Religion, Race, and Barack Obama's New Democratic Pluralism

Edited by
Gastón Espinosa

Routledge Research in American Politics and Governance

RELIGION, RACE, AND BARACK OBAMA'S NEW DEMOCRATIC PLURALISM

Contrary to popular claims, religion played a critical role in Barack Obama's 2008 election as president of the United States. Religion, race, and gender entered the national and electoral dialogue in an unprecedented manner. What stood out most in the 2008 presidential campaign was not that Republicans reached out to religious voters but that Democrats did—and with a vengeance. This tightly edited volume demonstrates how Obama charted a new course for Democrats by staking out claims among moderate-conservative faith communities and emerged victorious in the presidential contest, in part by promoting a new Democratic racial-ethnic and religious pluralism.

Comprising careful analysis by leading experts on religion and politics in the United States, Gastón Espinosa's book details how ten of the largest segments of the American electorate voted and why, drawing on the latest and best available data, interviews, and sources. The voting patterns of mainline Protestants, Evangelicals, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, and seculars are dissected in detail, along with the intersection of religion and women, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans. The story of Obama's historic election is an insightful prism through which to explore the growing influence of religion in American politics.

Gastón Espinosa is the Arthur V. Stoughton associate professor of religious studies at Claremont McKenna College and co-editor of the Columbia University Press Series in Religion and Politics. He served as research director of the $1.3 million Pew Charitable Trusts–funded Hispanic Churches in American Public Life research project and national survey and the Latino Religions and Politics national survey. His books include *Religion, Race, and the American Presidency* (2008) and *Religion and the American Presidency: George Washington to George W. Bush with Commentary and Primary Sources* (2009).

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Gastón Espinosa

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This book is dedicated to my son Gastón Rafael Espinosa.

Never live in the shadows of your dreams.

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PREFACE

This book examines the role of religion in the 2008 election. Barack Obama, John McCain, Hillary Clinton, Mitt Romney, and Mike Huckabee brought religion, race, and pluralism into the presidential election through their speeches, town hall meetings, and autobiographies and at faith and social justice forums at Rick Warren's massive 20,000-member Saddleback Community Church in California. What stood out to many commentators was that Democrats reached out to religious voters with a vengeance. Obama and Clinton studied Bush's past victories and Gore and Kerry's stunning defeats and staked out claims on what was considered Republican turf—the moderate and conservative faith communities.

Obama set a new course of action for Democrats by promoting a new kind of religious and racial-ethnic pluralism within the party that threaded the moral and political needles of American politics by welcoming both pro-choice and pro-life Democrats and Republicans disillusioned with the Bush administration's handling of the budget crisis and the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. This enabled him to chart a new path for the Democratic Party and the nation.

As a result, on November 4, Obama increased his margin of support over Kerry's 2004 results among almost every major religious and ethnic group by four to fourteen points. Although Obama lost the white Evangelical and Catholic votes, he still increased his shares among Evangelicals and won the aggregate Catholic vote because the burgeoning population of racial-ethnic minorities made up the difference. In short, race and religion mattered. They, along with his strong support from women and youth, led to Obama's historic victory.

How Obama pulled off this victory is the subject of this book. He did it by charting a new kind of Democratic religious and racial-ethnic pluralism, bringing together—to varying degrees—traditional religious moderates and

socially progressive but theologically and morally conservative voters into a new Democratic coalition, especially among racial-ethnic voters and key segments of the Evangelical and Catholic votes. Significantly, this involved liberal religious Democrats going after conservative and moderate religious voters in the post-Democratic South and nation without the traditional conservative credentials of regionalism and religion. Though Carter and Clinton could point to their Southern heritage and Southern Baptist and born-again credentials to win over religious and social conservatives, Obama (and Clinton in the primaries) came from white liberal Protestant traditions (United Methodist and United Church of Christ) and thus had to chart their own course and win over conservative-moderate religious voters by promoting faith-friendly policies such as faith-based initiatives and traditional marriage. Though to some extent Kerry also made limited efforts to do the same, Obama was more believable—in part because of his African American religious style.

This book explores how Obama reached out to ten of the most important racial-ethnic, religious, secular, and female segments of the electorate: African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, mainline Protestants, Evangelicals, Catholics, Muslims, Jews, seculars, and women. This should not give the impression that each group carries the same electoral clout. The reality is that presidential elections are largely driven and determined by Catholics, Evangelical Protestants, and mainline Protestants. This is because Protestants (54 percent) and Catholics (27 percent) made up 81 percent of the American electorate in 2008. However, given the seismic demographic shifts in the nation's racial-ethnic and religious composition today, race and religious diversity issues are increasingly salient in presidential elections for electoral and especially symbolic reasons (e.g., racial-ethnic and religious tolerance and inclusion), especially in key swing states such as Florida, Colorado, New Mexico, and Nevada, where the Latino population, for example, has surged to 20 to 44 percent of their populations with no sign of decrease. Was Obama's outreach to these groups sincere? Only time and his public policies will tell. What is more important is that in 2008, many racial-ethnic and religious voters gave him the benefit of the doubt and as a result collectively helped win him the election.

This book would not have been possible without the generous support of my colleagues and sponsors. I thank my scholarly contributors, the Claremont McKenna College (CMC) Department of Religious Studies and CMC President Pamela Gann and Dean Gregory Hess. I also thank Ulrike Guthrie for her keen editorial eye and my student research assistants: Bryan Cottle, Chase Laurelle Knowles, Victoria Gaines, and Elise Edwards. Hearty thanks are also due to James Leech and the National Endowment for the Humanities and Geoffrey Harpham and Kent Mulliken and the National Humanities Center. Last, but not least, I thank my brilliant wife, Jeanette, my vivacious children, and my extended family, without whose support and patience this book would not have been completed.

1

RELIGION, POLITICS, AND AMERICAN SOCIETY

Gastón Espinosa

FIGURE 1.1 President Obama takes his Presidential Oath of Office and is sworn in as the 44th President of the United States by the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court John G. Roberts, Jr. in Washington, D.C., January 20, 2009. Prior to taking the oath, Obama asked Justice Roberts to include "so help me God" at the end of the oath, which was duly added. Courtesy: U.S. Federal Government photo by Master Sergeant Cecilio Ricardo.

> Of all of the dispositions and habits, which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports… In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness. The mere Politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them… Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths?… Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.[1]
>
> President George Washington, *Farewell Address*, September 19, 1796

> Religious sentiment and activism have sparked some of our most powerful political movements, from abolition to civil rights… Secularists are wrong when they ask believers to leave their religion at the door before entering the public square… the majority of great reformers in American history not only were motivated by faith but repeatedly used religious language to argue their causes. To say that men and women should not inject their "personal morality" into public-policy debates is a practical absurdity; our law is by definition a codification of morality, much of it grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition.[2]
>
> President Barack Obama,*The Audacity of Hope*, 2006

Washington's and Obama's shared view of the influence of religion and morality on civil society is not accidental. All American presidents have supported the notion that religion and morality can be positive forces for promoting civic virtue and/or progressive social change. This chapter sets the larger context for those that follow by examining the role of religion in American politics; a taxonomy of U.S. religions; the history and importance of the religious, racial-ethnic, secular, and women's voting groups in politics; and Obama's upbringing, religious identity, and 2008 Election results.

Previous Literature on Religion and the Presidency

The influence of religion in American politics and society is ubiquitous. Almost every American president has utilized religion in his presidential campaigns and administrations. Although some argue that the manipulation of religion and morality as a political force in American presidents is new to George W. Bush, in fact it traces its roots back to the founding of the nation and to accusations in the election of 1800 by John Adam's operatives that Thomas Jefferson was an atheist and infidel and thus unfit to govern the nation. Although the strategy did not work, it sent a signal to presidential candidates that religion and morality were key variables that shaped American public opinion, a view that holds true to this very day.[3]

The influence of religion in the American presidency is analyzed in biographies by Peter Lillback, *Washington's Sacred Fire* (2006); Edwin Gaustad, *Sworn on the Altar*

of God: A Religious Biography of Thomas Jefferson (1996); Kenneth Morris, *Jimmy Carter: American Moralist* (1997); Paul Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan: A Spiritual Life* (2005); and David Aikman, *A Man of Faith: The Spiritual Journey of George W. Bush* (2005). It is also explored in a number of historical overviews such as Mark Rozell and Gleaves Whitney (editors), *Religion and the American Presidency* (2007); Randy Balmer, *God in the White House* (2009); Gary Scott Smith, *Faith and the Presidency* (2009); and David Holmes, *The Faiths of the Postwar American Presidents: From Truman to Obama* (2011).

Likewise, almost all of the recent biographies and autobiographies on Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, Mike Huckabee, Mitt Romney, and John McCain have sections about their faith journeys. Many of the books on Obama are slightly partisan: Stephen Mansfield, *The Faith of Barack Obama* (2008); Douglas Kmiec, *Can a Catholic Support Him?* (2008); Marvin McMickle, *Audacity of Faith: Christian Leaders Reflect on the Election of Barack Obama* (2009); and John Jocelyn and Dirk Brewer, *President Obama's Broken Promises: Race, Religion & Gay Rights* (2010). This book seeks to help fill this gap in the literature by taking a nonpartisan, secular, and social scientific approach to Obama, religion, and the 2008 Election.

Religion and Politics in the Twentieth Century

U.S. Religious Demography

Presidents continue to reach out to the American people through churches and religious events because they play a robust role in society. More than 92 percent of Americans believe in God or a universal spirit, and Americans have one of the highest rates of church, synagogue, and religious attendance in the world. One of the main reasons why presidents always self-identify with a Christian denomination is because Christians make up 77 to 82 percent of the U.S. population. Although the exact figures are debated, 50 to 61 percent of all Americans self-identify as Protestant and 21 to 25 percent as Roman Catholic. Almost 12 percent of Americans self-identify as nonaffiliated, 4.7 percent as other religion or do not know, 1.7 percent as Jewish, and 0.4 percent as Muslim. Protestants (54 percent) and Catholics (27 percent) made up 81 percent of the 2008 electorate. The Baptists, nondenominational/independents, Methodists, Lutherans, Pentecostals, and Presbyterians are the largest traditions. Almost all nondenominational/independent Christians are born-again and/or Evangelical Protestant (Table 1.1).

All of this points to the rising political power of born-again and Evangelical Christianity. The born-again experience is transdenominational. This is why some mainline Protestant politicians such as Ronald Reagan (Disciples, Presbyterian), G. H. W. Bush (Episcopalian), and G. W. Bush (United Methodist) both attended mainline churches and self-identified as born-again Christian. Born-again Christians make up 38 percent (100+ million people) of the U.S. population and 25 percent of the national electorate—or one of every four American voters.

TABLE 1.1 U.S. Religious Demographic Profile

Affiliation	*U.S. Population (%)*
U.S.	100
Religious, Spiritual, or Higher Power	92
Christian[a]	78.4
Protestant[b]	51.3
Major Protestant subgroupings	
Evangelical	26.3
Mainline Protestant	18.1
Historical Black Protestant Churches	6.9
Protestant traditions by size	
Baptist—all varieties	17.2
Methodist—all varieties	6.2
Other Protestant non-specific	4.9
Lutheran—all varieties	4.6
Nondenominational Protestant	4.5
Presbyterian—all varieties	2.7
Restorationist	2.1
Episcopalian/Anglican	1.5
Holiness	1.2
Congregationalist	0.8
Adventist	0.5
Reformed (including Dutch Reform)	0.3
Other Christian	0.3
Born-again in U.S. across all denominations and traditions[c]	38.0
Protestant Pentecostals in U.S.	10.0
Protestant Charismatics in U.S.	18.0
Pentecostal and Charismatic in U.S. (Protestant & Catholic)	23.0
Percent of Protestants who are Pentecostal/Charismatic	28.0
Percent of Catholics who are Pentecostal/Charismatic	36.0
Roman Catholic[d]	23.9
Orthodox	0.3
Mormon	1.7
Jehovah's Witness	0.7

Affiliation	*U.S. Population (%)*
Other Religion	4.7
Jewish	1.7
Buddhist	0.7
Muslim[e]	0.4
Hindu	0.4
Other world religions	0.3
Other faiths	1.2
Unaffiliated (Religious and Non-Religious)	16.9
Atheist	1.6
Agnostic	2.4
Nothing in particular/no one religious preference	12.1
Don't know/refused	0.8

Due to rounding, figures for the above Protestant traditions do not add to 100. Smaller categories were dropped due to lack of space.

a The *American Religious Identification Survey* (ARIS, 2001) reports a lower percentage of U.S. Christians (76.5%), whereas the *American Piety Religion Survey* (2005) reports a higher percentage (81.9%). The findings in Table 1.1 are largely based on the figures in Luis Lugo et al., *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey: Religious Affiliation: Diverse and Dynamic* (Washington, D.C.: The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008), 8, 110, 167; Barry Kosmin, Egon Mayer, and Ariela Keysar, *The American Religious Identification Survey* (New York: The Graduate Center of the City of New York, December 19, 2001), 12; Christopher Bader, Kevin Dougherty, Paul Froese, Byron Johnson, F. Carson Mencken, Jerry Park, and Rodney Stark, *American Piety in the Twenty-first Century: New Insights to the Depth and Complexity of Religion in the U.S.,* (Waco, TX: Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion, 2005), 4–30.

b *The American Religious Identification Survey* (2001) reports a lower percentage of Protestants (49.8%) than the *American Piety Religion Survey* (2005) (60.7%). *The U.S. Religious Landscape Survey* puts the figure at 51.3%, 8, 110, 167; Kosmin et al., ARIS, 1-30; Bader et al., *American Piety*, 4-30.

c Luis Lugo et al., *Spirit and Power: A Ten-Country Survey of Pentecostals* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, October 2006), and Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life and Pew Research Center surveys from January to September 2006 (n= 23,255). For a copy of the *Spirit and Power* report, see http:// pewforum.org/surveys/pentecostal/, and for the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life Web site's Religious Demography Profile, United States, 2007, see http://pewforum.org/world-affairs/countries/ ?CountryID=222.

d *The American Religious Identification Survey* (2001) reports a higher percentage of Catholics (24.5%) than the *American Piety Religion Survey* (2005) (21.2%). The *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey* put the figure at 23.9 percent, 8, 110; Kosmin *et al.*, ARIS, 13; Bader *et al.*, *American Piety*, 4-30.

e From *Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2007), 1-28. Due to rounding, figures may not add to 100 and nested figures may not add to the subtotal indicated. *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, 8, 110.

TABLE 1.2 Religious affiliation of U.S. presidents through 2004

Religious denomination or tradition	*Number of presidents*	*Percent of U.S. presidents*	*Percent of current U.S. population*	*Percent of presidents to percent of U.S. population*
Episcopalian	11	26.2	1.7	15.4
Presbyterian	10	23.8	2.8	5.1
Methodist	5	11.9	8.0	1.5
Baptist	4	9.5	18.0	0.5
Unitarian	4	9.5	0.2	47.5
Disciples of Christ	3	7.1	0.4	18.7
Dutch Reformed	2	4.8	0.1	48.0
Quaker	2	4.8	0.7	6.9
Congregationalist	2	2.4	0.6	4.0
Catholic	1	2.4	24.5	0.1
Jehovah's Witness	1	2.4	0.6	6.0
Total	42	100.0	57.0	

Source: Joseph Nathan Kane, *Facts About the Presidents*, 4th ed. (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1981), 360; William A. DeGregorio, *The Complete Book of U.S. Presidents*, 2nd ed. (New York: Dembner Books, 1989); see also http://www.adherents.com/adh_presidents.html.

Religious Affiliation of American Presidents

Despite Evangelical growth, the vast majority of American presidents have self-identified with mainline Protestant traditions—Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational—because they are viewed as religiously moderate and respectable upper-class traditions. There has been no Pentecostal, Lutheran, Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, or Mormon president. There has been only one Catholic president: John F. Kennedy (Table 1.2).

Although most presidents have associated with mainline Protestantism, the only two Democrats to win the White House from 1968 to 1996 were born-again, Evangelical, and Southern Baptist Christians from the South—Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton. During this same time, all the Republicans came from moderate-to-liberal Protestant denominations (Reagan: Disciples of Christ/Presbyterian; Nixon: Quaker; G. H. W. Bush: Episcopalian; G. W. Bush: Episcopalian/Methodist/Presbyterian), thus underscoring the transdenominational dimension and potential political power of born-again Evangelical Christianity. The 2008 election broke this trend by electing Obama, a member of the liberal United Church of Christ (UCC), although he too reportedly walked down an aisle at church and asked Jesus to be his personal savior and lord.[4]

FIGURE 1.2 Martin Luther (1483–1546). Engraving by Theodor Knesing from the painting by Lucas Cranach. Courtesy: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs, LC-USZ62-106322

Religious and Racial-Ethnic Taxonomy of American Society

Mainline Protestants

The two main varieties of Protestants in America are mainline and Evangelical. Mainline Protestants trace their roots back to Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, John Wesley, and the birth of the Protestant Reformation in 1517 in Europe. They arrived in America largely evangelical in theology. Most were theologically, socially, and morally conservative until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when they became increasingly influenced by Enlightenment rationalism, biblical criticism, science, evolution, and modernism. The Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy from 1910 to the 1930s marks the crystallization and formal birth of liberal Protestantism, which tended to deny cardinal doctrines such as the inerrancy of the Bible, Jesus' virgin birth, divinity, bodily resurrection, and salvation through Christ alone. Though mainline Protestant leaders tend to be moderate-liberal in orientation, the vast majority of rank-and-file parishioners across the nation tend to be moderate to this day. This explains why there has often been a divergence in the aggregate denominational voting patterns between leaders and parishioners.[5]

Mainline Protestant traditions constitute a small but important number of generally large denominations that include the UCC, Episcopalian, United Methodist (UMC), Presbyterian (PCUSA), Lutheran (ELCA), American Baptist, Reformed

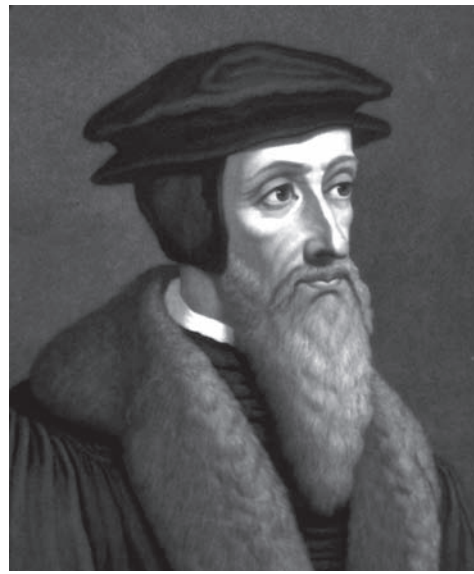


FIGURE 1.3 John Calvin (1509–1564). Engraving by John Sartain (?). Courtesy: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs, LC-USZ62-72002

Church in America (RCA), African Methodist Episcopal (AME), Disciples of Christ, and Unitarian-Universalist traditions. Mainline Protestants tend to be creedal, ecumenical, theologically and morally moderate-liberal in orientation, and liturgical.[6] They are much more likely than traditional Evangelicals to hold liberal social views on abortion, homosexual relations and marriage, and women's ordination. They reject the inerrancy of the Bible but are generally committed to social justice, women in ministry, environmentalism, pacifism, and progressive social views. With higher income and educational levels than Evangelicals, they have long dominated the American political, economic, and cultural scene. However, they have voted Republican for economic rather than social or moral reasons. In the 2004 presidential election, however, they split their vote between Republicans and Democrats and, in 2008, a slight majority voted for Obama according to Olson, Warber, and den Dulk in Chapter 2.[7]

Mainline Protestants' voting behavior indicates an increasingly divided partisan identity that may lean Democratic in the future. Because they vote at higher rates (75 percent) than Evangelicals (66 percent) they function as a swing constituency in both parties.[8]

The trend is that the less observant moderate-to-progressive mainliners are moving toward the Democratic Party. Previous scholarship indicates that denominational identity is no longer the most reliable predictor of political partisanship and voting behavior.[9] However, the decision by many Democratic presidential candidates (before Obama) to avoid talking about faith and religion was, in the words of Olson and Warber, "almost certainly … an electoral mistake" because the language of faith

and faith-based social justice still resonates with many mainline Protestants. This lack of talk about faith may be one of the reasons why Gore and Kerry could not reach Clinton's level of support (who was fluent in "God-talk") and is one of the main reasons why these candidates lost their election bids in 2000 and 2004, respectively.[10]

Conversely, this is precisely why George W. Bush attracted mainline women voters, who tend to be more religious than their male counterparts. Prior to 2008, Democrats were attracting a higher percentage of older mainliners who do not attend church on a regular basis and those at higher income levels, thus indicating a potential class, generation, and growing "God Gap" in the future. However, this book argues that Obama's 2008 election run appears to have in some cases slowed this trend and in other cases reversed it. Olson and Warber also found that Democrats are attracting older, secular-minded, and wealthier people—three constituencies that historically have been associated with the Republican Party.[11]

The influence of Protestantism will likely continue since it remains the largest religious tradition in the United States and makes up a majority of the members of Congress (57 percent), the Senate (56 percent), and the House (57 percent), though only a minority of the Supreme Court (22 percent). Just five traditions—Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Lutherans—make up almost half (43 percent) of all Protestant Congressmen.[12]

Evangelicals

American Protestantism has been historically Evangelical and politically conservative-moderate and isolationist. The Puritans led by John Winthrop (d. 1649) and many other Protestant groups that arrived in America practiced an evangelically rooted brand of Christianity. Their movement spurred on the First Great Awakening (1730s–1750s) led by Calvinist preachers such as George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, and Gilbert Tennent. The Second Great Awakening (1790s–1830s) was led by Charles Finney and others and shifted the American Protestant landscape from a largely Calvinist to an Arminian theological outlook, the latter of which denied that God elected people to heaven and hell and taught that persons could "backslide" and lose their salvation if they did not have a personal born-again conversion experience with Jesus Christ and live a religiously and morally upright life. This helps explain the stress on personal morality and social ethics. Evangelicalism was spread among whites, blacks, and Indians through the preaching of John and Charles Wesley and others in the eighteenth century and Dwight Moody, Billy Sunday, and Billy Graham in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Protestantism split into mainline and Evangelical segments over slavery (1840s–1860s) and the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy (1890s–1930s), which was fought over topics such as biblical inerrancy, biblical criticism of the Bible, and the creation-evolution controversy. The Scopes Monkey Trial of the 1920s marks a watershed; Protestantism saw the crystallization of a liberal branch of the movement

FIGURE 1.4 George Whitefield (1714-1770). Engraving by John J. Boyd. Courtesy: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs, LC-USZ62-120395.

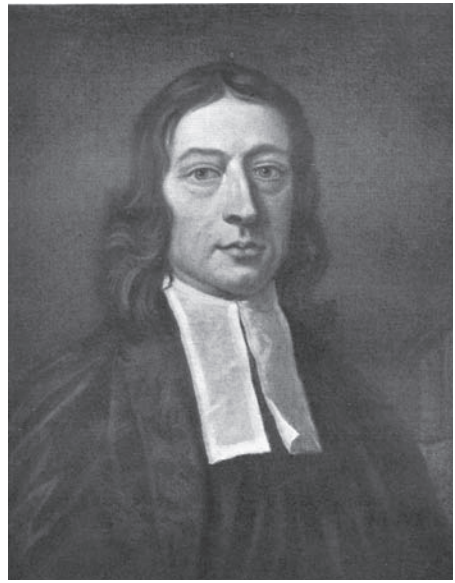


FIGURE 1.5 John Wesley (1703–1791). Portrait painted by J. Williams, 1741. Half-tone plate engraved by H. Davidson. Courtesy: Gastón Espinosa History Collection.

FIGURE 1.6 Billy Graham (1918–), April 11, 1966. Courtesy: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs, LC-DIG-ppmsc-03261

that tended to deny cardinal doctrines such as the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible, the virgin birth, divinity and bodily resurrection of Christ, and that Jesus was the only way to heaven. Evangelicals called these beliefs the "fundamentals of the faith."[13]

In contrast to mainline Protestants, Evangelicals tend to live in much greater tension with the world. The National Association of Evangelicals was formed in 1942 to unite Protestant Evangelical and Pentecostal denominations to give them a national voice. There are currently sixty participating denominations representing 45,000 churches throughout the nation. The most prominent Evangelical leaders today include Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, James Dobson, Rick Warren, Bill Hybels, John Piper, Tony Campolo, Ron Sider, Al Mohler, Jim Wallis, Chuck Smith, Jesse Miranda, Samuel Rodríguez, Bishop Charles Blake, and Bishop T. D. Jakes. Despite their denominational and ideological diversity, Evangelicals tend to stress a born-again experience, the fundamentals of the faith, biblical moral views, and historic Christian creeds and/or confessions. Yet a growing number of younger and ethnic Evangelicals also hold progressive social views on race relations, women in ministry, and social justice.[14]

More than a third of Americans report being born-again. The Evangelical population is larger than the mainline community. Evangelical churches tend to attract younger white middle- and working-class families and disproportionate numbers of racial-ethnic minorities and women; play contemporary music; sponsor youth programs; and focus on evangelism, missions, and church planting.[15]

Evangelical traditions come in two main theological varieties: traditional Evangelical and Pentecostal. Traditional Evangelical denominations include the Southern Baptists, Free Methodist, Presbyterian (Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Presbyterian Church in America, Evangelical Presbyterian Church), Congregationalist–CCCC, Lutheran–Missouri Synod, Christian Reformed Church, Evangelical Free, Evangelical Covenant, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Seventh Day Adventist, and the Church of the Nazarene. Pentecostal and Charismatic traditions include the Assemblies of God, Foursquare Church, Church of God in Christ, Church of God—Cleveland, Tennessee, United Pentecostal Church, Vineyard Christian Fellowship, Calvary Chapel, and 3,300 smaller denominations and councils.[16]

Because Evangelicals believe the Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God, they strive to follow its teachings in a literal way unless the passage is symbolic or metaphorical. Such reading leads many to teach that abortion is murder because it is the taking of a human life, which is prohibited in the Ten Commandments. It also leads them to deem homosexual practice sinful because it is described as unnatural and sinful in Leviticus 18:22 and Romans 1:24–27. Most also do not affirm it because they believe doing so requires them to accept premarital sex and adultery as all homosexual sexual relations take place either before marriage or outside of marriage. Even if gay marriage were made the law of the land, most would argue that the Bible does not sanction it and, therefore, God does not recognize it. They believe the Bible teaches that marriage is defined as a divinely sanctioned covenant between one man and one woman, and thus they also reject polygamy. All national surveys indicate that a majority of conservative and many moderate Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and seculars also share these views, though to varying degrees and for varying reasons.[17]

Liberal Protestants and Catholics reject these views on abortion and homosexuality. They argue abortion is not the taking of a human life but the surgical removal of an unwanted fetus and that references to homosexuality are taken out of their cultural context, and instead have to do with improper hospitality and not sexual practice (Leviticus 18:22). They were not and thus are not meant to be universally binding for all Jews and Christians today. Other liberals admit that although the laws may have been binding in their day, they should not be today because, like other culturally embedded laws (e.g., Kosher laws), no one is required to follow them anymore to be a good Jew or Christian. Some denominations (UCC) teach that Christians should accept homosexual practice and ordination, whereas others argue that although homosexual practice is sinful, homosexual orientation is not. This enables them to affirm the ordination of gays and lesbians provided they remain celibate. Although national survey research indicates that the vast majority of Evangelicals favor heterosexual relationships, former Evangelicals such as Troy Perry founded the Metropolitan Community Church for gays and lesbians in San Francisco in 1968. Today, it reports 250 congregations in 23 countries. Notwithstanding these developments, the overwhelming majority of traditional Protestant, Catholic, and

Orthodox Christians believe homosexual practice is unbiblical and morally wrong. For this reason, George W. Bush was able to use it as an effective wedge issue in the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections, though Bill Clinton was first to benefit from it as a political issue by signing into law the conservative-driven Defense of Marriage Act on September 21, 1996—six weeks prior to the 1996 election.[18]

Pentecostals and Charismatics

Pentecostals are a large subset of Evangelical Protestantism. What distinguishes them is their affirmation of *both* a personal, born-again relationship with Jesus Christ *and* the spiritual gifts (charismata) practiced by the Apostles and listed in Acts 2, 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, Ephesians 4:11, and Romans 12:6–8. These gifts include speaking in tongues (xenolalia and glossolalia), healing, working miracles, words of knowledge, prophecy, discernment of spirits, wisdom, evangelism, pastoring, teaching, knowledge, faith, exhortation, administration, service, giving, and mercy. The modern Pentecostal movement began with the teachings of Charles Fox Parham (d. 1929) and William J. Seymour (d. 1922). It spread rapidly throughout the United States through the leadership of Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles (1906–1909), and today the Pentecostal movement numbers more than 600 million people around the world (Figure 1.7).[19]

FIGURE 1.7 William J. Seymour (1870–1922) (African American seated center) and the Azusa Street Revival (1906-1909) Leadership Team, Los Angeles, Fall 1906. Courtesy: Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

FIGURE 1.8 President Barack Obama signs the proclamation marking the National Day of Prayer in the Oval Office of the White House, May 7, 2009. Looking on is Joshua DuBois (1982–), Director of the White House Office for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. DuBois also directed the Obama 2008 Campaign outreach to all of the nation's faith communities. Courtesy: Official White House photo by Pete Souza.

Pentecostals take their name from the New Testament book of Acts where, on the "Day of Pentecost," God reportedly poured out the Holy Spirit on the disciples, and as a result they began to speak in unknown tongues (xenolalia), a real human language that they had not studied. Today Pentecostals believe that xenolalia is rare and that most tongues (glossolalia) communicate a divine message for the congregation's edification or serve as a private prayer language. They believe that all of the spiritual gifts are available to all born-again Christians in any denomination.[20] Many Pentecostals affirm the ordination of women (e.g., Assemblies of God, Foursquare) and are working-class, poor white, black, Latino, and female, and historically and disproportionately Democrat—not Republican, though today white Pentecostals (e.g., Pat Robertson, John Ashcroft, Sarah Palin) tend to vote Republican.

Given its social-ethnic profile, it is not surprising that some of President Bill Clinton's closest friends were Pentecostal, that President Obama selected an ordained African-American minister associated with the Assemblies of God named Joshua DuBois to run his 2008 outreach to all U.S. faith communities, and that Pentecostal Pastor Leah Daughtry was chief of staff to Howard Dean and was the CEO of the 2008 Democratic National Convention Committee (Figure 1.8).[21]

Evangelicals and Pentecostals are not Fundamentalists per se. The number of Fundamentalists (as opposed to Evangelicals/Pentecostals) is very small. They tend

to be militantly anti-modernists and cessationists and reject women's ordination. Harold Ockenga quipped that an Evangelical is a Fundamentalist (theologically speaking) with a social conscience.[22]

Evangelical Progressives and Voting Patterns

Contrary to popular perception, 20 to 30 percent of the U.S. Evangelical population is socially progressive on civil rights, women's ordination, the death penalty, and immigration and consistently votes Democrat. In fact, Evangelicals were once solidly Democrats, not Republicans. The "Solid South" was a phrase created to refer to the Democratic-controlled Evangelical South. A slow but steady political shift began with Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs that primarily benefited the industrial North, JFK's secular domestic programs and fears about his Catholic commitments, Lyndon Johnson's support for the Civil Rights Movement, Jimmy Carter's perceived betrayal of Southern values and weakness on foreign policy, and more recently with the perception that the Democratic Party is controlled by minority pro-choice and gay-rights lobbies. At the same time, Republicans began to stress smaller government, economic conservatism, moral and family values, and conservative views on race, segregation, affirmative action, and immigration reform. Socially progressive Evangelicals include activists such as Jim Wallis, Ron Sider, and Tony Campolo. They have attracted media attention through books such as Wallis's *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It*.[23]

The Evangelical community is hard to define politically because of the growth of racial-ethnic minorities. National surveys indicate that 50 percent of African Americans and 37 percent of U.S. Latinos self-identify as born-again Christian or with an Evangelical denomination.[24] African Americans and U.S. Latinos tend to be conservative on abortion and same-sex marriage but progressive on the death penalty, affirmative action, educational reform, women's ordination, civil rights legislation, and—among Latinos—immigration reform. Black Evangelicals vote overwhelmingly Democrat, as do Latino Catholics and (to a lesser degree) Protestants. The majority of the nation's 12.2 million Latino Protestants, most of whom self-identify as born-again, voted Democrat in 1996 and 2000 but voted for Bush in 2004—only to vote for Obama in 2008 for reasons outlined in Chapter 10.

Corwin E. Smidt argues that Evangelicals have moved from being "a relatively passive and divided bloc of voters" that leaned Democrat in the early twentieth century to a "relatively engaged, largely unified, and critical voting bloc" that voted Republican in the post-1976 period. Their growing influence and power are primarily the result of their size (one-fourth of the U.S. electorate in 2008) and shift from a diverse voting bloc in the 1960s to a more homogenous one concentrated in one political party today. They left the Democratic Party due to JFK, Barry Goldwater's and Richard Nixon's southern outreach strategies,

Jimmy Carter's campaigns in 1976 and 1980, Ronald Reagan's support for Evangelical causes, Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority in 1979, Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition in the 1980s, George W. Bush's Evangelical "God-talk," and the Democratic Party's decision to proactively affirm abortion and homosexual lifestyles.[25]

Finally, the Evangelical and born-again population is politically significant because it makes up 38 percent of the U.S. population or more than 100 million Americans. Although their political clout is diminished because of their modest turnout on Election Day (65 percent), they still grew from one in five voters in 2004 to one in four in 2008. Surprisingly, they cast 20 to 32 percent of their votes for Democrats over the past twenty years. Their growing influence and power in the Republican Party is also the result of their growing voter turnout rates, which have increased from 56 to 66 percent over the past four decades. In 2004, for example, 78 percent of Evangelicals voted for Bush, and they constituted 40 percent of all Republican voters, in contrast to mainline Protestants (18 percent) and Roman Catholics (20 percent). Despite their support for Bush (78 percent), more than one in five Evangelicals (20 percent) supported Kerry and one in four Obama (26 percent). In 2004, they made up 12 percent of Kerry's vote totals, which was equivalent to Kerry's black Protestant support (13 percent).[26]

Although it is unlikely that Democrats will make substantial inroads among Evangelicals, scholars such as Corwin E. Smidt argue that a center-left Democratic candidate could win a presidential election by slicing off three to four percentage points of the Evangelical vote, transforming a 51–49 Republican victory into a 51–49 Democratic victory: exactly what Obama did in 2008.[27]

Roman Catholics

The second-largest religious voting block and the largest single Christian denomination in the United States is the Roman Catholic Church, with 68 million affiliates. The growing power of Catholicism is largely due to Latin American immigration. Today, Latinos make up almost 40 percent of the Church. The first Catholics in the continental United States arrived from Spain. They set up missions in St. Augustine, Florida in 1565. The first English Catholics established Maryland in 1634.[28]

Between 1820 and 1920, some 5.5 million Germans, 4.4 million Irish, and 4.1 million Italians arrived in the United States, the majority of whom were Catholic. Between 1870 and 1914, 2.6 million Poles, most of whom were Catholic or Jewish, joined them. Their massive influx, formation of parochial schools, poverty, and purported anti-democratic impulses led to the rise of Protestant nativism, religious bigotry, and the Know-Nothing Political Party in the mid-1850s. The Ku Klux Klan and other anti-Catholic groups also arose and criticized Catholicism as un-Democratic. Systematic discrimination against Catholics continued well into the

FIGURE 1.9 John F. Kennedy (1917–1963). Courtesy: John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, STC2371611.

sixties, abating somewhat only with the election of John F. Kennedy. Vatican II (1962–1965) revolutionized Catholicism. This along with the rise of Liberation Theology and the Cursillo, Encuentro, Sanctuary, and Catholic Charismatic movements during the 1960s to the 1990s created a more open, progressive, and activist church. Although beset by scandals over pedophile priests and sexual abuse and a shortage of priests, Catholicism is growing, especially thanks to Latin Americans and Southeast Asian immigrants from the Philippines and Vietnam.[29]

Catholics are politically significant because they make up 21 to 25 percent of the U.S. population, 24 percent of the Senate, 30 percent of the House, and 56 percent of the Supreme Court. According to the National Exit Poll (NEP), they made up 27 percent of the U.S. electorate in 2008, 19 percent of which were Euro-American. Today, Catholics split their vote between Democrats and Republicans. Catholics went from casting 78 percent of their votes for JFK in 1960 to 48 percent for fellow Catholic John Kerry in 2004. This shift began in earnest when Reagan won over many Catholic Democrats. Concerns about civil rights, their rising economic and social status, and a revitalized Catholic hierarchy that opposed the Equal Rights Amendment, abortion, and gay marriage prompted some Catholics to become Republican.[30] Bush's "compassionate conservatism," faith-based initiatives, school vouchers for private religious schools, pro-life platform, Latino-friendly message, and constitutional amendment to define marriage as a covenant between one man and one woman all helped him win a majority of Catholics and the White House in 2004.[31]

Jews

Unlike Evangelicals and Catholics, Jews have maintained their historic affiliation with the Democratic Party because of their ethnic and religious marginalization and social views. This history goes back to anti-Semitism in Europe. The first Jews probably arrived in the New World as Spanish *conversos* or Jewish converts to Catholicism during the Spanish conquest of Mexico in 1521. Their first permanent settlement in the English colonies was established in 1654, when twenty-three Dutch Jews arrived in New Amsterdam (New York City). Between 1880 and 1930, some 2.25 million Jews immigrated from Russia, the Pale of Settlement, Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova, where they faced pogroms and religious and ethnic conflict.

There are four major branches of Judaism and numerous smaller expressions. They are Reform (38 percent), Conservative (33 percent), Orthodox (22 percent), and Reconstructionist (2 percent). Of the nation's 305 million people in 2008, 6.5 million self-identified as Jewish, although only 5.1 million observe the Jewish religion. The American Religious Identity Survey found that only 3.54 of the 5.1 million observant Jews call themselves "religious." Jews are more likely than almost any other racial-ethnic group to self-identify as atheist or agnostic.[32] A 2003 poll found that while 90 percent of Protestants said they believed in God, only 48 percent of Jews did. Sixteen percent of all Jews attend synagogue at least once per month, 42 percent attend once per year or more, and the rest go once a year or less or not at all. The number of Jews who describe themselves as culturally rather than religiously Jewish has increased from 20 percent in 1990 to 37 percent in 2008. Intermarriage increased from 6 percent in 1960 to 40 to 50 percent by 2000.[33]

Ninety-four percent of Jews live in thirteen states. They are highly concentrated in urban centers such as New York City (1.7 million), Miami (535,000), Los Angeles (490,000), Philadelphia (254,000), and San Francisco (210,000). More than 70 percent are registered Democrats, and 70 to 78 percent vote Democratic in presidential elections. They wield disproportionate influence in national politics and the Democratic Party because although they make up 1.7 percent of the adult U.S. population, in the 111th Congress, they constituted 7.3 percent of all Congresspersons (Senate and House), 6.2 percent of the House, 12 percent of the Senate, 33 percent of the U.S. Supreme Court, and 24 percent (11 of 54) of all Democratic Senators and 14 percent of Democrats in the House. Although Republicans appointed a large number of Jews and Jewish Neoconservatives (e.g., Richard Perle, Elliot Abrams, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Pipes) to national posts, Democrats such as FDR, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama have appointed many more to key offices. A Jewish American political consultant, David Axelrod, is credited for paving the way to Obama's 2008 victory. Jews have championed Israel's right to exist, religious neutrality in schools and American public life, and separation of church and state, though some studies indicate this may be waning because of assimilation, increased social standing, and intermarriage with non-Jews.[34]

FIGURE 1.10 Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, President Bill Clinton, and Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat meet at the White House to sign the Oslo Peace Accords, Washington, D.C., September 13, 1993. Courtesy: William J. Clinton Library and Museum, P 7291-10A.

Republican presidents have only occasionally been able to win significant shares of the Jewish vote as Reagan did in 1980 (40 percent) due to his staunch support for the State of Israel and his advocacy for Jews suffering in the Soviet Union. In 1992, Clinton trumped Reagan's advances, winning 80 percent of the Jewish vote thanks to his staunch support of Israel and in 1996 because of the Oslo Peace Accords (Figure 1.10). George W. Bush gained only 19 percent and 27 percent of the Jewish vote in 2000 and 2004, respectively.[35]

Muslims

The first people of Muslim heritage probably arrived in the Southwest with the Spanish explorers and settlements as *marranos* (converts from Islam to Catholicism). The first recorded arrival of Muslims in the United States were black slaves from West Africa in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There have been at least three major waves of Muslim immigration to the United States: 1875 to around 1910 (from Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine); 1910 to the mid-1960s (Egypt, Syria, Yugoslavia, Albania, USSR); and from the mid-1960s to the present (Middle East, Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia, Africa, Asia). The exact number of Muslim Americans is hotly debated, with figures ranging from 1.3 million according to the American Religious Identity Survey (2008) to 2.5 million in the Pew Forum on Religion and

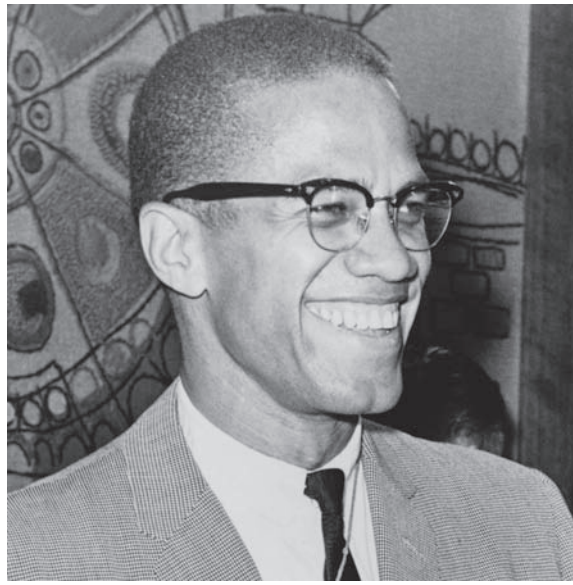


FIGURE 1.11 Malcolm X (1925–1965). Courtesy: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs, LC-USZ62-115058

Public Life national surveys, to 7 million according to The Council on American-Islamic Relations. The first U.S. mosque was established in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in 1934 to serve Syrian and Lebanese workers. There are an estimated 1,200 mosques or religious centers in the United States today.[36]

The Muslim community is racially and ethnically diverse. Approximately 34 percent say they are South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi), 26 percent say they are Arab, 25 percent say they are African American, and 15 percent are from Bosnia, Africa, and Asia. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found that 37 percent described themselves as white, 24 percent black, 15 percent other, 4 percent Latino, and the rest as Asian or other. In terms of religious affiliation, 50 percent reported being Sunni (85 percent worldwide and 50 percent of the Middle East), 16 percent Shia, 22 percent non-affiliated, and 16 percent other/no response.[37]

Islam is growing in small but noticeable ways. Approximately 23 percent of American Muslims converted in the United States, 59 percent of whom were African Americans—the most famous of whom are Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, Louis Farrakhan, and Muhammad Ali. Many youths were converted through prison, gang, at-risk youth, and inner-city social ministries. More than 72 percent of Muslims reported that religion is very important to their lives, and at least 31 percent attend mosque once per week or more and another 12 percent once or twice a month.[38]

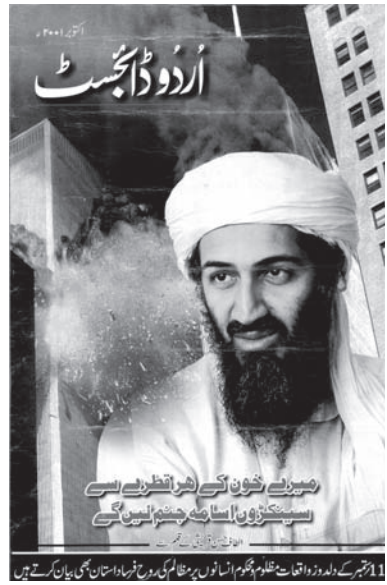


FIGURE 1.12 Osama bin Laden shown on a poster in Urdu in front of the burning World Trade Center during the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack in New York. The caption reads: "A drop of my blood will give birth to hundreds of Osamas." Courtesy: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs, PR 13 CN 2002:069:1.

Muslim political influence is increasing but it is largely symbolic. Muslims make up 0.4 percent of the U.S. population and 0.4 percent of the Congress.[39] The two Muslim Congressmen, both in the House of Representatives (Keith Ellison, MN and Andre Carson, IN), are African American, converts, and Democrats. Aside from African American Muslims, who almost always vote like their African American Christian counterparts, Muslims were trending Republican in 2000 because of President Bush's pro-family values and push for a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli controversy. As a result, prior to the 2000 Election, Bush was winning 48 percent of the Muslim vote compared to Gore's 36 percent. Bush also did well among Muslims in 2000, because Gore chose an Orthodox Jew (Joseph Lieberman) as his running mate, who many Muslims believed was too pro-Israel.

However, there was a dramatic shift in 2004 in the wake of Osama bin Laden's attack on the World Trade Center on 9/11. Despite Bush's statements to the contrary, some Muslims perceived his invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq in pursuit of bin Laden and weapons of mass destruction as a war against the Muslim world. As a result, Kerry won 82 percent of the Muslim vote to Bush's 7 percent. This shift was a response to Bush's foreign policy in Iraq and Afghanistan, racial profiling, and reports of growing anti-Muslim intolerance.[40]

Seculars and Nonreligious

The origins of American secularism date back to the British and French Enlightenment's focus on rationalism, scientific method, and skepticism. Seculars share a commitment to the separation of church and state, freedom of conscience, and a desire for a religiously neutral public square. Some seculars are aggressively anti-religion and others deeply spiritual. The former believe that religion should not shape in any way American politics, culture, and intellectual institutions as religion represents a pre-scientific worldview and past, whereas the latter believe that religion's role should be restricted to the private sphere and limited in politics.

Almost all national surveys report the number of atheists (1.6 percent) and agnostics (2.4 percent) at 4 percent or less of the U.S. population. The real debate is over Americans who report being "non-denominational/independent," "just Christian," "other," "something else," "other religion," "no religion," "no affiliation," or "no religious preference," who some scholars claim have grown from 8.4 percent in 1973 to 1980 to 20.4 percent in 2004. Some try to use these figures to argue that the number of religious people in general and Christians in particular has significantly declined.[41]

However, a number of other national studies call this conclusion into question because they tend to assume that a person who has no religious preference at the time of the survey is nonreligious, which is not necessarily true.[42] For example, the *Latino Religions and Politics* national survey fielded in October 2008 (QS5, $n = 2{,}750$) found that only 17 percent of Latino "no-religion" respondents said in a follow-up question that they actually and literally meant they had "no religion." Instead, 80 percent of the no-religion respondents reported in a follow-up question that they were in fact Christian, believed in God, and/or were spiritual. In light of this, it appears that they had "no religious *preference*" rather than no religion.[43]

Kellstedt, Guth, Espinosa, and others argue that there is a need for a more refined classification system. In their chapter on Seculars (Chapter 7), Kellstedt and Guth propose a system that disaggregates religiously unaffiliated with high religiosity rates from the rest as their religious practice rates more closely resemble religious practitioners than atheists: (1) the religiously unaffiliated with little or no religiosity, (2) the nominally religious, and (3) the religiously unaffiliated but with high religiosity. The first group should be further broken into subgroups: (1) atheists, (2) agnostics, and (3) the unaffiliated.[44]

Notwithstanding these methodological concerns, recent scholarship finds that seculars are increasingly voting Democratic reportedly because of the growing influence of religiously influenced social stances. In 2004, seculars made up one-sixth of all Democratic voters. Despite their size, the four factors that undermine their political clout are their low voter turnout rates, mobilization difficulties due to their highly independent nature, lack of readily accessible mobilization sites, and because this group is not all nonreligious as previously believed.[45]

Women

The struggle of women in American political life has been immense. Women first began exercising a national political voice during the Abolitionist movement from the 1820s to the 1850s, during which Lucretia Mott, Maria Stewart, Angelina Grimke, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and others drew on their Christian faith to call for the abolition of slavery. They paved the way for women exercising a public voice and served as a foundation for Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and others to push for the nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920, which gave women the right to vote. Jeanette Rankin of Montana was the first woman to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1916, and Rebecca Latimer Felton was the first woman to serve in the U.S. Senate in 1922. Women's roles in politics began to grow after Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in 1972, and the feminist movement grew and gained influence throughout the 1970s. In 2011, there were 72 women (16.6%) in the House, 17 (17%) in the Senate (5 Republican, 12 Democrat), and 2 (22%) on the Supreme Court. Sandra Day O'Connor was the first female member of the U.S. Supreme Court (Figure 1.13). She was Episcopalian, nominated by Republican Ronald Reagan, and served from 1981 to 2006. Although still greatly underrepresented in politics, women voters wield considerable influence in national politics as they are more likely to vote than their male counterparts (53 percent of the electorate in 2008) and are more likely than men to be registered Democrats.[46]

FIGURE 1.13 Sandra Day O'Connor (1930–). Courtesy: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs, LC-USZ62-86846.

Because all national surveys indicate that women are much more likely to be religious than men, it is not surprising that political candidates have reached out to female voters through faith-friendly policies and organizations such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Catholics for a Free Choice, Church Women United, Hadassah, Jewish Women International, Kamilat, Muslim Women's League, and National Council of Jewish Women, Concerned Women for America, and Eagle Forum.[47]

Though women tend to be more religious than men, this does not automatically translate into Republican Party identity or presidential support. Both religious women and nonreligious women gave a majority of their vote to Democratic candidates in 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004, whereas religious men gave Republican candidates a majority of their vote in 1980, 1984, 1988, 1996, 2000, and 2004. Despite the seeming uniformity for Democratic candidates, Protestant women tended to vote Republican, whereas Catholic, Jewish, and other women tended to vote Democrat in 2000 and 2004. However, Protestant women supported Clinton in 1992 and 1996. Given their growing numbers in all sectors of society, their role will increase in politics.[48]

African Americans

Obama's election to the U.S. Presidency was an historic moment for African Americans who have suffered the brunt of slavery, racism, and discrimination in society. The first African Americans arrived in the United States in Virginia in 1619 and worked as servants. Although they could work off or purchase their freedom in the earliest years, by the 1660s the colonies placed restrictions on private manumission of slaves, banned miscegenation, and forbade blacks from owning firearms. By the 1740s, blacks were denied the right to vote, and only blacks were being held as chattel slaves for life. The Abolitionist movement led to the abolition of slavery and the thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Despite the promises of Reconstruction, African Americans suffered under Jim Crow segregation, which by the 1890s had resulted in Black Codes, Literacy Tests, Poll Taxes, and fear of public lynching and intimidation by the Ku Klux Klan and other groups (Figure 1.14). In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court rendered *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which legalized discrimination on the basis of race. Although most African Americans flocked to the Republican Party after the Civil War because of Abraham Lincoln and like-minded Republicans, by the 1930s they began to shift to the Democrats because of FDR's New Deal programs and especially Eleanor Roosevelt's quest to address the plight of African Americans.

African American civil rights leaders such as Frederick Douglas, W.E.B. DuBois, and Booker T. Washington fought against racism, segregation, and discrimination and paved the way for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s led by the Baptist minister Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. His protests along with those

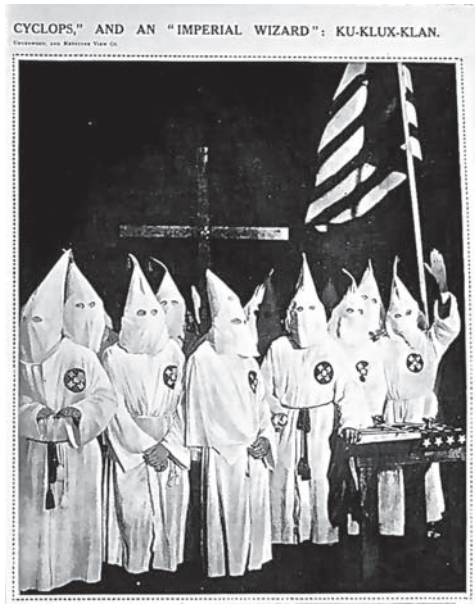


FIGURE 1.14 "Cyclops, and an 'Imperial Wizard': Ku-Klux-Klan," Annapolis, Maryland. Source: *The Illustrated London News,* February 3, 1923, p. 181. Courtesy: Gastón Espinosa Collection.

of many others in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference led President Lyndon Johnson to sign into law the Voting Rights Act and Civil Rights Acts in 1964 and 1965, which put an end to African American political disenfranchisement. As a result, blacks began to vote in larger numbers, and some ran for the presidency, including Jesse Jackson, Carol Moseley Braun, Alan Keyes, Al Sharpton, Barack Obama, and Herman Cain.

African Americans have also gained political power due to their strategic location and growing numbers and because they represent a key segment of the Democratic electorate. By 2008, African Americans made up 12.8 percent of the U.S. population and 13 percent of the U.S. electorate. The vast majority of African Americans are Christian (85 percent), more than 78 percent are Protestant, and 59 percent affiliate with historic black denominations. There are also black Catholics and members of the Nation of Islam and orthodox Sunni Islam. A growing number attend Euro-American or multiracial Evangelical, Pentecostal, Baptist, or mainline Protestant denominations and nondenominational megachurches. They tend to be theologically and morally conservative and oppose abortion and homosexual marriage.[49]

African Americans remained faithful to the party of Lincoln until the early twentieth century. However, FDR received 76 percent of the black vote in 1936, and African Americans have given 85 percent or more of their vote to the Democratic

FIGURE 1.15 Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968). Courtesy: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs, LC-USZ62-126559.

presidential candidate since mid-century.[50] Clinton received 97 percent of the black vote in 1996, and Gore 91 percent in 2000. Bush took 12 percent of the black vote in 2004 versus Kerry's 85 percent.[51]

Latinos

Although U.S. Latinos trace their roots to Spanish settlements in St. Augustine, Florida (1565); San Juan Pueblo near Santa Fe, New Mexico (1598); El Paso, Texas (1690); and San Diego, California (1769), Mexicans did not receive U.S. citizenship until after the acquisition of the Southwest via the United States–Mexico War (1846–1848) and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848). Puerto Rico was acquired from Spain in 1898.

Latinos were led by largely secular civil rights organizations such as the LULAC, the GI Forum, the National Council for La Raza, and the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund. In the 1960s, César Chávez, Reies López Tijerina, Rodolfo González, Dolores Huerta, and José Ángel Gutiérrez became leaders in the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement and drew on their Catholic, Protestant, and Pentecostal traditions to fight for social justice and migrant workers and to reclaim Hispano lands from the U.S. Government in New Mexico. Since then, a growing number of Latinos such as Henry Cisneros, Bill Richardson, and Marco Rubio have run for political office.[52]

FIGURE 1.16 César Chávez breaks a 25-day religious fast as leader of the migrant farmworkers' union by having communion with Robert Kennedy in Delano, California, on March 10, 1968. Photographer: Richard Darby. Courtesy: Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Photo ID, 234.

Latinos historically voted Republican for many of the same reasons as African Americans. They began voting Democrat largely because of FDR's New Deal policies. This Democratic commitment was solidified via Robert Kennedy's "Viva Kennedy" clubs, taking communion with César Chávez, and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and Voting and Civil Right acts, which also benefitted Latinos. It was also due to the perception that Democrats were more racially tolerant and willing to fight on behalf of the poor and working class. Yet Latinos do not vote as a block. Mexican Americans tend to vote Democrat, whereas Cubans tend to vote Republican because from 1960 to 1962 President Dwight Eisenhower partnered with faith-based Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish organizations to welcome Cuban exiles into the United States.[53]

The U.S. Latino population increased from 22.4 million in 1990 to 48 million in 2008, not including 8 to 12 million undocumented immigrants and 4 million people living in Puerto Rico, all of whom hold U.S. citizenship. More than 93 percent of U.S. Latinos self-identify as Christian. The vast majority are Catholic (66 percent or 30 million) or Protestant and other Christian (28 percent or 12.2 million). More than 84 percent of Latino Protestants are Evangelical and/or born-again, and 64 percent are Pentecostal/Charismatic. Furthermore, 22 percent of all Latino Roman Catholics are born-again and Charismatic, and 43 percent of all Latino mainline Protestants self-reported being born-again. President George W. Bush leveraged

Latino religiosity to increase the Republican Latino vote from 19 percent under Dole in 1996 to 35 percent in 2000 and 40 to 45 percent in 2004. Obama was aware of this trend and made a concerted effort to reach Latinos through the faith community, which helped him win 67 percent of the Latino vote in 2008. The importance of Latinos will only continue to grow because the population topped 50 million (16 percent of the U.S. population) in 2010 and is projected by the U.S. Census to grow to 133 million people or 29 percent of the United States by 2050.[54]

Asian Americans

Asians arrived in large numbers in the nineteenth century to work in the gold fields during the California Gold Rush in 1849 and on the railroads and in other sectors of the service industry. They have faced discrimination and anti-Asian laws aimed at excluding or making it difficult to immigrate to the United States, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the U.S.–Japanese Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907. During World War II, many Japanese were incarcerated at relocation camps in the Southwest such as Manzanar. After the Korean and Vietnam wars and key amendments in 1965 to the Immigration and Nationality Act abolished the national origins quotas that restricted Asians and other groups, their population has steadily increased. Some argue that Asian Americans are now the fastest growing (3.2%) racial-ethnic minority group in the United States.

In 2008, there were 14.9 million Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States, 5 million of whom lived in California. They currently make up 5 percent of the U.S. population. The largest numbers are Chinese (3.6 million), Filipino (2.9 million), and South Asians, largely Indian/Pakistani (2.7 million), Vietnamese (1.6 million), Korean (1.5 million), and Japanese (1.2 million).[55]

As many are not U.S. citizens, they made up only 2 percent of the electorate in 2008. Unlike Latinos and Blacks, they represent a wide range of religious traditions or none at all. A majority of Asian Americans are Christian (52%), but many are also Buddhist (16%), Hindu (7%), other (3%), Muslim (2%), and none/no religious preference (20%). When analyzed by country of origin, Filipinos (89%) and Koreans (85%) are the most Christian and Chinese and Japanese the least. Most Asian American religious practitioners self-identify as Democrat, including 34 percent of Buddhists and 50 percent of Asian American Protestants. Today, anywhere from 10 percent (other Christians) to 30 percent (Muslims) of Asian Americans self-identify as politically independent.[56]

Scholars argue that the high levels of secularism and immigration explain why Asian American political participation is lower than some other voting constituencies. For example, 37 percent of those who profess no religion also did not identify with a political party—something true for only 10 percent of nonbelievers nationwide.[57]

Although Asian Americans tend to vote Democrat in the aggregate, political party identity and voting patterns differ significantly when broken down by ethnic

or national subgroups: 43 percent of Asian Americans said they were Democrat rather than Republican (17 percent), and 68 percent voted for Gore over Bush (32 percent). Pan-ethnic Asian identity was positively linked to greater levels of political activism, although not more uniquely to the Democrats than Republicans.[58]

Finally, scholars have found a strong positive relationship between pan-Asian identity and political interest and integration. The dominance of a single religion among some Asian American ethnic groups is a double-edged sword because it makes coalition building across ethnicities and national origin difficult. Such coalition building is also undercut by the high percentage of Asian Americans who self-identify as secular or as having no religion. Whether a refinement of this category would change these outcomes is uncertain. That a number of Asian ethnic groups practice primarily one religious tradition also creates internal cohesion that may allow them to exercise targeted and strategic political influence. In 2004, they gave Kerry 56 percent of their vote compared to 44 percent for Bush.[59]

Barack Obama's Upbringing, Conversion, and 2008 Election Results

Obama's Upbringing

In the 2008 election, these shifts in America played to Barack Obama's personal strengths and journey. He was born in Hawaii in 1961 to a Kenyan father and a Euro-American mother who divorced in 1964. Obama's mother subsequently married an Indonesian of Muslim heritage, Lolo Soetoro. In 1967, they moved to Jakarta, Indonesia, where Obama attended public and private Catholic schools from the age of six to age ten. In 1971, he returned to Hawaii, where he lived with his mother's parents and attended Punahou School. He next attended Occidental College in California before transferring to Columbia University, where he graduated with a BA degree in political science in 1983. He worked as a faith-based community organizer for the Developing Communities Project from 1985 to 1988 on Chicago's South Side.[60]

In 1988, he attended Harvard Law School, graduating summa cum laude in 1991. Afterward, he moved to Chicago, where he served as an adjunct lecturer (1992–1996) and then as senior lecturer (1996–2004) in constitutional law at the University of Chicago Law School. In Chicago in 1989, he not only found a job and the Christian faith but a bright Princeton University graduate named Michelle Robinson, whom he married in 1992.[61]

In the 1990s, he directed the Illinois Project Vote, which registered 150,000 African Americans to vote. He also joined a law firm that specialized in civil rights and economic development. He then ran for political office and served as an Illinois state senator from 1997 to 2004 and as a U.S. Senator from 2004 to 2008. He was one of the few bright spots for Democrats on an otherwise gloomy election night 2004, when Bush beat John Kerry for a second term.[62]

Obama's Spiritual Journey at Trinity United Church of Christ

Obama grew up something of a skeptic and reflected the general outlook of his mother and father, neither of whom practiced organized religion. To establish strong ties with the black community, he decided to work as a community organizer in Chicago. This put him in direct contact with African American churches and their social service ministries, as they often served as the center of the black community. This connection and Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright's support provided him with a sense of purpose and a new spiritual life. He began attending Wright's Trinity United Church of Christ and, after a period of reflection, decided to "walk down the aisle," kneel beneath the cross, and convert to Christianity. Although his personal doubts and questions remained, he finally felt at home and at peace with his decision and new family.[63]

Harnessing the Power of Religion in the 2008 Election

In 2004, an ordained African American Pentecostal minister named Joshua DuBois offered to help Obama mobilize the religious community on behalf of his senate campaign. Obama appointed him director of his campaign outreach to the faith community for both his senate and presidential campaigns. On February 10, 2007, Obama announced his candidacy for the Presidency and won the Democratic nomination, defeating Hillary Clinton. Obama realized that Bush had more effectively mobilized the faith communities and determined that he would not allow that to happen again. He knew that Bush had proven a more capable strategist than Kerry, especially with Evangelicals and Catholics. He sought to transform his liabilities into assets by targeting religious and racial-ethnic minorities across the religious spectrum.[64]

This book explores how Obama won over or increased his margin of support over John Kerry's 2004 levels among the ten largest voting constituencies in the American electorate: Catholics, Evangelicals, Mainline Protestants, Jews, Muslims, African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, women, and seculars. It also analyzes how they voted by religious tradition and practice, moral issues, race, gender, age/generation and, in some cases, education, income, marital and immigration status, and citizenship. Contrary to the argument that the 2008 Election signaled the end or erosion of religion in American political life, this book argues just the opposite—but that this time religion benefitted Democrats. Smidt and others argue they employed four strategies to win over and mobilize religious voters: posturing (providing a group with attention, recognition, solidarity, or identification via a position or event important to a particular group's religious identity); signaling (using rhetoric or symbols to resonate with religious voters); framing (promoting an issue through a particular faith-friendly perspective); and directly mobilizing activists to mobilize religious voters in their communities.[65]

Contrary to the argument that Obama did not close the God Gap in 2008, this book argues that he did help close it with some conservative/traditional mainline Protestants, women, and especially non-white racial-ethnic minorities, who made up 27 percent of the electorate (only 23 percent in 2004). Obama persuaded a majority of Latino Protestant Evangelicals who voted for Bush in 2004 to vote for himself in 2008, and he also took 67 percent of the aggregate racial-ethnic Evangelical vote. He also helped narrow this God Gap even among groups he lost such as white Evangelicals and white Catholics (though he won the aggregate Catholic vote) by increasing his shares of their vote over Kerry's 2004 shares.[66]

Obama's Religious and Racial-Ethnic Minority Democratic Pluralism

Why was Obama able to help close the God Gap with some groups? Because he promoted a new kind of religious and racial-ethnic minority Democratic pluralism that welcomed pro-choice and pro-life Democrats *and* Republicans disillusioned with the Bush administration's handling of the budget crisis and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Obama recognized that although the American electorate is, in the words of Bill Clinton, "operationally progressive," it is nonetheless "philosophically moderate conservative."[67] He learned this the hard way in the bitterly contested Illinois Senate race against Alan Keyes, a staunch pro-life African-American Catholic with a PhD from Harvard. Keyes and his followers criticized what they deemed Obama's questionable faith by calling him everything from a leftist to an apostate.[68] Although he took 70 percent of the vote, that experience was an excellent warm-up for 2008 and prepared Obama to steer a middle path between strict separationist and accommodationist positions on church-state relations. This was clear in his decision to support abortion but not gay marriage—at least publicly. He ran his campaign much as American revivalists run evangelistic crusades, complete with revivalists (Obama), special music, sing-along songs/slogans, colorful banners, and calls for conversion and commitment and to spread and proselytize Obama's message of a better society. Indeed, for many disillusioned Democrats—and not a few bumper stickers—Obama was "the One" they had been waiting for—at least so Axelrod and his handlers promoted.

Obama's Vision for Church-State Partnerships

Taking his cue from FDR and Bill Clinton, Obama drove home his strong support of church-state partnerships. In *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream* (2006), he reclaimed the organic link between faith and social change by arguing, "Religious sentiment and religious activism have sparked some of our most powerful political movements, from abolition to civil rights to the prairie populism of William Jennings Bryan."[69] Indeed, he said, "I was drawn to the power of the African American religious tradition to spur social change…[and] the biblical call

to feed the hungry and clothe the naked… I was able to see faith as more than just a comfort to the weary or a hedge against death; rather, it was an active, palpable agent in the world."[70] Obama echoed President Washington's conviction that religion played an indispensible role in shaping "national morality" and divine hope for all Americans, especially the poor and marginalized.

Obama's African American and Evangelical-Style Conversion Narrative

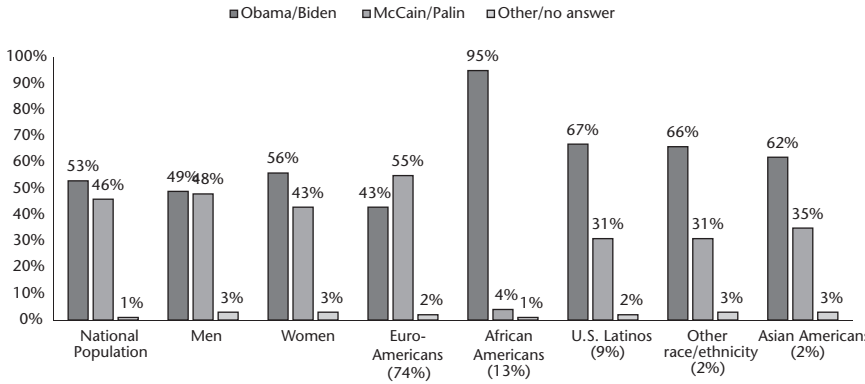
One of the most compelling reasons why religious people were comfortable with Obama was because of his spiritual journey. Although many accused him of talking about his Christian faith only to counter charges that he was a Muslim, to distance himself from Rev. Jeremiah Wright, and to show that he was not an anti-Evangelical liberal Protestant, in fact he began speaking about it long before the campaign began. He won over many by proclaiming: "I let Jesus Christ into my life" and "learned that my sins could be redeemed" and that Christ could "set me on the path to eternal salvation."[71]

Indeed, this Evangelical-style conversion narrative and Catholic and mainline Protestant rhetoric about social justice tapped into the growing emphasis on "righteousness and justice" across the nation among Evangelical, Catholic, and Latino faith leaders. This message enabled him to chart a new religious path for the Democratic Party and the nation.[72]

2008 Election Results

On November 4, 2008, Obama increased his support among almost every religious and racial-ethnic group by 4 to 14 points over Kerry's 2004 support: Latinos (+14 percent), Catholics (+9 percent), Seculars/No Religion/Nones (+8 percent), African Americans (+7 percent), Asian Americans (+6 percent), Evangelicals (+5 percent), women (+5 percent), Jews (+4 percent), and Euro-Americans (+2 percent). Although Obama lost the *white* Evangelical and Catholic votes, he still increased his Evangelical support to one in four and won the aggregate Catholic vote because of the large number of racial-ethnic Catholics. In short, race mattered.[73]

Exactly how Obama won over these voting constituencies and sought to reclaim the American dream is the subject of this book. It argues that Obama charted a new Democratic religious and racial-ethnic pluralism in the Party that brought religious moderates and socially progressive but theologically and morally conservative voters together into a new Democratic coalition. Although this is not the first time that a Democratic candidate reached out to religious and racial-ethnic minorities, the difference with Obama is that he made religion in general and religious and racial-ethnic minority pluralism in particular a



Note: Findings are from the 2008 National Election Poll (NEP). Number in parentheses is the share of the 2008 electorate.

FIGURE 1.17 National 2008 election by gender and race/ethnicity

key component of his backdoor strategy and actually hired a large number of minorities and religious clergy from the very groups he sought to win over to serve as campaign advisors and then turned them loose to win over their co-ethnics and co-religionists—something they did with varying degrees of success. The most surprising example of this strategy was his risky decision to ask Pentecostal minister Rev. Joshua DuBois to run his entire 2008 Campaign outreach to all faith communities.

Obama knew that the vast majority of rank-and-file working-class *Democrats* from the South, Southwest (especially Latinos), Florida (Latinos, elderly, Jewish), and the rust-belt states were people of faith; most were Christian—Protestant or Catholic. If they wanted a moderate candidate who would respect their faith, fight for social justice, and keep the church and state separate to protect the church's prophetic voice, Obama was their man. However, Obama also knew that he would not be able to win them over without a fight and without outperforming McCain with each of them. Although the odds were stacked against this junior senator from Illinois, this book shows how he used his new Democratic racial-ethnic pluralism message to overcome his obstacles and transform the Democratic Party's hitherto religious liabilities into strategic assets to win the 2008 Election, a topic to which we now turn.

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2

MAINLINE PROTESTANTS AND THE 2008 ELECTION

Laura R. Olson, Adam L. Warber, and Kevin R. den Dulk

> Every religion has some political opinion linked to it by affinity. The spirit of man, left to follow its bend, will regulate political society and the City of God in a uniform fashion; it will, if I dare put it so, seek to harmonize earth with heaven.[1]
>
> —Alexis de Tocqueville

Tocqueville's words are even more relevant today than they were in the early nineteenth century. Religion has come to exert an essential role in both electoral politics and public policy debates. In twenty-first–century American politics, the notion of "religion" suggests much more than beliefs about the divine or the institutions that teach and perpetuate such belief systems. Religion is also a potent—and multifaceted—tool of symbolic politics utilized by candidates, elected officials, political parties, and interest groups as a means of stimulating public support.[2]

The most recent chapter in the story of religion's impact on American politics has found the Republican Party at a distinct advantage due to its successful long-term strategy of reaching out to people of faith. Ronald Reagan pioneered the use of religious appeals to attract the support of American citizens, strategically conveying the connections that he perceived between his traditionalist positions on socio-moral issues and some of the central tenets of Christianity. Reagan mobilized conservative Americans of faith—a constituency that was ripe for the picking in 1980—and paved the way for the GOP to continue mobilizing voters through religious appeals.[3] By the dawn of the twenty-first century, a majority of Americans had come to perceive the Republican Party as substantially "friendlier to religion" than the Democratic Party.[4] Republican candidates had become adept at portraying themselves as in touch

with the values and priorities of people of faith—and in painting Democrats as effete coastal elites.[5]

After George W. Bush was reelected to the presidency in 2004, the Democratic Party was forced to come to grips with the fact that it was facing a serious "religion problem." In 2004, the Bush campaign placed the mobilization of conservative "values voters" at the top of its priority list, and the strategy worked: President Bush outpaced John Kerry by wide margins among Americans who attended religious services frequently (including many of Kerry's fellow Catholics).[6] Consequently, during their long race for the 2008 Democratic nomination, both Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton employed staff members specifically charged with religious outreach. During the general election campaign, Obama's staff worked conscientiously to reach out to people of faith—especially younger Christians, and there is some evidence that this strategy was fruitful.[7] Today, the Democrats' task is to find ways of reaching out to Americans who prioritize religion in their lives without being perceived as disingenuous. We contend that they cannot succeed in this effort without attracting substantial support from mainline Protestants.

The objective of this chapter is to analyze the ways in which mainline Protestant religious identity was relevant to the outcome of the 2008 presidential election. Although the mainline Protestant tradition has been facing numeric decline—and a concomitant drop in its social and political relevance—we will argue that mainline Protestant voters played a critical role in electing Barack Obama to the presidency. Moreover, we will note that the 2008 election results highlight a longer-term trend in mainline Protestant partisanship that is leading this once-solidly Republican constituency in a much more Democratic direction.

The Backdrop: Mainline Protestantism in the United States

Protestantism in the United States comes in three principal varieties: mainline, evangelical, and African American. Approximately 18 percent of all Americans are mainline Protestants.[8] These individuals belong to a religious tradition that is especially distinctive for its strong adherence to hierarchical denominationalism. In fact, all mainline Protestants belong to eight denominations—none are nondenominational. Theologically, mainline Protestants embrace multiple interpretations of scripture and encourage plural points of view on contentious issues. Theirs is not a rigid, unyielding approach to scripture. Instead, mainline Protestantism is described quite accurately by the tag line of a series of television advertisements run by The United Methodist Church since 2003, in which it advertises itself as a denomination of "open hearts, open minds, [and] open doors." Rationalism tends to prevail over dogma in most mainline Protestant contexts. Mainline Protestants also are known for their ecumenism, meaning they respect religious perspectives other than their own as equally valid and meritorious.

Mainline Protestantism and American Politics

Mainline Protestantism has been characterized historically not only by its longstanding emphasis on social justice but by an equally long tradition of Republican voting preferences and party identification. A majority of mainline Protestant laity opposed President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal coalition in part because Catholics were squarely on FDR's side.[9] During the New Deal era, many mainline Protestant leaders were staunchly anti-Catholic—despite their frequent articulation of concern for the disadvantaged and disempowered. This anti-Catholic sentiment fell away by the mid-twentieth century once Catholics assimilated and as more mainline leaders extended the Social Gospel legacy of equality and tolerance to include their Catholic neighbors.[10]

As the twentieth century progressed, mainline Protestant politics grew increasingly liberal, in part because mainline seminaries had become hotbeds of theological and political liberalism.[11] Soon scholars were identifying and evaluating a "new breed" of leftist mainline clergy.[12] In the 1950s and 1960s, thousands of mainline Protestants (many of them clergy) linked arms with African Americans in their struggle for justice and equality in the South and beyond.[13] This activism was anchored by a widely accepted image of Jesus Christ as a champion of social justice for the poor and disadvantaged. Civil rights activism gave way to antiwar protests by mainline clergy in the 1970s,[14] which led later to organized, if less effective, activism against the Reagan administration's foreign policy in Latin America.[15]

For the most part, however, the mainline laity remained solidly behind the Republican Party throughout the twentieth century; as socioeconomic elites, they favored the Republicans' economic conservatism.[16] In fact, a much touted clergy-laity political "gap" emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, frustrating many liberal mainline clergy who found their rank-and-file congregation members markedly conservative—particularly on economic issues—and unwilling to be mobilized for social justice-oriented political causes.[17] It is worth noting that many of the most liberal mainline Protestants retained their Republican Party identification as a result of their experiences with the Civil Rights movement. In the South, mainline activists encountered a white power structure—run by the Democratic Party—that they found repellent. The Democratic Party was hardly a "liberal" entity in the South in the civil rights era, and some mainline Protestants rejected it on these grounds.

Ever since the protest era drew to a close in the 1980s, mainline Protestants have been less visible nationally than they were in previous generations. They do, however, maintain an active role in American politics.[18] For decades, each mainline denomination has staffed a national lobbying office in Washington, DC.[19] A range of para-church organizations and independent interest groups, such as the National Council of Churches, also speak on behalf of many mainline Protestants. At the state and local levels, mainline Protestant political and social outreach focuses primarily on confronting poverty and injustice.[20] Here we see the continuing legacy of the

Social Gospel, with its emphasis on the high ideals of laboring for social justice, being actively involved in the secular society, and addressing the problems of the less fortunate in a Christ-like manner.

By the 1990s, mainline Protestant laity had begun to drift toward the Democratic Party.[21] No longer were most mainline Protestants loyal Republicans; instead, they were looking more and more like a swing constituency. This partisan shift probably began as a theological and ideological reaction against the strong alliance between the Republican Party and evangelical Protestants that took root in the 1980s. Mainline Protestants—particularly those in younger generations—seem to have begun reevaluating their ties to the Republican Party as it began placing heavier emphasis on socio-moral issues. Economic conservatism is consistent with mainline Protestants' relative socioeconomic advantage, but socio-moral conservatism runs afoul of mainline Protestantism's uneasiness with drawing strict lines defining "right" and "wrong." Today, mainline Protestant voters are in flux. Although they have not recently been targeted as a unified voting bloc, they remain a highly significant electoral force despite their declining numbers. For example, in 2008, 71 percent of mainline Protestants voted in the presidential election, compared to 62 percent of the general public; they comprised 19.5 percent of the 2008 voting electorate.[22] Furthermore, their seeming rejection of the GOP's recent insistence on socio–moral conservatism makes them a "gettable" target for a Democratic Party that is hungry for the opportunity to create inroads among religious Americans.

Mainline Protestants and Presidential Elections

There are many lessons to be learned about mainline Protestants—and about recent trends in religion and politics in broader terms—through an examination of mainline Protestant presidential vote choice. The analysis that follows examines mainline Protestants' recent voting behavior with special emphasis on the 2008 presidential election. We analyze American National Election Studies survey data for 1996, 2000, and 2004[23] and data from the Henry Institute National Survey on Religion and Public Life for 2008.[24] In each case, we excluded all respondents who did not identify themselves as members of a mainline denomination.[25]

Table 2.1 presents mainline Protestants' party identification and presidential vote choice in 1996, 2000, 2004, and 2008. We see that mainline Protestant partisanship has not changed substantially since 1996; with some slight variation, mainline Protestants break down roughly into three equally sized partisan groups: a third are Republican, a third Democrat, and a third Independent (a category that includes party leaners). This pattern in partisanship is indicative of mainline Protestants' status as a swing constituency, as is their presidential vote choice since 1996. In 1996 and 2000, mainline Protestants were closely divided at the polls. The margins were slightly larger in the subsequent two elections, with mainline Protestants following the general electoral trend toward George W. Bush in 2004 and Barack

TABLE 2.1 Mainline Protestant party identification and presidential vote choice, 1996-2008

	Party Identification			*Presidential vote choice*	
Election year	*Republican*	*Democrat*	*Independent*	*Republican candidate*	*Democratic candidate*
1996	38.5% (125)	29.2% (95)	32.3% (105)	45.8% (108)	49.2% (116)
2000	33.3% (84)	34.5% (87)	32.1% (81)	47.3% (96)	52.7% (107)
2004	36.9% (62)	31.0% (52)	32.1% (54)	57.0% (65)	43.0% (49)
2008	33.2% (80)	31.5% (76)	35.3% (85)	45.7% (96)	54.3% (114)

Note: The measure of "independent" for party identification also includes party leaners. Data comes from the 1996, 2000, and 2004 American National Election Studies (ANES) and the 2008 Henry Institute National Survey on Religion and Public Life.

TABLE 2.2 Vote choice of mainline Protestants by religious attendance, 2008

	Mainline Protestants	
	Obama	*McCain*
Weekly	44.4% (32)	55.6% (40)
Monthly/yearly	59.2% (61)	40.8% (42)
Never	58.8% (20)	41.2% (14)

Data comes from the 2008 Henry Institute National Survey on Religion and Public Life.

Obama in 2008. It is noteworthy that though Obama clearly received a majority of mainline Protestants' votes in 2008, there was no corresponding movement toward Democratic partisanship in general.

However, Table 2.1 masks important variations *within* mainline Protestantism that have electoral consequences. Studies show that since the early 1990s, those Americans who are most involved and invested in religious communities tend to be more politically conservative than less religiously committed Americans.[26] People who prioritize religious participation are exposed to a systematically different set of experiences and information than those who are less involved in religious life. For example, frequent attendance at worship services continually exposes one to specialized information from clergy and fellow worshipers; individuals who do not attend services simply are not exposed to such information. This information often is politically relevant, both because it reflects the teachings of the religious tradition to which one belongs and because being involved in religious activities simply sets one apart—both psychologically and socially—from people who do not participate.[27]

Table 2.2 clearly illustrates the relationship between worship attendance—the best single measure of the importance of religion in one's life[28]—and the 2008

FIGURE 2.1 Most American Presidents have attended and affiliated with Mainline Protestant Churches. President George H.W. Bush attended St. Ann's Episcopal Church, in Kennebunkport, Maine. He is pictured next to the Rt. Rev. John Maury Allin and the Evangelical leader Billy Graham, a family friend, on September 2, 1990. Courtesy: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, P15460-05.

presidential vote choice. Mainline Protestants who attended worship services weekly actually preferred John McCain by a substantial margin, unlike their counterparts who attended less frequently. This relationship between frequent worship attendance and Republican candidate preference is not new: Mainline Protestants who attended worship services most often also preferred George W. Bush, Bob Dole, and George H. W. Bush.[29]

Nor is the relationship between worship attendance and Republican vote choice by any means the sole province of mainline Protestants; this gap appears across religious traditions.[30] It is nevertheless indicative of a significant cleavage between the most committed mainline Protestants and those who are even slightly less involved in religious life. Notice the absence of any significant difference in presidential vote choice between mainline Protestants who attended anywhere from monthly to yearly and those who *never* attended. Based on these data, the real political split within mainline Protestantism comes between those who attend worship services most frequently and everyone else.

Worship attendance is merely one blunt instrument for measuring the salience of religion in one's life. In Table 2.3, we present the relationship between a more sophisticated measure of religious commitment and belief and the 2008 presidential vote choice. Instead of using worship attendance alone, we combine several measures

TABLE 2.3 Vote choice of mainline Protestants by religious traditionalism, 2008

	Mainline Protestants	
	Obama	*McCain*
Traditionalist	34.0% (16)	65.9% (31)
Centrist	61.3% (65)	38.6% (41)
Modernist	57.0% (32)	43.0% (24)

Data comes from the 2008 Henry Institute National Survey on Religion and Public Life.

of religious *behavior* together with measures of the nature of one's religious *beliefs* to create a dimension termed religious *traditionalism*. Religious traditionalism is, as political scientist John Green puts it, "the extent to which individuals partake of the practices and doctrines that help define the religious tradition to which they belong."[31] We place mainline Protestants into three broad categories of religious traditionalism: traditionalists, centrists, and modernists. Members of mainline Protestant denominations fit into the traditionalist category if they report strong orthodox beliefs (for example, a high view of the authority and historical accuracy of the Bible), high levels of religious engagement (for example, regular worship attendance), and a commitment to preserving those beliefs and practices in the midst of social change. In contrast, a modernist will tend to have heterodox beliefs (for example, a belief that biblical authority is not necessarily superior to that of other sacred texts), lower levels of religious engagement, and openness to adapting religious beliefs and practices to modern sensibilities. Centrists fall somewhere between these two poles.

Table 2.3 makes the political distinctiveness of traditionalists, who account for roughly a fourth of all mainline Protestants,[32] especially plain. Nearly two-thirds voted for McCain, a figure that is even starker in contrast with the high levels of support for Obama in evidence among centrist and modernist mainline Protestants. Clearly, there is a substantive difference between the politics of traditionalist mainline Protestants on the one hand and centrist and modernist mainline Protestants on the other. In practical terms, however, there simply are not enough traditionalist mainline Protestants to have much of an impact on electoral outcomes. Notice in Table 2.3 that the raw number of traditionalist mainline Protestants pales in comparison to the numbers in the centrist and modernist camps; another recent study determined that traditionalist mainline Protestants comprise just 4.3 percent of the U.S. population.[33] It is a basic fact of mainline Protestant theology and practice that different degrees of adherence are well tolerated. One does not have to accept every teaching or participate in every religious ritual to call oneself legitimately a mainline Protestant. Moreover, there are reasons to believe that the most conservative mainline Protestants have been the ones most likely to leave their denominations in recent years as heated debates have erupted around theological interpretation and socio-moral issues.[34]

TABLE 2.4 Vote choice of mainline Protestants by election issues, 2008

	Vote choice of mainline Protestants who agree/ strongly agree with statement	
	Obama	*McCain*
"Strict rules to protect the environment are necessary even if they cost jobs or result in higher prices."	64.8% (46)	35.2% (25)
"The government should spend more to fight hunger and poverty even if it means higher taxes on the *middle class*."	67.8% (61)	32.2% (29)
"There are too many immigrants in the U.S. today."	36.8% (28)	63.2% (48)
"Free trade is good for the economy even if it means the loss of some U.S. jobs."	40.0% (50)	60.0% (75)
"Gays and lesbians should be permitted to marry legally."	67.1% (55)	32.9% (27)
"Abortion should be legal and solely up to the woman to decide."	74.5% (41)	25.5% (14)

Data comes from the 2008 Henry Institute National Survey on Religion and Public Life.

In this context, how did the 2008 mainline Protestant presidential vote choice break down around views on key public policy issues of the day? As we would expect in the population at large, there are clear differences among mainline Protestants on the basis of such issues. Table 2.4 displays mainline Protestants' vote choice in relation to attitudes about the environment, fighting hunger and poverty, immigration, free trade, gay rights, and abortion. Mainline Protestants who expressed a desire for stricter environmental protection and greater government initiatives to combat hunger and poverty favored Obama by nearly a two-to-one margin. Slightly smaller percentages of those who disagreed that "there are too many immigrants in the U.S. today" and proponents of free trade supported Obama as well. Differences in attitudes about socio-moral issues created even larger electoral cleavages among mainline Protestants: three-fourths of mainline Protestant supporters of abortion rights voted for Obama, as did two-thirds who favor gay rights.

Table 2.5 offers a look at the relationships between mainline Protestants' 2008 presidential vote choice and several key demographic variables. To what extent were generation, education, income, marital status, gender, and region related to mainline Protestants' preference at the polls?

First, the high level of support Obama earned from younger voters in general is reflected among mainline Protestants as well. Though our data show that Obama prevailed across the four generational groups (Millennials, Generation X, the Baby Boomers, and the Silent/Greatest Generation), his largest margin of support by far

TABLE 2.5 Vote choice of mainline Protestants by demographic information, 2008

	Mainline Protestants	
	Obama	*%McCain*
Generation		
Millennial (after 1976)	60.5% (23)	39.5% (15)
Generation X (1961–1976)	50.6% (42)	49.4% (41)
Boomers (1943–1960)	52.6% (40)	47.4 % (36)
Silent/Greatest (before 1943)	51.2% (22)	48.8 % (21)
Education		
Less than high school	69.2% (9)	30.8 % (4)
High school graduate	50.0% (28)	50.0% (28)
Some college	47.2% (33)	52.8% (37)
College graduate	61.1% (22)	38.9% (14)
Postgraduate	63.6% (21)	36.4% (12)
Income (household)		
Less than $40,000	44.2% (23)	55.8% (29)
$40,000 – $79,999	66.3 % (55)	33.7% (28)
$80,000 – $125,000	55.0% (22)	45.0% (18)
Greater than $125,000	33.3% (5)	66.7% (10)
Marital/gender status		
Single female	51.7% (15)	48.3% (14)
Single male	57.1% (20)	42.9% (15)
Married female	64.4% (47)	35.6% (26)
Married male	43.1% (31)	56.9% (41)
Region		
Northeast	61.5% (16)	38.5% (10)
Midwest	50.6% (42)	49.4% (41)
South	54.7% (35)	45.3% (29)
West	56.8% (21)	43.2% (16)

Data comes from the 2008 Henry Institute National Survey on Religion and Public Life

came among those in the Millennial generation (those born after 1976), who would have been no older than 32 years of age on Election Day 2008. A previous study of recent mainline Protestant voting behavior did not reflect any significant political differences among various generations of mainline Protestants,[35] so Obama's powerful appeal to younger mainline Protestants might be indicative of a new trend.

Second, education and income have long been gold-standard predictors of presidential vote choice.[36] Historically, mainline Protestants have enjoyed higher socioeconomic status than other religious groups,[37] and Table 2.5 provides little evidence to the contrary (for example, just 13 mainline Protestants in our sample had less than a high school education). Previous research shows that in many recent elections, higher levels of education were associated with support for Republican presidential candidates among mainline Protestants.[38] In 2008, however, greater educational attainment is associated with greater support for Obama. The relationship between income and vote choice is less transparent, although it is safe to conclude from the table that if we define "the middle class" in very broad terms (those earning between $40,000 and $125,000 annually), Obama did well among middle-class mainline Protestants.

Third, gender and marital status were related to mainline Protestants' presidential vote choice in 2008 as well. A well-established gender gap has characterized American politics on the whole since the presidential election of 1980,[39] but the evidence is mixed as to the existence of a mainline Protestant gender gap in voting behavior.[40] In 1996, Bill Clinton did well among "soccer moms"—many of whom were mainline Protestant suburbanites—but this pattern does not hold across presidential elections.[41] Because George W. Bush was an unexpectedly attractive candidate to many women voters (including some within mainline Protestantism) in 2004, some scholars speculated about the demise of the gender gap.[42] However, Obama clearly carried mainline Protestant women in 2008—particularly (and significantly) married women. Had Al Gore or John Kerry been able to attract more support from married women, especially within a swing constituency like mainline Protestants, he might have won the presidency, particularly since they make up nearly 20 percent of the American electorate.[43]

Finally, we turn to the question of whether the region in which one lives might differentiate mainline Protestant political orientations. Table 2.5 shows that the Northeast was Obama's greatest regional bastion of support, followed by the West, the South, and the Midwest. Obama prevailed in all four regions, but the relatively small size of his margin in the Midwest is indicative of three significant facts. First, as the table makes clear, we find the largest concentration of mainline Protestants in the Midwest; by definition, there should be more political diversity in larger groups. Second, the mainline denominations most heavily represented in the Midwest (the Disciples of Christ, the ELCA, and the Reformed Church in America) are slightly more moderate theologically and socially than the mainline denominations that tend to prevail in the Northeast (the Episcopal Church and the UCC).[44] Third, perhaps the largest concentration of swing states in 2008 were located in the Midwest: Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, and Wisconsin were all considered to be battlegrounds at least for a while during the general election campaign.

In short, President Obama—himself a mainline Protestant—earned a slim but meaningful margin of support among mainline Protestants in 2008, carrying

54.3 percent of the mainline vote (see Table 2.1). Had Obama not been able to benefit from—and draw upon—the gradual yet unmistakable movement of mainline Protestants away from the Republicanism of their forebears, his path to victory would have been more difficult, if not impossible, as they comprise nearly 20 percent of the voting electorate.[45] As the Republican Party succeeded in mobilizing many of the most religiously adherent Americans to support their candidates and policies, they did lose some support among mainline Protestants.[46] This is so in part because the socio-moral issues emphasized by the Republicans are not cornerstones of mainline Protestant political theology, with its prioritization of social justice over moral reform.[47] It is also true in part because mainline Protestants tend to be skeptical, independent thinkers, emphasizing reason over strict religious belief and openly questioning some of the teachings of their clergy. Accordingly, it stands to reason that many mainline Protestants would exercise skepticism about cultural narratives, suggesting that conservatism follows naturally from religious commitment. Another reason for the apparent mainline Protestant drift away from the Republican Party might be rooted in the numeric decline of mainline denominations. Just as conservatives left mainline churches in the early twentieth century as a result of mainline Protestantism's accommodation to modernity, so too are today's conservatives bolting from the mainline because of their denominations' increasing progressivism around contentious theological and social issues. This phenomenon would mean, almost by definition, that those who remain in mainline Protestant churches are moderate to liberal.

Mainline Protestantism and Politics in the Obama Era

When Barack Obama was elected to the presidency, many religious progressives—including many mainline Protestant leaders and laity—rejoiced. For eight years, and arguably since Ronald Reagan was first elected in 1980, the American religious left had little access to the channels of power in Washington. The Republicans' thoroughgoing success in mobilizing conservative people of faith created the impression in many Americans' minds not only that the Democratic Party was unfriendly to religion but that religion and politics by definition meant religion and *conservative* politics.[48] As Martin Marty, the preeminent living historian of American religion, observed in 1999—*before* George W. Bush was elected: "[perhaps] the religious left flies stealthily low and gets unnoticed. Or [maybe] there is not much of a religious left about which to speak."[49] As a result, religious progressives were overjoyed when Obama was elected, especially after he and his campaign worked to emphasize the relevance of faith to his policy priorities.

In June 2006, more than six months before he announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination, Obama drew upon his background as a faith-based community organizer and made a highly touted speech at a conference organized by Call to Renewal, an organization run by the most visible spokesperson of religious progressivism in the United States today, Rev. Jim Wallis. Although

Wallis himself is an evangelical, Call to Renewal (and its companion organization, Sojourners) is not exclusively tied to any particular religious tradition. In his Call to Renewal speech, Obama stated his view that the Democratic Party had mistakenly abandoned religion:

> Conservative leaders have been...reminding evangelical Christians that Democrats disrespect their values and dislike their Church, while suggesting to the rest of the country that religious Americans care only about issues like abortion and gay marriage; school prayer and intelligent design. Democrats, for the most part, have taken the bait. At best, we may try to avoid the conversation about religious values altogether, fearful of offending anyone… At worst, there are some liberals who dismiss religion in the public square... Over the long haul, I think we make a mistake when we fail to acknowledge the power of faith…in the lives of the American people—and I think it's time that we join a serious debate about how to reconcile faith with our modern, pluralistic democracy.[50]

The warm reception Obama received from the Call to Renewal audience—and subsequently from a range of high-profile political analysts including *Washington Post* columnist E. J. Dionne—enhanced both his popularity and his claim to speak for religious progressives.[51] Though Obama later had to fight off intense public criticism of his former pastor, Rev. Jeremiah Wright of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, he maintained a high level of mutual respect and trust with religious progressives, including many mainline Protestant leaders. In part, Obama attempted to downplay the political fallout created by the Rev. Wright controversy by instead emphasizing broad religious themes, many of which resonated with mainline Protestants. For example, in a May, 2008 interview with *Newsweek*'s editor-at-large, Evan Thomas, Obama stated:

> My relationship with Reverend Wright and the church…and the fact that it became such an enormous issue, took me somewhat by surprise. Not entirely, but somewhat, first of all because it's a very conventional black church in a lot of ways. This whole thing about black liberation theology and black value system etc., etc., that's an overlay of some names that are given to very traditional aspects of the black church—preaching the social gospel, emphasizing your obligations to the community. Nine out of ten of Rev. Wright's sermons would stir no controversy whatsoever. He was not a public figure in Chicago beyond the church; he was not somebody like Jesse or Farrakhan who sought the public eye. He wasn't considered a firebrand. The church ministries are similar to church ministries all across the country. The membership is indistinguishable from the membership of most black churches.[52]

As striking evidence of the positive reaction among mainline Protestant leaders, consider two prayers offered at the Washington National Cathedral on the occasion of Obama's inauguration. The first is a prayer of thanksgiving offered by the National Cathedral. Notice the emphasis in the first stanza on "justice and equity for all" in the context of the dawning of a "new day of hope," an allusion to the Obama campaign's frequent emphasis on the theme of hope. Justice and egalitarianism, of course, are the *sine qua non* of the Social Gospel legacy of mainline Protestantism. The second stanza features a call for peace, and the third stanza emphasizes "our marvelous diversity." Peace and inclusiveness, too, are cornerstones of mainline Protestantism's political theology. Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, offered the second prayer at the close of Obama's presidential inaugural prayer service, which was held at the National Cathedral. Significantly, Jefferts Schori adapts Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address on the occasion of the inauguration of the first African American president (Lincoln's words are in italics): "*With malice toward none, with charity for all,* may we…achieve *a just and lasting peace*." Lincoln, of course, spoke of an end to the Civil War. Jefferts Schori might be referencing peace in general, both at home and abroad, and she might also be referring to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Mainline Protestants generally are supportive of peace in both contexts. She continues by invoking both the Social Gospel legacy and Obama's campaign theme of hope in her request that God "light in us the fire of justice…[and] go forth renewed and committed to make hope a reality."

> A Prayer Offered by Washington National Cathedral in Celebration of the Inauguration of the Forty-Fourth President of the United States
>
> At the dawn of this new day of hope we pray to you, O God, to keep this nation under your care: May it prosper with a renewed promise of justice and equity for all.
>
> Guide our president, Barack Obama, and all the leaders of this nation, that they may direct our country in the way of righteousness. May your love and spirit give rise to peace in this land and beyond.
>
> Grant us, the people of this land drawn from all corners of the world, the unity to embrace our marvelous diversity. May your grace inspire the whole human family to live together in harmony.
>
> On this day of new beginnings, light in us a fire for justice, a readiness to forgive, a determination to seek what is right and good, and a commitment to make hope a reality.
>
> *Amen.*
>
> *Source:* http://www.nationalcathedral.org/pdfs/inauguralPrayer2009.pdf>(2009).

Closing Prayer, Fifty-Sixth Presidential Inaugural Prayer Service, Washington National Cathedral, January 21, 2009. Delivered by The Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church

On this radiant day we give thanks to you, O God, for the freedom to gather united in prayer.

Strengthen and sustain Barack, our President, that in the days to come he may lead your people with confidence and compassion.

Grant patience and perseverance to the people of this Nation. With malice toward none, with charity for all, may we strive to finish the work you have given us to do that we may achieve a just and lasting peace.

In this time of new beginnings, new ventures, and new visions, light in us the fire of justice, and the passion for forgiveness. Give us the strength to hold fast to what is good that we may go forth renewed and committed to make hope a reality.

Amen.

Drawn in part from Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1865.
Source: http://www.nationalcathedral.org/pdfs/inaugural090121.pdf (2009).

Religious progressives did more than just pray after Obama was inaugurated. Many offered him advice or admonishments or simply expressed their hopes and well wishes for his new administration. The National Council of Churches (NCC), a para-church organization that encompasses mainline Protestants and a variety of other ecumenically minded American religious traditions, offered one such statement in the days before Obama's inauguration. The NCC statement presents a veritable laundry list of policy priorities cherished by religious progressives, from broad calls for "social reconstruction at home and the restoration of honor abroad" to specific mentions of issues such as education, health care, and torture. They claim Obama as "one of us" due to his longstanding membership in "a distinctive, well-informed congregation of the United Church of Christ," thus sidestepping all of the controversy that swirled during the campaign around Rev. Wright's more inflammatory rhetoric. They refer to the NCC's own Social Creed, a document adopted in 2008 that calls for domestic reform and international peace and diplomacy. There are thinly veiled attacks on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq—"the deliberate violence of 'wars of choice'"—and a piqued mention of "the Bible's warnings about empire." The NCC statement ends with a reference to one of mainline Protestantism's most significant twentieth-century theologians, Reinhold Niebuhr. Clearly, the NCC statement is intended not only to set forth policy priorities for the Obama administration but to reassert the NCC's own legitimacy as a political mouthpiece for mainline Protestants and other religious progressives.

FIGURE 2.2 First Lady Michelle Obama, President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, and Dr. Jill Biden pray at the 56th Presidential Inaugural Prayer Service at the Washington National Cathedral, which is affiliated with and led by the Episcopal Church of America. Courtesy: Official Department of Defense photo by Staff Sgt. Adelita C. Mead.

Vision, Virtue, and Vocation: The "Mainline Church" Message to President Obama, Rev. Christian Iosso, Rev. Michael Kinnamon

Everyone, it seems, has a message for the new President. They are full of wish lists and urgent demands and heartfelt dreams for our nation.

The churches have a message for President Obama, too.

Mr. President, we have thought about what needs to be done, and have been working at it throughout the history of these United States. And we are ready to help you achieve great deeds that will bring positive change for the people of America and the world.

We Protestant and Orthodox churches—the ecumenical faith community—know how serious is the need for social reconstruction at home and the restoration of honor abroad. We have long worked in the soup kitchens, sheltered the homeless, pushed for environmental justice, defended public education, volunteered overseas, and steadily opposed the war with Iraq, despite the weaknesses of media and congressional oversight.

As the President-elect knows, we do not scorn "community organizers;" our urban congregations have helped fund them and have given them a base from which to work. We visit the prisons and know how bad they are; we are

regular caregivers in the hospital wards and emergency rooms. We know first-hand how many are without health insurance.

While many look at who has a role on the platform at the ceremony, we look at the commitments of the man being inaugurated: long a member of a distinctive, well-informed congregation of the United Church of Christ (church of the historic pilgrims as well as contemporary prophets), he is one of us.

The social vision of the ecumenical churches is summed up in the "Social Creed for the 21st Century," unanimously adopted by the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches of Christ one hundred years after the first "social creed" was adopted by the churches in 1908.

That earlier social message addressed the challenges of its day—industrialization and proposed measures like a "living wage," the abolition of child labor, and prototypes of Social Security and Workers' Compensation. When Franklin Roosevelt addressed the churches' annual assembly in 1933 he thanked them for their biblically based social teachings. The text from Jesus that he quoted is in the 2008 version of the Social Creed and articulates the purpose of the Creed, and of faith's prayer for society: "that all may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

The 2008 Social Creed, speaking to our day, addresses the challenges of globalization and sustainability and the context of war and inequality, which is both morally and politically debilitating. While the new Social Creed lists 20 specific reform measures under three theologically-grounded headings, it is the overall vision that is key: "a vision of a society that shares more and consumes less, seeks compassion over suspicion and equality over domination, and finds security in joined hands rather than massed arms."

The churches do not split personal and public virtue. Individual character and morality are crucial, but they depend on the character of churches and other nurturing institutions. Action for social justice — the "social activism" some critics scorn — is grounded in communities that lift up God first.

While solidly patriotic, our churches have resisted the kind of arrogant nationalism that confuses the flag and the cross. We remember the Bible's warnings about empire, that only a people who humble themselves shall be exalted.

Especially now in economic life, the churches stand for "grace over greed," and recognize the need for burdens to be fairly shared, and modern forms of usury to be regulated out of existence. This means affirming progressive taxation as well as adequate social welfare: a society is judged by how it treats its most vulnerable members.

The vocation of the church is different from that of the nation, but even a wiser and humbler United States still has a great vocation as "one nation" *among others* "under God." The Social Creed summarizes countless church statements that address our nation's current challenges: "multilateral diplomacy rather

than unilateral force, the abolition of torture, …strengthening …the United Nations and the rule of international law." The ecumenical churches helped write the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 60 years ago and have never forgotten its principles of "full civil, political, and economic rights for women and men of all races."

The churches do not affirm diplomacy without responsible power, but can never tolerate the deliberate violence of "wars of choice" and the economies distorted by them. We have seen the high tech and housing bubbles burst but it is now time for the military-industrial bubble to burst: we advocate "nuclear disarmament and redirection of military spending to more peaceful and productive uses."

The churches alone cannot create a moral consensus for the redirection of America, but if President Obama harkens to his personal experience, he knows that the solid, unheralded work of the churches will be there, in support of more courageous action than most observers outside the faith community can imagine. In Reinhold Niebuhr's famous words, we pray that we may now have a nation with the "courage to change" for the better.

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Source: http://www.ncccusa.org/news/090115iossokinnamon.html (2009).

It remains to be seen whether mainline Protestant denominations, leaders, laity, and related organizations will support President Obama through the entirety of his first term in office and in his 2012 reelection campaign. However, it is safe to say that though not all mainline Protestants voted for Obama, many more did so than would ever have been the case a generation earlier. It is also a fair assessment that on the whole, institutional mainline Protestantism was pleased at Obama's election. First, his election provided a powerful witness to the long–term effectiveness of the Civil Rights Movement, in which so many mainline Protestants fought for justice alongside African Americans. Second, Obama's own background as a mainline Protestant community organizer surely endeared him to many fellow mainline progressives. Third, the election of a Democrat to the White House signaled the possibility that the connection between religion and politics in the United States might be open to more progressive interpretations than has been the case for several decades.

Conclusion

Mainline Protestants are both a key swing constituency in American presidential politics and a community in political flux. Although, as Corwin E. Smidt points

out in his chapter on Evangelicals (Chapter 3), they are not mobilized as a cohesive voting block like their evangelical counterparts, mainline Protestants nevertheless are a constituency of substantial strategic consequence. There are fewer of them than in generations past, but they participate in politics more than members of most other religious groups because of their comparatively high socioeconomic status and their longstanding commitment to civic engagement. Despite evidence of the broader worship attendance in contemporary American politics—traditionalist mainline voters maintain their ties to the Republican Party—the majority of mainline voters seem increasingly to be favoring the Democrats. And though conservatism has been the dominant manifestation of the relationship between religion and politics in recent decades, there is some reason to believe that religious progressivism is showing some signs of life. Mainline Protestants could become an essential component of a resurgent religious left movement in the United States.

Studying mainline Protestants' approach to presidential politics is substantively important in its own right, but it also sheds light on several broader lessons about religion and politics in America. First, increasingly it has become clear that religious affiliation by itself is not an especially good predictor of partisanship or political behavior.[53] Until the post–World War II era, it was reasonably safe to assume that white Protestants of all varieties would vote for Republican candidates, whereas Catholics, Jews, and African American Protestants would vote for Democrats.[54] In recent times, however, a loss of collective identity has left large religious groups, particularly mainline Protestants and Catholics, open to mobilization by either party.[55]

Strategically speaking, this suggests a second trend, which is that moderate-to-progressive mainline Protestants are now ripe for mobilization by Democratic candidates who can connect their policy goals with mainline political theology, especially the legacy of the Social Gospel movement.[56] Our data analysis suggests that a sizable number of mainline Protestants have grown disenchanted with the Republican Party, perhaps due to its emphasis on morality politics. Such individuals could become an important constituency for the Democratic Party if the Democrats can make progress in their efforts to reach out to religious Americans. President Obama is by no means the only Democrat to confront the "religion problem." Many other Democratic candidates have been touting their religious beliefs in successful runs for high office, such as U.S. Senators Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Robert Casey, Jr. (D-Pennsylvania). As one more bit of evidence that the Democratic Party is working to overcome its religion problem, consider Obama's choice of former Virginia Governor Tim Kaine to chair the Democratic National Committee in 2009. Kaine is well known for being a deeply committed person of faith who often speaks openly about the relationship between his Catholic beliefs and his politics. The occupant of the White House undoubtedly will continue to use religious strategies to great advantage, both for electoral gain and policy influence, in the twenty-first century and beyond.

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3

EVANGELICALS AND THE 2008 ELECTION

Corwin E. Smidt

As the 2008 presidential campaign began, a growing number of analysts and political strategists pondered whether the enthusiasm of evangelical Protestants for Republican candidates and their policies might be waning.[1] After all, much had changed since the initial Bush victory in the presidential election of 2000. The Christian Right had become more fragmented and less significant politically. A new generation of evangelical voters appeared to be emerging, one apparently more environmentally sensitive and less reflexively Republican in their preferences. And, finally, the ongoing conflict in Iraq, rising oil prices, and a stagnant economy had largely pushed social issues off the table.

Moreover, other important developments related to the Democratic Party and its candidates had also occurred. After Bush's reelection in 2004, the Democratic Party sought to contest the perception that the Republican Party was the party of religious people while it was the party of secularists.[2] And, in the wake of its success in the 2006 congressional elections, the Democratic Party and many of its candidates had become more open to religious voters. In fact, some political strategists even suggested that Democrats should openly court evangelical voters.[3] And, during the 2008 presidential campaign, Barack Obama employed religious rhetoric and a religious strategy in seeking to win the nomination of his party, whereas John McCain seemed more reticent to use religious language and focused more on social conservatives than on religious groups in his campaign effort.

Did the candidacy and election of Obama, however, substantially change the way in which evangelical Protestants cast their ballots for president or shift their partisan loyalties? Given the changes already cited and the fact that the election was seemingly fought largely over economic rather than social issues, one might anticipate a substantial decline in Republican fortunes among evangelicals. To what

extent, then, did the election reveal any major political shifts among evangelical Protestants?

This chapter examines the relationship between evangelical Protestants and Barack Obama in the 2008 election to ascertain what changes were evident in the relationship between evangelical Protestant voters and the Democratic Party and its standard bearer between the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections. First, the chapter discusses certain important changes and continuities between the 2004 and 2008 presidential election as a context for expecting change in the way in which evangelical Protestants might relate to the Obama candidacy in the 2008 presidential election. Second, it examines the changing relationship between evangelical leaders and party politics and the overtures of the Democratic Party toward evangelicals (and other religious voters more generally), and whether any differences in this relationship may reflect a "changing of the guard" in the leadership of evangelicals in public life. Third, the chapter analyzes the voting patterns of evangelical voters on Election Day to ascertain to what extent any possible changes at the leadership level may also be reflected at the mass level. In the end, given the evidence examined, one is led to conclude that there appears to be no substantial evidence that any important shift of evangelical loyalties toward the Democratic Party and Barack Obama transpired in the last election.

The 2008 Election in Perspective

The political context of the 2008 election was both markedly different from, yet in many ways similar to, the one held four years earlier. Certain factors suggested that evangelical Protestants (along with many other Americans) might cast their 2008 ballots far differently from how they had done in 2004.

First, the 2008 election marked the first time since 1952 that neither of the two major party nominees would be a sitting president or vice-president. Given their office, sitting presidents seeking reelection (and, to a less extent, vice-presidents seeking election to be president) have many weapons at their disposal, including access to free and extensive media coverage. Neither McCain nor Obama, however, enjoyed that kind of access in 2008.

Second, the combination of two characteristics of American politics—the two-party system and popular distrust of any concentration of power over time—affected the electoral context differently in 2008 than in 2004. After eight years of one-party control of the presidency, there were many more voters in 2008 than in 2004 who were inclined to believe that it is "time for a change" in party control of the presidency—a sentiment working to the advantage of the Democratic nominee.

Third, partly as a result of a discontent with policy in Iraq, an important shift in political power occurred after the 2006 congressional election, as Democrats won control of both houses of Congress. This change suggested that the partisan tide in national politics may have turned toward to the Democrats and that the Democratic

Party was well poised for victory in the 2008 presidential election. At a minimum, this Democratic success in the 2006 congressional election buoyed Democratic enthusiasm for, and confidence about, the 2008 presidential election.

Fourth, not only had attitudes toward Iraq shifted but the salience of certain other political issues had waxed and waned between the 2004 and 2008 elections. Of particular significance was the fact that issues related to the economy were much more important in the 2008 than the 2004 campaign—issues that typically have worked to the advantage of the Democratic Party. The general lack of any real growth in family income over the past several years, the rapid rise in oil prices that transpired in the summer months of 2007 (with gas surging to more than $4 a gallon), along with an increasing number of home foreclosures in the summer of 2008, ultimately led to a crisis in financial markets and economic meltdown less than two months prior to the election. Though "hot-button" social issues (e.g., abortion and gay marriage) were still present, their relative salience diminished substantially as economic issues moved front and center in the 2008 presidential election.

Finally, the leadership and organizational apparatus of the Christian Right, a political movement of religious conservatives long linked to support for the GOP, was clearly in disarray and decline. During the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections, many analysts still commented on the strength, if not the vitality, of the Christian Right, and President Bush's reelection in 2004 contributed to an ongoing discussion of its relative strength as well. The Christian Coalition, however, historically the most powerful of the grassroots organizations associated with the Christian Right, had largely disappeared from the national political scene by the 2008 presidential election. Thus, organizationally at least, the Christian Right was seemingly a shell of its former self that had operated in elections from the 1980s through the 1990s during the Ronald Reagan to Bill Clinton eras. And, in addition to this organizational shift, many of the old leaders of the Christian Right, such as Jerry Falwell and D. James Kennedy, had passed away prior to the 2008 election, further creating a kind of "leadership vacuum" within the Christian Right.

Conversely, no presidential election begins totally afresh. Every presidential election is marked by a great deal of continuity with the previous election, and the 2008 presidential election was no exception. First, though the nominees of the major parties may change, the major parties that compete in presidential elections remain the same (with a few historical exceptions). The Democratic and Republican parties have long dominated the American political system. Some activists may be attracted to the party because of a particular candidate, but most activists who work for and contribute money to each party do so at least partly because of the party's historic policy emphases. Thus, the activist core of each party makes it difficult for either party to shift substantially in its policy positions. Given this continuity, voters are also largely familiar with the general emphases, priorities, and inclinations of both parties. As a result, neither major party is likely to shift substantially in their policy emphases and goals from one election to the next.

FIGURE 3.1 Ronald Reagan speaks at the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) National Convention in Orlando, Florida, March 8, 1983. Courtesy: Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, C13322-21A.

Second, though candidates may change, the partisan identifications of voters are typically stable across a four-year period. Research suggests that partisan identifications tend to be formed relatively early in life and that, once formed, they become resistant to change. Consequently, the percentages of Democrats and Republicans in the electorate are not likely to shift much over a short period of time. Moreover, many voters cast their ballots in line with their partisan identifications, and thus the percentage of votes that the candidate of either major party is likely to receive falls within a certain range based, in part, on the distribution of these partisan identifications within the electorate.

Third, over time, social, economic, and religious groups develop ties to each of the political parties. Though not every member of these particular groups necessarily votes according to these ties, a sufficient number do so. As a result, conventional wisdom tends to associate such groups with supporting some particular party. For example, members of labor unions and Jews are linked to the Democratic Party, whereas business leaders and evangelical Protestants are linked to the Republican Party. Given the presence of these relatively long-standing ties between groups and parties, the partisan proclivities of these social groups are not likely to change markedly from one election to the next.

These elements of continuity, among others,[4] suggest that changes in the level of support for the two candidates between the 2004 and 2008 election were probably not as substantial as some analysts may have suggested. To be sure, the election was a landmark in many ways. Yet, as we shall see, Obama's victory was not necessarily

the result of certain dramatic changes within the electorate. The old political adage is that "elections are won at the margins," suggesting that a candidate does not have to substantially change the proportion of votes won among members of some social group to dramatically affect the outcome of an election. A shift of even 4 percent among women voters, for example, could result in a 2-percentage national shift in support for the two major candidates—moving a 51-percent to 49-percent result in favor of one party to a 51-percent to 49-percent result in favor of the opposing party. Thus, even with this substantial continuity from one election to the next, the results of elections can nevertheless change dramatically.

Evangelical Leaders and Presidential Candidates

Evangelical Protestantism is a fairly broad and large religious tradition, comprising about one-fourth of the American people,[5] when classification as an evangelical Protestant is based on denominational affiliation.[6] Social groups (including religious groups) are defined by patterns of interaction and affiliation—not by uniformity of thought and action or even claims of particular religious experiences (e.g., the claim of being "born-again"). Thus, evangelicals may characteristically hold certain religious beliefs, but they do not uniformly do so. Just as not all Catholics think alike in terms of church doctrine or engage in identical patterns of religious behavior, the same is true with regard to evangelical Protestants. Thus, though a substantial proportion of evangelicals may hold certain common attitudes or exhibit certain common behavior, there is diversity within the ranks of evangelical Protestantism in terms of religious—and political—thinking and behavior.

Changing Evangelical Leadership and Thought

Several important changes transpired within evangelical Protestantism between 2004 and 2008 that created greater opportunities for Democratic success among evangelical Protestants in the 2008 presidential election. First, among evangelical elites, the "old guard" was passing from the scene, and a new, and younger, array of evangelical elites was coming to the fore. Not only had Jerry Falwell and James Kennedy died since the 2004 presidential election but other such leaders were becoming less relevant due to increasing age and perhaps declining popularity (e.g., Pat Robertson and James Dobson). Younger evangelical leaders were emerging—leaders with different political agendas and far weaker ties to the Republican Party—including such pastors of mega-churches as Rich Warren, Bill Hybels, and Joel Hunter.

Moreover, a substantial number of books was released prior to, and during, the 2008 presidential campaign that addressed the religious legitimacy of certain political options—particularly whether Christian principles and values necessarily predicated Christians casting their ballots for Republican Party candidates. These

FIGURE 3.2. President George W. Bush meets with Rick Warren at the Saddleback Community Church Forum on Global Health, Lake Forest, CA, December 1, 2008. Courtesy: Saddleback Community Church, Lake Forest, CA.

books, of course, had been in the works for some time, prepared by writers across different religious faiths in full anticipation of the 2008 campaign year. These books included: Catholic E. J. Dionne's *Souled Out* (January 2008); evangelical Protestant Tony Campolo's *Red Letter Christians: A Citizen's Guide to Faith and Politics* (February 2008); and, mainline Protestant Amy Sullivan's *The Party Faithful* (February 2008). However, an important part of this new and growing conversation was occurring among evangelicals, one that seemed for many commentators to have the marks of a generational shift in evangelical political attitudes. In addition to Campolo's book, a new tone was being set by such best sellers as Brian McLaren's *Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope* (October 2007); David Gushee's *The Future of Faith in American Politics: The Public Witness of the Evangelical Center* (January 2008); Ron Sider's *The Scandal of Evangelical Politics: Why are Christians Missing the Chance to Really Change the World?* (February 2008); and Jim Wallis's *The Great Awakening*: *Reviving Faith and Politics in a Post-Religious Right America* (2008). Evangelical writers produced many texts besides these, and some were notable in their attacks on the Religious Right per se.[7]

Third, the national media was seemingly giving greater attention to voices within evangelical Protestantism that were emphasizing issues of social justice. Perhaps this attention was partly a function of the just-noted recently published books by evangelical writers suggesting a generational shift; perhaps it was partially a function of Wallis's efforts in convening the annual Call to Renewal, an interfaith effort to address poverty, at which the candidates for the nomination of the Democratic Party spoke in the summer of 2007 (see below); or perhaps it was a function of the

FIGURE 3.3 Jim Wallis. Courtesy: Jim Wallis and Sojourner's magazine.

media's choosing to cover the growing evidence of Americans seeking change in the forthcoming presidential election. Regardless of the particular reason(s), however, there was growing media attention to the diversity of thought found within the ranks of American evangelicals.

Changes within the Democratic Party

However, in addition to changes within evangelical Protestantism that created greater openings for the Democratic Party to establish more positive, and productive, relationships with American evangelicals, the Democratic Party too was shifting its approach to religious voters—including evangelical Protestants. On the basis of lessons learned in the 2006 congressional elections, the Democratic Party wanted to signal to evangelical voters (and religious voters more generally) that the party was not going to ignore them.

Consequently, the three major Democratic candidates (Clinton, Edwards, and Obama) were showcased in early June 2007 in a special candidate forum on the campus of Washington, DC's George Washington University that was particularly targeted toward religious issues and the religious background of the candidates. The forum was sponsored by the evangelical group Sojourners and broadcast by CNN. In an evening that the *Washington Post* called "unprecedented," all three candidates described how faith influenced both their politics and their personal lives.[8] Answering questions from the moderator and a group of ministers and religious leaders familiar to Democratic politics, none of the candidates offered answers that strayed from

party orthodoxy on key issues. There were, however, also questions and answers on the rare territory— for Democrats— of the candidates' religious beliefs and practices.

The generally favorable coverage of the event led to expectations that Democrats would use more religious language and symbolism in their pursuit of moderate evangelical, Catholic, and mainline Protestant voters.[9] A favorable summary of the event in *The Christian Century*, the flagship magazine of mainline Protestantism, stated that the old stereotype of Democrats being hostile to religious faith and uncomfortable in front of evangelicals was being "chisel(ed) away," with candidates giving "Americans a glimpse of their soulful side."[10] The *Christian Science Monitor* noted the irony: In 2008, the "top Democratic contenders may be more comfortable fielding questions on religion than today's top Republicans."[11]

Moreover, each of the major Democratic candidates for president (Clinton, Edwards, and Obama) focused on religious outreach in their campaigns; each had hired religious outreach advisors early in their campaigns. And each of these presidential aspirants also had public claims to a sincere faith.[12] From the start of his campaign, the Obama organization had a religious affairs team, and during the primary campaign, it conducted weekly conference calls with prominent African-American religious leaders, evangelical and values voter-activists, Catholic religious leaders, and Jewish religious and civic leaders.[13]

In addition, after he had secured the nomination of his party, Barack Obama convened a group of influential Christian leaders in early June to help shape the kind of conversations he wished to have with voters during the general election campaign. The group was not gathered with an eye toward possible endorsement; indeed, not all the participants were Obama supporters.[14] Instead, it was assembled to hear their critique of the Obama campaign in his quest for independent, middle-class, and GOP votes and to "let the group know that his door was open—in the campaign and in the White House, if he is elected."[15]

The invited guests numbered about thirty people. Though it included mainline Protestant, black Protestant, and Roman Catholic leaders from across the country, "the majority of attendees were white evangelical leaders."[16] Included in the group were Cameron Strang, the founder and editor of *Relevant*, the Christian magazine and related web site that caters to young evangelicals; Max Lucado, a pastor and best-selling author of numerous Christian books; and, Paul Corts, the president of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities.[17]

Regardless of whether Obama won new political converts, the event was a clear opportunity for the campaign to signal its desire to reach beyond the conventional Democratic blocs. After the meeting, Joshua DuBois, Obama's chief campaign staffer for religious affairs, issued a statement that noted explicitly the participation of several "prominent evangelicals," though not singling out any other religious tradition. He also suggested that attendees not only discussed policy issues but "came together in conversation and prayer."[18] The point of the meeting, he suggested, was "outreach," not necessarily political mobilization.[19]

FIGURE 3.4 Senator Barack Obama meets with Rick Warren at the Saddleback Community Church Civil Forum on the Presidency, Lake Forest, CA, August 16, 2008. Courtesy: Saddleback Community Church, Lake Forest, CA

Finally, another opportunity for Obama to court evangelicals was the appearance of both presumptive nominees at the Saddleback Community Church Civil Forum on the Presidency held at the Saddleback Church, in Lake Forest, California, on August 16. The Rev. Rick Warren, pastor of the 22,000 member evangelical megachurch and author of the best-selling book *The Purpose-Driven Life*, accomplished what had never been done previously in any American presidential election—to get the two candidates on the same stage prior to their national party conventions. Not only was it the first joint appearance of the two presumptive nominees, it constituted only one of four joint appearances of the campaign—the others being the three debates that were planned for later in the fall. Both candidates had been friends with Warren prior to their run for president, and he invited them to participate in Saddleback's Civil Forum on the presidency.[20] Moreover, the forum, which was heavily covered by national media, represented the first time that an event featuring the two major presidential contenders had been moderated by a pastor or held in a church.

Voting Patterns of Evangelical Protestants in the 2004 and 2008 Elections

Of course, whatever the relationship may be evident between evangelical leaders and the Democratic Party, or its candidates, does not necessary indicate just how evangelical voters at the mass level choose to cast their ballots on Election Day.

TABLE 3.1 Presidential vote in 2004 and 2008 by religious tradition

	Reported vote (%)					
	2004			*2008*		
Religious Tradition	*Bush*	*Kerry*	*Total*	*McCain*	*Obama*	*Total*
Evangelical Protestants	77	23	100	76	24	100
Mainline Protestants	51	49	100	46	54	100
Hispanic Protestants	63	37	100	57	43	100
Black Protestants	17	83	100	7	93	100
Hispanic Catholics	31	69	100	31	69	100
Non-Hispanic Catholics	53	47	100	53	47	100
Jews	27	73	100	29	71	100
Other faiths	45	55	100	41	59	100
Unaffiliated	28	72	100	24	76	100

Sources: 2004: Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics: 2008: Henry Institute National Survey on Religion and Public Life

Though prominent figures within any religious body or faith tradition may seek to lead those within its ranks, there is no guarantee that parishioners will necessarily choose to follow. Consequently, it remains to be seen how evangelical voters decided to cast their ballots in the 2008 presidential election.

The data analyzed here are drawn from the Henry Institute National Survey on Religion and Public Life.[21] This study is a national survey of 3,002 Americans conducted April 8 to May 10, 2008, with respondents then re-interviewed after the presidential election (November 5 to 25, 2008), with the post-election sample consisting of 1,515 respondents. Data for the 2004 presidential election are drawn from the Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics conducted by the University of Akron Survey Research Center. The pre-election survey was conducted during February and March of 2004 (N = 4,000), with a post-election "call-back" conducted in the weeks immediately after the presidential election. Though the two surveys were conducted by different organizations, the religion questions contained in the two surveys were largely identical in nature, with both surveys containing a rich variety of religious affiliation, religious belief, and religious behavior questions.

Table 3.1 reports the two-party presidential vote in 2008 across the religious landscape, and it provides the comparable two-party vote for each religious category in 2004. These data reveal several important patterns. First, there continue to be important differences in voting choice based on patterns of affiliation with the major religious traditions. Compare, for example, the McCain vote among all evangelical Protestants, mainline Protestants, black Protestants, and the religiously unaffiliated. Even using these broad categories of religious tradition helps explain

differences in presidential voting, revealing the continuing political importance of religious belonging.

In short, the basic patterns in religious voting found in the 2004 election continued to hold true in the 2008 election. Though some religious groups exhibited double-digit changes in their pattern of partisan voting (namely, black Protestants), what is particularly striking is the relative similarity in levels of party voting found across the two elections. In other words, there was far more continuity than change in the patterns—and magnitude—of religious voting from Bush's victory in 2004 to Obama's in 2008.[22] Thus, despite Obama's convincing victory, the results of the election reveal little evidence of any fundamental shift in the structure of faith-based voting.

In addition, one is also struck by the relative lack of swing constituencies (i.e., religious groups in which candidates won by small margins). There was much speculation during the campaign about whether Obama would attract a substantial increase in support among evangelical Protestants, partly because his campaign along with his progressive allies had targeted them and partly because McCain struggled for their support. Obama did best with the modernist segment of those affiliated with the evangelical Protestant tradition (data not shown in Table 3.1), but the national size of the modernist component of the evangelical Protestants tradition is much smaller than its traditionalist component (1.7 percent versus 14.8 percent—data not shown in Table 3.1). As a result, evangelical Protestants in the end supported McCain at virtually the same level they supported Bush in 2004.

The closest division in the two-party vote occurred among mainline Protestants and non-Hispanic Catholics. Fifty-four percent of mainliners cast their ballots for Obama, whereas 47 percent of non-Hispanics Catholics did so. However, even when evangelical Protestants, mainline Protestants, and Roman Catholics are examined in terms of religious traditionalism, only centrist Catholics exhibit a partisan division of fewer than 10 percentage points. All other religious groups examined in Table 3.1 reveal one candidate or the other capturing the votes of that religious community by more than 10 percentage points.

Clearly, the foundation of Obama's victory was the strong support he received from racial, ethnic, and religious minorities. Not surprisingly, as Cooper and Smidt point out in Chapter 9, Obama did very well among black Protestants—obtaining more than 90 percent of their votes. However, he also did very well among Hispanic Catholics, Jews, and the religiously unaffiliated, securing 70 percent or more of their vote totals. Obama also did well in the composite category of other religious faiths, with nearly three-fifths of their votes. McCain, conversely, did well among evangelical Protestants as a whole but particularly so among traditionalists. Centrist evangelicals and Catholics were also generally supportive of McCain.[23] All other religious groups voted for Obama.

In the pre-election component of the Henry Institute National Survey on Religion and Public Life, respondents were asked whether they had voted in the

2004 election and, if so, for whom they had voted. When one compares the 2004 reported votes of the respondents with their reported votes in 2008, one finds that only 12 percent of the respondents were "swing voters" (i.e., those who voted for the candidate of one political party in the previous election and for the candidate of the opposing party in the subsequent election; data not shown in Table 3.1). In other words, nearly 9 of 10 voters' presidential vote in 2008 reflected their partisan choice in 2004. Again, these patterns substantiate the adage that "elections are won at the margins," as the subterranean changes in voting patterns do not shift markedly from one election to the next.

Overall, 7.3 percent of those voting in both elections shifted from Bush to Obama, whereas 4.3 percent reported that they had moved from Kerry to McCain (data not shown in Table 3.1). Among those who voted for a different party in 2008 than in 2004, economic issues were overwhelmingly cited as the most important issue of the campaign. And, among all voters who ranked economic issues as most important, more than 10 percent swung from Bush to Obama (whereas fewer than 3 percent swung from Kerry to McCain). Conversely, fewer than 5 percent who cited foreign policy issues or social issues as the most important swung their votes—and only among those who cited foreign policy issues did the swing from Kerry to McCain (3.6 percent) exceed the swing from Bush to Obama (1.8 percent; data not shown in Table 3.1). Clearly, the issue priorities of voters were crucial in affecting whether voters' partisan choice shifted from 2004 to 2008.

The Religious Composition of the Presidential Vote Coalition

Another way in which to assess the relationship between religion and the contemporary American party system is to examine the voting coalitions supporting each of the presidential candidates. When analyzed on this basis, the contribution that a group makes to a political party's electoral coalition is determined by three factors: the size of the group in the electorate, its turnout rate, and the proportion of the vote that it gives to that party.[24]

Considered in this way, evangelical Protestants have clearly grown in importance over the past several decades in terms of their proportionate contribution to the total votes received by Republican presidential candidates, whereas their proportionate contribution to the Democratic presidential coalition of votes has declined somewhat.[25] Between 1972 and 1980, evangelical Protestants contributed a little more than one-fifth (22 percent) of all the votes cast for GOP presidential candidates, but that proportion increased to a little more than one-fourth during the elections of the 1980s and then rose to nearly one-third in the 1992–2000 period. Thus, evangelical Protestants have grown steadily in terms of their political importance to the GOP, though, given their overall size in the population, they still contribute an important number of votes to the Democratic candidate for president.

TABLE 3.2 The religious composition of the presidential vote coalition

	2004 (%)			*2008 (%)*		
Religious constituency	*Bush voters*	*Kerry voters*	*All voters*	*McCain voters*	*Obama voters*	*All voters*
Evangelical Protestants	39.8	12.1	26.0	39.8	10.4	23.7
Mainline Protestants	18.4	18.9	18.6	17.9	17.6	17.7
Hispanic Protestants	2.6	1.6	2.1	2.2	1.4	1.8
Black Protestants	2.6	13.2	7.7	1.5	16.6	9.7
Hispanic Catholics	1.9	4.4	3.2	5.4	9.4	7.5
Non-Hispanic Catholics	19.8	18.5	19.2	18.8	14.0	16.2
Jews	1.4	4.1	2.7	0.7	1.6	1.2
Other faiths	5.3	5.6	5.5	5.2	6.4	5.8
Unaffiliated	8.1	21.7	14.9	8.6	22.7	16.3
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Sources: 2004 Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics; 2008 Henry Institute National Survey of Religion and Public Life

Table 3.2 examines the relative contribution of each religious tradition to the total votes cast for McCain and Obama in 2008 and compares such results with the proportion each gave to the Bush and Kerry vote totals in 2004. The table details the religious components of the party coalitions in 2008, with each column adding up to 100 percent in terms of the religious sources of each presidential candidate's vote. Again, a pattern of continuity between the 2004 and 2008 presidential campaigns is evident.

The Democratic Coalition

As the first viable African American presidential candidate, Obama's candidacy had special appeal to religious minorities—particularly African Americans. With his candidacy, black Protestants turned out in larger numbers in 2008—jumping from 7.8 percent of the electorate in 2004 to 9.7 percent of the electorate in 2008. These black Protestants voted overwhelmingly for Obama and, as a consequence, black Protestants accounted for nearly 17 percent of all Obama's ballots. Together, Hispanic Catholics, Jews, and those of other religious faiths comprised 14.5 of the electorate in 2008, providing another 17 percent of all Obama's votes but only 11 percent of McCain's. Though the Democratic preference of these particular religious minorities was not something new in 2008, it was larger and more cohesive than in previous elections. Taken together, these religious minorities provided more than one-third of all ballots cast for Obama.

Another important component of the Obama coalition was the votes cast by the religiously unaffiliated. In fact, the religiously unaffiliated have been the primary source of presidential votes for the Democrats, providing the single largest source of vote for Kerry in 2004 (21.7 percent) and for Obama in 2008 (22.7 percent).

Overall, the percentage of the total votes that the Democratic presidential candidates received from those affiliated with the three largest Christian traditions (i.e., evangelical Protestants, mainline Protestants, and Catholics) fell from 49.5 percent in 2004 to 42.0 percent in 2008—reflecting, in part, the increased level of turnout among religious minorities who strongly supported Barack Obama. Nevertheless, the 42 percent that the three largest Christian traditions contributed to the Obama coalition was larger than the contribution of either the unaffiliated (22.7 percent) or the religious minorities (34 percent).

The Republican Coalition

Whereas the Democratic coalition of voters was religiously and ethnically diverse, the religious base of the Republican coalition was largely anchored in the three largest, predominantly white, Christian traditions of evangelical Protestantism, mainline Protestantism, and Roman Catholicism.[26] More than three of every four votes received by McCain (76.5 percent) were cast by those affiliated with one of these three traditions, approximately the same percentage of the Bush coalition in 2004 (78.0 percent). In contrast, those affiliated with these same three traditions accounted for only 42.0 percent of the votes within the Obama coalition. And, whereas Hispanic Catholics, black Protestants, Jews, other religious faiths, and the religiously unaffiliated provided Obama with 56.7 percent of the votes he received, those affiliated with these religious groups accounted for only 15.4 percent of McCain's votes.

Evangelical Protestants were the core of the Republican coalition in 2004, and they were so again in 2008. Evangelical Protestants accounted for two of every five votes Bush received in 2004 (39.8 percent), and they provided the exact same proportion of all McCain's vote in 2008 (39.8 percent).

Mainline Protestants accounted for more than one-sixth of all of McCain's vote (17.9 percent)—nearly the same percentage that mainline Protestants represented within the Obama coalition (17.6 percent), and virtually the same percentage they accounted for in terms of the Bush vote in 2004 (18.4 percent). Catholics provided for nearly one-fifth of all McCain votes in 2008 (18.8 percent), down slightly from their level of contribution within the Bush coalition in 2004 (19.8 percent).

In conclusion, we have seen that the 2008 presidential election reveals little evidence of any fundamental shift in evangelical religious voting. Overall, the religious structure of the Democratic and Republican coalition of voters remained virtually the same from the 2004 election to the 2008 election. Rather than the 2008 presidential election representing some fundamental shift in allegiances, the story was more one

of variation within the basic structure of that vote.[27] In other words, Obama won by improving marginally the proportion of votes he captured within many, though not all, religious groups. Of course, the net result of these marginal shifts was sufficient to enable him to capture the White House in a rather convincing fashion. This was the case in spite of concerted efforts by the Obama campaign to appeal to religious voters and difficulties of the McCain campaign in appealing to them.

The Relative Importance of Religion in Voting Choices

To this point, we have simply examined the relationship between religion and voting behavior in isolation from other factors that also serve to shape the voters' decisions on Election Day. However, just how important a factor was religion in shaping voting decisions compared to other variables such as age, gender, or income?

Though religion was clearly associated with voting decisions in the 2008 election, was it the most important factor shaping electoral decisions? Table 3.3 addresses this question, in part, by examining the percentage of the two-party votes cast for Barack Obama and John McCain in 2008 by various socio-demographic variables. The table simply presents the percentage of voters casting ballots for McCain within categories of seven different variables. Each of the variables examined (race, age, marital status combined with gender, income, education, religious tradition, and religious traditionalism) are significantly correlated (at the .001 level) with vote choice.[28]

If demographics are destiny in terms of which political party prevails in our two-party system, the patterns revealed in Table 3.3 raise two important questions about the future strength of the Republican Party. First, whites were significantly more likely than African Americans and Hispanics to vote for McCain. Though whites constitute the vast majority of the electorate, they fell below 75 percent of the electorate for the first time in 2008, and their share of the electorate is likely to decline further in future elections. This alone represents a considerable challenge for the GOP, given its persistent and growing difficulties in attracting minority support.

Second, though the highly anticipated surge in younger voters did not fully materialize, voters younger than the age of thirty did vote overwhelmingly for Obama. Over the past several decades, young Americans had actually been "more likely to vote Republican than their elders," whereas Democrats generally fared "better among whites who had reached voting age before World War II."[29] However, in 2004, younger voters between ages eighteen to twenty-nine were the most supportive of Kerry—although only 55 percent of young voters cast their ballots for him.[30] In 2008, however, Obama captured two-thirds (67 percent) of the young vote—providing Obama a margin over McCain nearly four times greater than the nine-point margin that Kerry enjoyed among such young voters in 2004.[31] Thus, the presidential election of 2004, and particularly that of 2008, suggest a new trend—one

TABLE 3.3 Selected socio-demographic variables and presidential vote: 2008

	McCain (%)	*N*	*Eta*
Race			
White	55	829	.34***
Black	2	129	
Hispanic	33	151	
Other	40	67	
Age			
Under 30	33	205	.15***
31 thru 44	49	346	
45 thru 64	44	411	
65+	55	208	
Marital Status/gender			
Single female	31	271	.24***
Single male	33	231	
Married female	51	330	
Married male	59	346	
Income			
$40,000 or less	42	406	
$40,001–$80,000	45	487	
$80,001–$125,000	58	174	
Over $125,000	39	114	
Education			
Less than high school graduate	27	113	.13***
High school graduate	47	336	
Some college	51	381	
College graduate	45	184	
Some post college education	43	167	
Religious tradition			
Evangelical Protestants	76	280	.44***
Mainline Protestants	46	209	
Hispanic Protestants	57	21	
Black Protestants	7	115	
Hispanic Catholics	32	89	
Non–Hispanic Catholics	53	190	
Jews	29	24	
Other faiths	41	69	
Unaffiliated	24	192	

Source: 2008 Henry Institute National Survey on Religion and Public Life

in which the youngest voters are the most likely to support the Democratic candidate. Thus, the situation is now reversed from that of the Reagan era; it is the oldest voters who are now the most likely to support the Republican candidate. Should these patterns continue to prevail, they would have important long-term consequences for American electoral politics. Not only would it reveal the emergence of a cohort of young voters much more highly disposed to the Democratic than the Republican Party, but this more youthful Democratic cohort would increasingly grow in political importance and influence as the older, more Republican, voters increasingly pass from the political scene through natural processes of mortality.

Gender differences in American voting behavior emerged in the 1980 presidential election, and differences grew through the 2000 election.[32] Initially, during the Reagan era, some feminists hoped that women would play a major role in defeating the Republicans, but the presence of a gender gap in voting does not necessarily help the Democratic Party. For example, in the 2004 presidential election, women largely split their vote between Kerry and Bush (51 percent of women voted for Kerry), whereas men voted primarily for Bush (44 percent for Kerry). In the 2008 presidential election, however, there was more of a marital gap than a gender gap.[33] Among those not married, Obama captured an overwhelming majority of support (two-thirds or more of votes cast), whereas McCain enjoyed majority support among married voters—both male and female. This support for McCain among married voters may reflect in part the greater appeal of the Republican McCain to persons holding more traditional cultural values, as they are likely to be found disproportionately within their ranks.

Historically, American politics has not exhibited the same level of class-based conflict as is found in many other industrialized Western nations. And, though social class has remained an important influence in shaping voting choice outside the United States, the influence of social class on the vote has further declined over the past several decades.[34] However, some have suggested class-based voting is reemerging within advanced industrial societies.[35] For example, differences in educational attainment could well serve as a basis of political cleavage in which the information-rich and technologically sophisticated members of the electorate vote differently than those who are information-poor and unskilled. Moreover, Stonecash argues that class divisions have grown, not declined, since the 1950s, at least when class divisions in voting are measured by income groups.[36] However, in 2008, the data presented in Table 3.3 reveal that family income and education were both curvilinearly related to vote choice, with those at the lowest and those at the highest levels of family income being most likely to cast their ballots for Obama. Thus, the partisan division was less a pattern of "the rich versus the poor" than a coalition between the relatively rich along with the relatively poor versus the middle.

Finally, Table 3.3 examines the pattern of voting for McCain within categories of religious tradition affiliation. In terms of the strength of the relationships between voting and each of the seven variables examined in Table 3.3, the religious tradition

variable was the most strongly related to vote choice (eta = .44). Obviously, in terms of the simple relationships examined, religion is more strongly related to the vote than other factors frequently examined in seeking to explain differences in voting patterns within the American electorate. This helps to explain why religious considerations played a significant role in both campaigns.

Conclusion

At the advent of the 2008 presidential election, a variety of factors suggested the possibility that evangelicals might vote in a substantially different fashion than what they had done in the previous election. The political environment was markedly different, with no incumbent president seeking reelection, with the sitting Republican administration and its policies being highly unpopular, and with the sentiment for political change being relatively strong. Moreover, the Democratic Party itself, and many of its candidates for the party's nomination, sought the support of religious voters, and Barack Obama, the eventual nominee of the Democratic Party, comfortably employed religious rhetoric in his campaign speeches and had a religious outreach department within his campaign organization. Finally, there appeared to be substantial political ferment within different segments of American evangelicals, and the leadership of American evangelicals was shifting, reflecting a generational change within evangelical Protestantism.

Nevertheless, despite such hints of possible change, the extent to which evangelical Protestants cast ballots for the standard bearer of the Republican Party in 2008 was the same as the support they had offered George W. Bush in 2004. This was true despite the fact that the election itself was based largely on economic, rather than social, issues and despite the fact that evangelicals never seemed to be as genuinely enthusiastic for McCain in 2008 as they had been for Bush in 2004.

Moreover, it would appear that this pattern of evangelical Protestant support for the Republican Party and its candidates is not likely to change in the near future. The pattern of partisan identification among evangelicals, coupled with the fact that younger evangelicals do not appear to have voted more heavily for Obama than their older co-religionists,[37] suggests that the tie between evangelicals and the Republican Party at the mass level is likely to continue for numerous elections to come.

Notes

1 See, for example, Peter Wehner, "Among Evangelicals, a Transformation," *National Review* Vol. 59, No. 24 (December 31, 2007); E. J. Dionne, "Faith & Politics: After the Religious Right," *Commonweal* Vol. 135 (3): (February 15, 2008); Amy Sullivan, *The Party Faithful: How and Why Democrats Are Closing the God Gap* (New York: Scribner, 2008).

2 As an initial effort, the Democratic National Committee created the Faith in Action Initiative in 2005. For a fuller discussion of some of these efforts on the part of the

Democratic Party, see Corwin E. Smidt, Kevin R. den Dulk, Bryan T. Froehle, James M. Penning, Steven V. Monsma, and Douglas L. Koopman, *The Disappearing God Gap? Religion in the 2008 Presidential Election* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

3 See, for example, Sullivan, op. cit.

4 Among such additional continuities are the relative size of various voting blocs, cultural expectations related to presidential candidates, and the role of the two major parties in the election campaigns. For a fuller discussion, see Smidt et al., 2010.

5 For a fuller discussion of the concept of religious tradition, see Corwin E. Smidt, "Evangelical and Mainline Protestants at the Turn of the Millennium: Taking Stock and Looking Forward," in *From Pews and Polling Places in the American Religious Mosaic*, ed. Matthew Wilson (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2007), 29–51. For estimates of the size of the evangelical Protestants group within American society, see John E. Green, Lyman A. Kellstedt, Corwin E. Smidt, and James L. Guth, "How the Faithful Voted: Religious Communities and the Presidential Vote," in *A Matter of Faith: Religion in the 2004 Presidential Election*, ed. David E. Campbell (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2007), 15–36.

6 For a discussion of different analytical and measurement approaches to identifying evangelical Protestants, see Corwin E. Smidt, Lyman A. Kellstedt, and James L. Guth, "The Role of Religion in American Politics: Explanatory Theories and Associated Analytical and Measurement Issues," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and American Politics*, eds. Corwin E. Smidt, Lyman A. Kellstedt, and James L. Guth (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3–42.

7 Randall Balmer, *God in the White House: A History: How Faith Shaped the Presidency from John F. Kennedy to George W. Bush* (New York: HarperOne, 2008).

8 Perry Bacon, Jr. "Clinton, Edwards and Obama Discuss Their Faith at Forum; All Say Religion Informs Politics, Personal Lives." *Washington Post*. June 5, 2007: A3.

9 Mark Silk, "The Democrats Get Religion." *Religion in the News* Vol. 10 (Summer/Fall 2007): 8–9, 19.

10 *Christian Century.* "First GOP Debate Airs Differences on Abortion, Evolution." May 29, 2007. Vol. 124 (11): 11.

11 Linda Feldmann, "Can the Religious Left Sway the '08 Race?" *Christian Science Monitor*. June 6, 2007: 1. Similarly, after the Democratic presidential primaries had winnowed the playing field down to Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, the two Senators participated on April 13, 2008, in a "Compassion Forum" at Messiah College, an evangelical liberal arts college in Grantham, Pennsylvania. The televised event was moderated by CNN's Campbell Brown and *Newsweek*'s John Meacham. Each candidate was on stage, separately, for approximately thirty minutes, before a "bipartisan audience of faith leaders from around the country" (Campbell Brown, in her words of introduction to the event). Senator John McCain was also invited, but he declined the invitation, citing a schedule conflict.

12 Suzanne Fields, "Nobody Here but Believers: Democratic Seekers Hit the Sawdust Trail," *The Washington Times*, March 12, 2007: A19; and Gary Rosen, "Narrowing the Religion Gap?" *New York Times Magazine*, February 18, 2007, Section 6: 11.

13 Lynn Sweet, "Obama Invites Christian Leaders in for Private Talks." *Chicago Sun-Times*. June 11, 2008. http://blogs.suntimes.com/sweet/2008/06.obama_invites_christian_leader.html. Accessed January 7, 2009.

14 Amy Sullivan, "Obama's Play for the Faithful." *Time*. June 12, 2008. http://www.time.com/time/politics/article/0,8599,1814206.00.html. Accessed January 7, 2009.

15 Sweet, op. cit.

16 Sullivan, op. cit.

17 Also included were Catholic scholar Douglas Kmiec, an attorney who served in the Reagan and Bush administrations; Bishop T. D. Jakes, the black pastor of a Dallas megachurch; the Rev. Stephen Thurston, president of the National Baptist Convention of America; the Rev. T. DeWitt Smith, president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.; and African Methodist Episcopal church leader Bishop Phillip Robert Cousin Sr. See Sweet op. cit.

18 Sweet, op. cit.
19 In other words, it represented a form of political posturing. By labeling it political posturing, I do not mean to suggest that the efforts of the Obama campaign were insincere and merely strategic but that the campaign was recognizing and identifying with a particular group without necessarily endorsing that group or even expecting an endorsement in return. For a discussion of political posturing, see Smidt et al., 2010, Chapter 1.
20 Jim Rutenberg, "McCain and Obama Agree to Attend Megachurch Forum." *New York Times*. July 21, 2008. www.nytimes.com/2008/07/21/us/politics/21church.html. and Rick Warren, "Saddleback's Civil Forum with McCain and Obama," *Washington Post*. August 13, 2008. http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/guestvoices/2008/08/saddlebacks_civil_forum. Accessed January 2, 2009.
21 This survey was commissioned by the Paul B. Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics at Calvin College and was conducted by Opinion Access Corp. of Long Island, New York; the survey was funded, in part, through a grant received from the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation.
22 Perhaps the most important shift took place among mainline Protestants, as they moved from being marginally Republican in their voting in 2004 to more fully Democratic in their voting patterns in 2008.
23 According to this survey, Hispanic Protestants also appear to be generally supportive of McCain in terms of their votes. However, this assessment is based on a relatively small number of Hispanic Protestants surveyed. In his chapter on Latinos (Chapter 10), Espinosa identifies certain problems with this finding.
24 Robert Axelrod, "Where the Votes Come From: An Analysis of Electoral Coalitions, 1952–1968," *American Political Science Review* 66 (March 1972): 11–20; David C. Leege, Ken D. Wald, Brian S. Kreuger, and Paul D. Mueller, *The Politics of Cultural Differences: Social Change and Voter Mobilization Strategies in the Post- New Deal Period*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).
25 Corwin E. Smidt, "Evangelicals and the American Presidency," pp. 1–25, in Gastón Espinosa, ed., *Religion, Race and the American Presidency* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).
26 These traditions are predominantly white in the sense that our analysis has removed Hispanic Protestants and Hispanic Catholics from their ranks, with black Protestants constituting another separate religious tradition in our analysis—thereby, in terms of this classification system, leaving the resulting members of these traditions predominantly white.
27 John Green, "What Happened to the Values Voters? Believers and the 2008 Election," *First Things* Vol. 191 (March 2009), 42–48.
28 Technically, the values for the measure of association reported in the table are eta statistics derived from one-way analysis of variance. The dependent variable was the mean score for the religious groups derived from a dichotomous variable in which a vote for Obama was scored a value of 0 and a vote for McCain was scored a value of 1. In the case of dichotomous variables scored in this fashion, the mean score is also the percentage of respondents who exhibit that particular characteristic; hence, the data are presented as percentages rather than as mean scores.
29 Paul Abramson, John Aldrich, and David Rhode. *Change and Continuity in the 2004 Elections*. (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2006) p. 113.
30 Ibid, pp. 113–114.
31 Stuart Rothenberg, 2008. "Is 2008 a Realigning Election? Numbers Offer Some Clues." *realclearpolitics.com*. November 11. http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2008/11/is_2008_a_realigning_election.html.
32 Abramson et al., op. cit., p. 112.
33 Some of the difference between single women and married women in their level of support for Democratic candidates is attributable to the larger portion of black women, who vote overwhelmingly Democratic, within the single women category.

34 Paul Nieuwbeerta and Nan Dirk DeGraaf. "Traditional Class Voting in 20 Postwar Societies," pp. 23–57 in Geoffrey Evans, ed., *The End of Class Politics?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
35 Geoffrey Evans, "Class Voting: From Premature Obituary to Reasoned Appraisal," pp. 1–21, in Geoffrey Evans, ed., *The End of Class Politics?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
36 Jeffrey Stonecash, *Class and Party in American Politics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), p. 124.
37 See Smidt et al., 2010, Chapter 7.

4

CATHOLICS AND THE 2008 ELECTION

David Leege and Stephen T. Mockabee

The 2008 presidential election seemed to be all about a candidate who was not running for office. Political scientist Gary Jacobson called it an "anti-Bush referendum."[1] George W. Bush had been declared the winner in the disputed 2000 election, partly through the action of the U.S. Supreme Court. Following his response to the 9/11 (2001) attacks that rallied support and resolve from the citizenry, he became one of the most popular men to hold the office. He soundly defeated Roman Catholic Senator John Kerry in 2004. A constitutional lame duck by 2008, however, his poll figures bottomed out, and he was among the least popular residents of the White House in history. The country by then was mired in two controversial Middle Eastern wars and was reeling from the worst financial crash and job loss since the Great Depression.

The rise and fall of President Bush culminated a long and intense Republican strategy to wean Roman Catholics away from their Democratic affinity to become reliable Republican voters. Catholics are the largest single religious group in the electorate. If they were to vote as a bloc, Catholics, especially those concentrated in the large Electoral College states, would become a great prize. Historically, that has happened only twice—1928 with Gov. Al Smith and 1960 with Sen. John F. Kennedy, who won almost 80 percent of the Catholic vote. Despite heavy Catholic mobilization, Smith lost by a landslide, in part because anti-Catholic sentiment at the time of the second Ku Klux Klan had stoked fears among Protestants. After the World War II mobilizations and the GI Bill, Catholics were viewed as increasingly assimilated and Kennedy could win, even if by a cliff-hanger. In elections succeeding these Catholic candidates, Catholics gradually returned to their normal status as a swing electorate slightly favoring Democratic candidates.

This chapter interprets the story of Barack Obama's standing among Roman Catholic voters through long-term trends in Catholic party identification and vote

FIGURE 4.1 Senator John F. Kennedy standing with Roman Catholic Cardinal Francis Spellman, Archbishop of New York, and Vice President Richard Nixon at the Al Smith Memorial Dinner, 1960. Photograph by Jack Schildkraut Courtesy: John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, Px88-7:3.

choice and through Republican strategies, electoral successes, and policy failures. At times, the discussion will treat Catholics as an undifferentiated part of the larger group of religiously active and conservative Christian voters. We will argue that the salience of a candidate's being attractive simply as a fellow member of the Catholic community has declined, while the relevance of some policy positions consistent with Church social teachings has increased. We will also show that Republican strategies to intensify Democratic voters' apprehensions toward cultural "others" that had worked so effectively during the Nixon-Reagan-Bush years continued—but this time under the guise of religious symbols rather than racial symbols. We will conclude with the observation that at least Obama did not lose even more white non-Latino Catholic voters, as historic trend lines might have predicted, but in fact increased the Democratic margin among Catholics. The reason for the increase is the higher mobilization of Latino and African American Catholics. When all was said and done, white non-Latino Catholics behaved politically very much as they had in 2000, although the conditions were very different.

Recent Catholic Electoral History

One should not think of Catholics as a monolithic voting bloc. They come from several waves of migration. Though all Roman Catholic, their national churches

were quite different, reflecting very diverse cultural heritages. Some assimilated earlier and experienced the American dream of education, economic success, and social acceptance. Others were slower down this path, or they experienced ethno-religious discrimination by the host Protestant American society. Particularly for those who were black or brown (African American, Latino) or were at one point in history perceived as such (Irish, Italian), doorways to opportunity were slower to open.[2] Catholics dealt with these issues as most Americans do—organized, set up parallel institutions (schools, hospitals, ethnic betterment societies, political clubs), and bargained through weight.

The resulting mosaic of Catholic political histories becomes like a kaleidoscope, slightly different in each election year. Even the attitudinal and opinion propensities attached to such a diverse Catholic population lead to far different issue priorities. The Church's leadership could and would engage in a wide range of social teachings about human life, dignity, and social justice, but many Catholics would impose their own moral calculus on election choice. Further, the Catholic Church in the United States has over the last half century experienced precipitous declines in the frequency of mass attendance and the loyalty claims of Catholic institutions.

It should come as no surprise, then, that many Catholics could embrace Obama as an appropriate option in 2008—and would do so with informed consciences. And it should come as no surprise that many Catholics could reject Obama—with informed consciences. For some, consistent with teachings about human dignity and equal opportunity, an American historical precedent could be celebrated again: A nation of opportunity could elect an Irish Catholic in 1960 and an African American Protestant in 2008. For others committed to the same Catholic norms, Obama's position on abortion itself so strongly violated these teachings that he had to be rejected.

Positions on human life issues hardly exhausted vote choice among Catholics over the last half-century. Already in colonial days, leaders of the "Catholic colony" (Maryland) welcomed settlers not because they were Catholics but because they could contribute to rewarding enterprise—a place where "profit, not religion, (was) the primary impulse."[3] The first bishop, John Carroll of Baltimore, rejected the notion that the Pope held *secular* power; his was a *spiritual* power only. A century after Carroll "cautioned against the Church getting cozy with any political faction," however, influential Bishop John Ireland urged Catholics to support the Republican ticket. Many Catholics felt the Church (leadership) supported their preference for the party that best served their personal economic interests. Still others, however, gave their vote to the candidate supported by their ethnic political club or their ethnic betterment society—a more communal Catholic position. At about the time that Catholic men had broken the control exerted by old-line Protestants over civic and economic institutions, they had to start making room for African Americans and women in decision-making roles. This created conflicts among status-conscious Catholics regarding worthiness and serving one's time in the ranks, and it led to a

sense of *relative deprivation*, [4] (i.e., the perception that people who have done nothing to earn the benefits of society are getting unfair advantages through the actions of the federal government). It was this feeling that created a huge opening for political appeals to disgruntled Catholic Democrats. The wedge issue became a staple of partisan conflict from 1964 onward as the politics of race, gender, religion, and patriotism grew.

During the 1960s, the Democratic Party imploded over racial conflicts and the Vietnam War protests. In 1968, it split three ways until the final week of the campaign, when anti-war candidate, Sen. Eugene McCarthy, a Catholic, capitulated to Vice-President Hubert Humphrey. Gov. George Wallace of Alabama, presumably the candidate of Southern segregationists, found substantial support among Northern white ethnic Catholics. His discourse was laced with white resentment and *relative deprivation* appeals. In 1972, incumbent President Richard Nixon saw the opportunity to build a new Republican coalition by deploying such racial symbols (states' rights, black urban riots, women afraid to walk on city streets, freedom from fear, law and order) and other cultural symbols (bra burners, ultra feminists, flag burners, disrespect for military, etc.) among disgruntled Southern whites, Evangelical Protestants, and white non-Latino Catholic Democrats. He scored massively, with 42 percent of white Catholic Democrats rejecting Sen. George McGovern and crossing over to Republican Nixon, and another 19 percent failing to vote at all. Thus, only 39 percent of them remained loyal Democrats!

The lesson was clear for future Republican candidates. Ronald Reagan, a beloved Catholic symbol because of his role as the Gipper in the movie *Knute Rockne, All-American*, was able to convert these "Nixon Democrats" into a permanent realignment. Reagan used racial code words ("welfare queen from the South Side of Chicago," "welfare cheats," "freeloaders") to suggest to whites that their hard-earned dollars were being taken from them through taxes and being redistributed to people who will not work for a living. Such appeals led to calls—still in currency today—for lower taxes and a smaller state. Eventually, the symbol "tax-and-spend liberal" came to connote all of the presumed racial and gender injustices of the welfare state for law-abiding, hard-working white citizens. The symbols worked especially effectively on older white non-Latino Catholic men and Baby Boomers, so that they either realigned party affiliation or they entered the active electorate as Republicans.[5] Though many people would attribute this change to upward class mobility and resulting economic interest, even more evidence supports *cultural* interpretations for Republican success among Catholics.[6]

Every action has a reaction in politics, and Reagan's placing a halt on the use of government to promote equal opportunity had consequences for young, educated women, increasingly Catholic, who had entered the labor market. In earlier decades when Republican platforms championed equal opportunity for women, such people formed the business and professional women's base of the party. Not anymore: It was now Democrats who championed proactive policies they felt would

FIGURE 4.2 President Ronald Reagan meets with Pope John Paul II during the latter's visit to the United States, May 2, 1984. Courtesy: Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, C21616-4.

promote equality of economic opportunity (e.g., the ERA, affirmative action) and Republicans who lionized the stay-at-home mom. By the 1990s, younger, educated women, including Catholics, were attracted to the Clintons and mobilized as a new base of the Democratic coalition.

Finally, the American Catholic Bishops had promulgated a series of pastoral letters that applied Catholic social teaching to current issues—abortion and other human life issues, nuclear war and peace, the economy, and race relations. Evidence indicates that Catholics agreed that bishops could provide such guidance, but in the end laity would make up their own minds in the context of any given election. Some tried hard to follow what Joseph Cardinal Bernardin called the "consistent ethic of life." More commonly, "cafeteria-style Catholicism" developed (e.g., those supporting peaceful resolution of international conflicts might still be willing to permit abortions, while anti-abortion Catholics might advocate military solutions or capital punishment).[7] When the pedophile scandal involving sexual assault of children by some priests and the cover-up by several bishops unfolded in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the bishops as a whole appeared to lose even more moral authority. Into that vacuum, politicians were able to recruit individual bishops to make well-publicized criticisms of the politicians' opponents and give the impression that a few bishops were speaking generally for the Church. That set the stage for the current era of the Bush and McCain campaigns.

FIGURE 4.3 President George W. Bush bows in prayer at the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C., May 20, 2005. Pictured with him are Archbishop Charles J. Chaput of Denver and Joseph Cella. At the event, President Bush declared "we reaffirm that freedom rests on the self-evident truths about human dignity" and that "Pope Benedict XVI recently warned that when we forget these truths, we risk sliding into dictatorship of relativism where we can no longer defend our values." Courtesy: Official White House photo by Eric Draper.

The Catholic Voter Project was expected to complete the process of building a permanent majority for the Republican Party.[8] Developed by conservative Catholic editor Deal Hudson and George W. Bush's chief political strategist, Karl Rove, it sought to fashion a conservative and visibly Christian Republican candidate who "spoke Catholic." The problem with Goldwater's and Reagan's brand of conservatism was that it treated government as the *enemy* to be shrunk at all costs. Many Catholics, however, wanted to enlist government as an *ally* in pursuit of a life of dignity and respect for all God's creatures. Bush, who had undergone a recent conversion experience, was a religious seeker engaged in daily Bible study; scriptural turns of phrase rolled easily from his lips (Figure 4.3).

For his run at the White House in 2000, Bush developed an overarching theme of "compassionate conservatism" and made the faith-based initiative the centerpiece of his domestic program. He had cleverly purged himself from culpability for his heavy drinking and profligate early life by using a "prodigal son" metaphor—one of the most compassionate parables repeated in many religious families—in his acceptance address. Once in office, he adopted Marian Wright Edelman's slogan, "Leave No Child Behind," to sell his school reforms. He called for massive American

aid to respond to the AIDS pandemic in Africa. He asked Congress to liberalize immigration policies toward Mexicans who entered the United States illegally but were gainfully employed. All were policies that appealed to Catholic sensitivities. Bush drew criticism from conservatives in the party, but that again showed Catholics how compassionate Bush was. Looking toward his reelection in 2004, President Bush cut taxes but, equally important, vetoed no government spending bill despite its impact on a steeply mounting deficit. Government was no longer the enemy, a position that resonated with many Catholics.

President Bush also used visible contacts with Catholic leaders to show his respect for their moral guidance, including having three meetings with the Pope during his first term. Although the Pope expressed displeasure with Bush's conservative domestic positions and aggressive war policies, these were lost on much of the Catholic public simply because Bush had sought counsel from the Holy Father. Bush selected and thought over moral issues (e.g., stem cell research, gay marriage) in a way that he occupied Catholic moral positions sometimes before the Pope had made a specific pronouncement.

On the Catholic front, the Bush campaign made major institutional efforts to exploit the gay marriage issue. Although the Catholic hierarchy and parish priests are prohibited from endorsing candidates, into this vacuum a network of nationally funded but parish-based organizations of "Catholics for…" was established by the Bush campaign and friends. Micro-targeting by the Republican National Committee pinpointed who should receive anti-gay materials.[9] They stressed not only church teaching on abortion but gay lifestyle issues. Previously, several bishops said they would refuse communion to Kerry (Figure 4.4). Republican and conservative front organizations distributed this information. The press paid attention to them rather than to most of the bishops who had reservations about mixing religion and politics in partisan ways. Ultimately, Bush received white Catholic support by a 55 percent to 45 percent margin over Kerry. Even modest movement in states such as Ohio, Florida, and others that had a gay marriage referendum on the ballot would have been all it took to win the Electoral College.[10]

Bush's Catholic gains, however, quickly eroded by 2007. The country remained mired in the Iraq War, whose legitimacy the revered John Paul II had questioned. We had lost much of our "soft power," our moral standing in the eyes of allies and adversaries. The economy seemed in a panicky free fall as Election 2008 approached. Widespread corruption in Washington and on Wall Street was exposed. More and more Catholics who had experienced the rewards of upward mobility were vulnerable to layoffs and furloughs. Republican-led Congresses had removed more and more of the regulatory safeguards. Faith in the conservative credo—a more recent conversion experience for many Catholics—was shaken. The agenda that had worked so well for Bush against liberal Catholic John Kerry in 2004 was largely obsolete. Election 2008 was wide open. And the Republican nominee would be penalized with the Bush handicap.

FIGURE 4.4 Senator John Kerry. Courtesy: Official U.S. Congressional Portrait of Senator John Kerry.

The Contenders' Strategies: Obama, Clinton, McCain, and the Others

Although many Democrats, including some Catholics, announced their candidacies, in the end the contest was between only Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton. Whoever won would ensure an historic election in the fall. Both were from the left-center of their party, both had taken positions on cultural issues that made them vulnerable to attack by religious leaders and ideological opponents, yet both had religious *bona fides*. Clinton, a suburban Chicago Goldwater girl in high school, had her conscience pricked by a youth minister who embraced the Social Gospel: Christianity is best measured by efforts to transform society, bringing opportunity and justice to the needy. She engaged in lifelong conversations with him, well after he had joined the Divinity faculty at Boston University. Obama, progeny of a Kenyan father and a liberal anthropology-trained mother, did not embrace Christianity until his young adulthood as a community organizer on Chicago's industrially abandoned Southeast side. Catholic parishes were part of his support base, and he experienced a new spiritual awakening during the frequent masses that were part of his job. He was also coming to grips with his identity in a country that defined him as black, although he had been raised by a white mother and white grandparents. When he married a successful black attorney, he affiliated with a leading liberal Protestant church (United Church of Christ) on the South Side. Its pastor, Jeremiah Wright, trained at the University of Chicago Divinity School, used fiery metaphors of divine

judgment and deliverance in white America. He was later to get Obama in trouble. Each leading Democrat embraced both self-help and government alliance to bring about justice. The market, though necessary, was insufficient by itself. In these respects, then, each was a credible candidate for those Catholics who paid attention to the Church's social teachings. Where each fell short was on the central human life issue of abortion policy.

The Democratic Party had gotten itself into a deep hole with those voters who saw politics primarily from religious perspectives. The massive realignment of southerners was not based solely on racial attitudes and the role of government as an engine for equal opportunity. Also involved in varying degrees was a passel of issues that came to be defined as family values: human sexuality, abortion, marijuana, gender roles, respect for traditionalists and, more recently, embryonic stem cell research and gay marriage. The so-called values voters, both northern and southern, were thought to look first at these matters and then examine weighty issues of the economy and foreign policy. Popular understandings of Americanism, constitutionalism, and patriotism even became confounded with these issues. Definitions of liberalism-conservatism increasingly were framed in these "cultural" issues, and party identification became shorthand for where the party stood on values.[11] Scholars noted that a "God Gap" had been created, in that conservative Christians who were more frequent in church attendance, private prayer, Bible reading, and other evangelical practices were more likely to vote Republican. In the public's mind, this cluster of personal and political traits described the "Religious Right."[12] Republican politicians catered to it, even when their personal behaviors deviated far from it.

Probably there were two turning points for Democrats who did not want to cede a religious advantage to Republicans. The first came in 1994, the year Republicans took over the House; many victorious congressional candidates were recruited by the leadership of the Religious Right, including the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition. Deeply concerned that signs predicted a Republican sweep, in summer 1994, the White House called a private parley to see what the party should be doing differently. Among the invited scholars and pollsters (who must remain anonymous) was a specialist in religion and politics. He carefully laid out what had been happening among values voters and religiously devout people. When his presentation was completed, the First Lady and a pollster asked what Democrats should be doing to reclaim standing among religious people. James Carville, however, obviously agitated by the direction of the discussion, left the room muttering, "Aw, f– 'em." Mrs. Clinton and others in the room remembered the occasion. By 2004, the awkwardness of Democrats on religious issues had become painfully evident. In religious Iowa of all places, Gov. Howard Dean fumbled a question about a prominent Biblical character. Kerry, the party's choice, avoided opportunities to make personal references to his religious values and only late in the game spoke about the quest for social justice having religious roots. Especially deeply religious

people who remained loyal to the party for its peace and justice priorities struggled with its secular public face.

Its stance on abortion came to symbolize the party's ambivalence on values issues. Survey data from the seventies had shown a higher proportion of abortion opponents among Democrats than among Republicans.[13] Reagan and Bush Sr. were both originally pro-choice, but after the ERA ratification wars, they realized there was a large mobilizeable base among Evangelicals that was restless in the Democratic Party. The presidents-to-be switched, following their new base. Democrats, however, were doing increasingly well in a traditional Republican base—business and professional women. Feminist leaders became an important interest group in the party. Young, educated professional women were seeking autonomy from male control, and the notion that women should be free to decide about their sexuality, and whether and when to have a baby, captured their sentiment. For Democratic presidential vote seekers, this took the form of "a woman's right to choose." Though Republican presidential candidates made appeals to code words such as "pro-life" or "culture of life" to mobilize their base, they stopped short of a constitutional amendment that would ban abortion. They spoke only of nominating judges who "respected life" and "the original intent of the Founders." This allowed them to keep much of their pro-choice base.

Democrats, while accusing Republicans of an anti-abortion litmus test for judicial appointments, did indeed develop their own pro-choice litmus test. In 1988, they dropped a platform plank recognizing "the religious and ethical concerns many Americans have about abortion." In 1992, they refused to allow popular Catholic Gov. Robert Casey of Pennsylvania to address the convention with a minority report challenging the party's acceptance of government funding for abortion as a "fundamental right." They drew a line in the sand, opposing instances where abortion was defined as a medical issue rather than a privacy issue, for fear that it would move the country toward a definition of life in the womb. And in their opposition to a late-term procedure that extracts a viable fetus from the womb, they failed to develop a counter-language to the Republican label "partial birth abortion." Successive presidential candidates Clinton, Gore, and Kerry described their abortion policy as "safe, legal and rare," which comes close to the mediating positions of about half of Catholics and, in fact, most Americans. Yet, in recent elections, the party has continued to suffer modest erosion in Catholic support where Republicans can paint abortion as symptomatic of a broader range of cultural issue positions.[14]

In the post-2004 self-examination of the devastating Democratic loss, Hillary Clinton and many others urged the party to adopt a more effective language to describe a compassionate abortion policy. Yet, at the same time, Democratic women's groups saw the candidacy of Catholic pro-life ex-Congressman Timothy Roemer for chair of the Democratic National Committee as a non-starter and criticized new Senate minority leader Harry Reid, a Mormon, for his pro-life position that they charged would impede unified opposition to Bush's judicial nominations. Democrats

seemed powerless to find a language that again resonated with Catholics who cared about Church teachings that supported those least able to protect themselves.

Both Clinton and Obama had a personal understanding of religion and the familiarity with religious symbols needed to stanch the Republicans' free ride with values voters. The differences seemed less in their beliefs and commitments than in their conversational facility in talking about religion as shaping their outlooks. Clinton had internalized the Social Gospel to the point where it was part of her political core but not at the top of her discourse. Obama was still very much the seeker, willing to talk about religious puzzles that troubled him, highly introspective, and acknowledging that he felt the way he did about some political issues because of his religious faith. The religious enlightenment experience had come to Clinton way back in high school, whereas for Obama it was fresher. As Corwin E. Smidt points out in Chapter 3, young Evangelicals and Catholic seekers found Obama an attractive figure.

Republicans and conservative front organizations had been taking notice. If Obama was challenging the God gap, questions needed to be raised about the authenticity of his religion. First, conservative bloggers, an increasingly important network for campaign communication, had put it out there that Obama was really a Muslim. Fox News and talk radio picked it up and gave it a long life. Although the contention had no truth, it had been fleshed out with false charges that Obama had been born in Kenya and was not even a natural-born American, and it was embellished by images of a black hand swearing into office on a Koran (the hand belonged not to Obama but to a black Muslim congressman from Minneapolis). Polls consistently show that somewhere between an eighth and a fourth of the religious public, depending on their affiliation, believes that Obama is a Muslim.[15] Most do not.

When the "Muslim strategy" fell short of the desired impact on conservative Christians, including Catholics, strategic detractors went to work on his South Side church and its pastor. Obama may say he embraced Christianity, but does his church preach a Christian message? Does it respect God's special calling for America? To cast doubt, conservative bloggers ran video of the Rev. Jeremiah Wright damning America for its racial history, and some of his charges were based on preposterous speculation. Obama dissociated himself from the claims and language of Rev. Wright but, after all, Obama said, he could not totally disown a clergyman who had helped bring him to faith, married him, and baptized his beloved daughters. His balanced disclaimer won Obama respect among younger Evangelicals and Catholics. The issue of Obama's pastor festered. Finally, when, as part of a book promotion tour, Wright addressed the National Press Club with continued wild assertions, Obama fully disowned the man his pastor had become. For many, the issue was laid to rest, and it received far less attention in the general election—in part, because the opponent, John McCain, had been vilified in similarly unjustified ways in his 2000 primary run. In fact, on the campaign trail, McCain corrected supporters who continued to use the false charges about Obama's religion.

As the nominating season wore on and Obama pursued a successful strategy of piling up victories in caucus states, the Clinton camp prepared for a showdown in Ohio and Pennsylvania, where she had cultivated a solid base among working-class Catholic ethnics. Many white Catholic men did not trust Obama, who appeared to be an educated black elitist. In a terrible campaign gaffe in mid-April, describing the pent-up frustration with job promises by previous administrations, Obama said of "…working-class voters in old industrial towns decimated by job losses, '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.'"[16] For days, Clinton appealed to workers and the unemployed in small mill towns, largely Catholics, pointing out how demeaning Obama was toward religion. Further, Catholic working-class women could feel a special affinity for Clinton based on their own life histories: Older Catholic women were earlier than women of other white religious groups to experience widespread employment outside the home. ("Rosie the Riveter" was probably a Catholic.) They knew well that gender biases are expressed through lower wages and abusive treatment. Although Clinton associated with pro-choice women's groups, she had always championed the Equal Rights Amendment as an economic justice issue. She came across as a fighter for underclass women. Further, yoked to an unfaithful husband whom she still loved, Mrs. Clinton toughed it out many times for the sake of their marriage and daughter, Chelsea; these women knew of similar situations in their own homes or Catholic neighborhoods—and respected her courage. They could not abandon her for a young black man gifted with a smooth tongue.

This Catholic base of the Democratic Party in Rust Belt Pennsylvania delivered Clinton a whopping forty-four-point victory margin over Obama. "Among the most devout in this group, those who attend Mass at least weekly, Clinton won 3 to 1."[17] Ohio had similar but less spectacular results. She did almost as well wherever white Catholics were older, less educated, and of lower income. "Of the 23 primaries for which adequate data exist, Hillary Clinton did better among white Catholics than white Protestants."[18] With white Catholics constituting well more than 20 percent of the electorate in contested states and being more willing to swing to McCain if Obama won than if Clinton won, Obama had a Catholic problem. Either he had to mobilize more Latino Catholics and educated younger white Catholics or he had to win over Rust Belt Catholics with relentless bread-and-butter comparisons to McCain. He chose both.

Among the large number of Republicans who pursued the nomination were some Catholics. The serious contenders, however, were reduced to two men about whose religion everyone knew (Mitt Romney and Mike Huckabee) and one to whom were attributed deep religious values because of his American patriotism (John McCain). Their pursuit of the presidency is a fascinating case study in the nuances of religion in campaigns.

Romney lived all of the family values of Evangelical Protestants, besides being smart, economically and politically successful, and an optimist with unfailing faith in market solutions. He had one fault—being a Mormon. Huckabee lived all the family values of Evangelical Protestants, along with great communication skills and a sense of humor, and was politically successful. He had one fault: Sometimes he felt government had to step in when the market fails. McCain embraced all of the family values of Evangelical Protestants, had an unmatched record of patriotic service to his country, was economically and politically successful, and almost always embraced market solutions. He had three faults: "*almost* always" not "always" embraced the market; that his deep faith developed in a Vietnam prison camp was common knowledge, but his fealty to organized religion was unclear; and he was a maverick who sometimes consorted with the enemy across the aisle on matters dear to Republican stakeholders, such as comprehensive immigration reform and campaign finance reform. All three candidates had a common fatal fault in Election 2008—they were members of the party of George W. Bush.

Initially, Rudolph Giuliani, the former New York City mayor who gained name recognition and respect for his tough and intrepid responses to 9/11, was the front-runner in the polls. Although a Roman Catholic, he took policy positions (e.g., pro-choice, tolerance of deviations from "family values") that Church leadership and knowledgeable Catholics found offensive. His own marital peccadilloes were available for all to see, as when he moved his then mistress into Gracie Mansion while his wife and young children still lived there. Finally, he showed little appetite for campaigning and quickly dropped out of contention after a disastrous plunge to defeat in the Florida primary.

At that point, Romney looked like a powerful front-runner attracting both the market-oriented and the values-voters bases of the party. When neither Huckabee nor Romney could show a trend in support, some activists urged Huckabee to withdraw so that Romney could pull support from the Religious Right. McCain survived, getting solid but not spectacular support despite his many staff shakeups. What the press and activists failed to note was that McCain, not Romney, was the second choice of Huckabee voters. As Corwin E. Smidt shows, when Huckabee withdrew, his Evangelical supporters established an upward trend for McCain. How could this be, given McCain's uncertain religious persona and his strongly worded criticism of influential televangelists in the 2000 primaries?

McCain had taken the time to mend fences with leaders of the Religious Right. Baptized Episcopalian as an infant, McCain's second marriage was to a woman who was baptized a Baptist. McCain himself never submitted to this central Baptist rite of young adult initiation, but he did call himself a "Baptist." He began to use more of the identifying language of an Evangelical Protestant. He argued that it was prayer in the POW camp that pulled him through, and he treated that as a conversion experience. However, he may have played his strongest religious card in another way: Just before a sequence of pivotal primaries, he told an interviewer, "I believe

Americans would prefer to have a Christian President." Befuddled that this was so out of character for the religiously tolerant McCain, the chattering class thought he might be talking about Obama and the Muslim rumor. Not at all. His subject, never acknowledged, turned out to be Romney. Most evangelicals and many other Christians do not consider the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints to be a Christian church, given its extra-biblical revelations and syncretistic doctrines. In their everyday conversation networks, conservative Christians expressed concern that if a Mormon would occupy the White House, this would bring respectability to a "non-Christian" faith. Wholly apart from the truth or falsity of this perception about Mormons, McCain had played on the fears of the religious "other" in 2008 in the same manner as evangelicals had played on fear regarding Catholics in 1928. Intentionally or not, he had uncovered a deep fissure among values voters that turned out to be politically advantageous. The Romney campaign was never able to launch a counter offensive in the manner of the Obama campaign.

As the nominating season blended into the general election campaign, McCain felt more comfortable speaking about his religio-patriotic experiences. He used short code-words such as "culture of life" in responses to complex questions. Most important, he selected a vice-presidential nominee, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, who immediately crystallized the hopes of the Religious Right with her plain-spoken answers to questions and her attacks on people or institutions she designated as "not patriotic or Christian." She appeared to give the McCain campaign religious credibility and mobilized its deeply conservative base of values-voters, again including those Catholics who share political positions with evangelicals.[19]

Religious outreach coordinators and values-based political action committees are staples of modern campaigns. They were found in abundance in 2008 and were used by the principal candidates. Most prominent for McCain on the Catholic front was a committee of 100 prominent Catholics headed by Catholic-convert Sen. Sam Brownback; he also received consultative assistance from Deal Hudson of the Rove-Bush–era Catholic Voter Project. They stressed not only McCain's consistent opposition to abortion and support for traditional marriage but his proactive views for the environment and humane immigration reform. His Catholic outreach liaisons found it harder to finesse his strong support of the Iraq war. McCain consistently won plurality support among Catholics in the primaries, including his early knock-out punch to Catholic Rudy Giuliani in Florida by fifteen points. He faced sharp criticism for his acceptance of support from Pentecostal televangelist and mega-church pastor Rev. John Hagee, who is noted for anti-Catholic positions. Eventually, McCain admonished Hagee for these positions but continued to accept his backing, perhaps because Hagee claims his ministry reaches millions of people on 166 television and 60 radio stations.[20]

Obama not only shored up his foreign policy and experience appeal with the selection of Sen. Joseph Biden as his running mate but testified to his effort to gain back the lunch-bucket Catholic base of the party in the Rust Belt. Biden, a

FIGURE 4.5 Senator Joe Biden. Courtesy: Official U.S. Congressional Portrait of Senator Joe Biden.

Catholic raised in Scranton, Pennsylvania and a family man who commuted daily to Washington from Delaware so that he could raise his sons, who had lost their mother at a young age, had to be taken seriously by this sector of the electorate. Obama also benefited from the resurgence of Religious Left advocacy groups, many organized to stanch the flow of religious adherents to the Rove-Bush Republican party.[21]

Some grew from the long-time progressive efforts of evangelical pastor Jim Wallis, his *Sojourners* magazine and center in Washington. Others were of more recent origin and shared distinctively Catholic perspectives on public policy (such as Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good, Catholics United) whereas some were interfaith (such as Faith in Public Life and its strategically important affiliates We Believe Ohio and We Believe Colorado, Network of Spiritual Progressives, Red Letter Christians, the Matthew 25 Network). All were established grass-roots networks of people both progressive and Christian. Still others such as the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference had an ethnic base.[22]

Typically, these organizations remained pro-life but felt that Obama's progressive agenda would minimize the conditions that led women to seek abortion. A particularly important supporter was pro-life leader and Pepperdine law professor, Douglas Kmiec. Kmiec joined Obama early, wrote a book on why a pro-life Catholic should support Obama, and was a ubiquitous columnist and interviewee. He had taught law at Notre Dame and was a conservative Justice Department official in the first Bush's administration. Like McCain, Obama also enlisted respected Catholic

public officials, some of whom were pro-life such as former Indiana congressman Tim Roemer, and others who were pro-choice such as Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sibelius and former Senate leader Tom Daschle, to stump effectively for him. Obama embraced religious discourse in public life and chastised fellow Democrats who caricatured Christians in politics. His organization distributed pamphlets that described his conversion in strongly evangelical language but in a Catholic setting.[23]

With these bases covered, Obama's most important task was to convince Catholics hurt by President Bush's domestic and foreign policies that McCain would follow a course that deviated little from that. McCain was caught in a vise. Though only about 40 percent of Republicans still thought positively of the Bush presidency, McCain himself had been quite a loyal supporter. Fortunately for McCain, another devastating hurricane threatened the Southeast, and the White House cancelled Bush's appearance at the party convention so that he could "direct the anticipated recovery." "No more Katrinas!" Yet Obama's people frequently played the footage of Bush and McCain embracing at the 2004 convention. They painted McCain as an out-of-touch rich man because he fumbled on the number of homes he and his wife owned.[24] Finally, McCain was gaining ground with the success of the surge in Iraq. However, in the same twenty-four-hour news cycle as the full reach of the crash and bank panic was described, McCain had made the gaffe of the campaign by describing the economy as fundamentally sound. McCain himself acknowledged that he could never recover from the bottoming of the economy. Obama had the footage he needed to woo Catholic Clintonites from the Rust Belt.

How would it play? How would the election outcome among Catholics be a function of both older and recent history? And, what in the end would matter most to Catholic vote choice? For that we turn to analytical narrative and interpret survey data.

Catholic Voting Patterns and the 2008 Election

The American National Election Studies (ANES) can be used to map the partisan political behavior of white non-Hispanic Catholics from 1952 to 2008 (Table 4.1).[25] Updated from ANES data presented in Leege et al.,[26] the table presents a *politician's calculus of the vote*. That is, it matters only a little to the campaign handler what the distribution of partisanship is within a particular group. More important is whether Democrats or Republicans actually vote in a given election and, if so, whether they remain loyal or defect to the opposition. The minority party, then, may neutralize the identifier advantage owned by the majority: If it creates disappointment and disinterest in the majority, people fail to turn out; if it creates sufficient anxiety in the majority, it may stimulate cross-over voting.

In much of the post–New Deal, the campaign strategy of the minority Republican Party was *to control the size and composition of the electorate* through negative appeals to vulnerable groups in the Democratic coalition dealing with race, patriotism, gender,

TABLE 4.1 Partisan patterns of white, non-Latino Catholics, 1952-2008 (percent)

Political Characteristics	*1952*	*1956*	*1960*	*1964*	*1968*	*1972*	*1976*	*1980*	*1984*	*1988*	*1992*	*1996*	*2000*	*2004*	*2008*
Democratic Party ID[a]	68	59	73	69	63	62	61	54	52	45	53	52	46	47	44
Proportion loyal to party[b]	61	57	87	79	61	39	58	45	60	67	64	65	50	72	76
Proportion not voting	15	18	6	14	19	19	22	24	17	17	14	20	11	19	13
Proportion defecting to opposition candidate(s)	24	25	6	7	20	42	21	31	23	16	23	15	13	11	13
Democratic partisan yield[c]	41	34	64	55	39	24	35	25	31	30	33	33	23	34	33
Republican Party ID	25	27	19	22	25	25	26	31	36	45	36	41	45	40	45
Proportion loyal to party	83	83	60	65	72	77	66	68	83	73	60	67	56	81	76
Proportion not voting	12	14	13	9	10	11	22	19	13	19	11	11	7	11	18
Proportion defecting to opposition candidate(s)	5	3	28	26	18	12	12	13	4	8	29	23	10	8	7
Republican partisan yield	21	22	11	14	18	19	17	21	30	33	22	27	25	32	34
Democratic partisan advantage[d]	20	11	53	40	21	5	18	4	1	-3	12	6	-2	2	–1
"True" independent[e]	7	11	8	9	11	12	12	15	11	10	11	7	5	12	11
Apolitical	0	3	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Number in Sample	376	360	215	333	313	595	494	316	428	343	432	330	365	225	259

Source: ANES Cumulative File

a Includes percent strong Democrat, not so strong Democrat, and Independent leaning Democrat.

b Proportion of Democrats who turn out and select the Democratic candidate for President.

c Product of Democratic party identification and reported vote for Democratic candidate.

d Subtract Republican partisan yield from Democratic partisan yield to calculate partisan advantage.

e Respondents who claim to be Independents but do not lean to either party.

and religion. From 1952 onward, white non-Latino Catholic Democrats were seen as a vulnerable group whose turnout could be depressed or whose anxiety could be heightened into defection. Eventually defection became a learned behavior and led to realignment. As the culture of partisanship within the group changed, young people considered it natural that they, as Catholics, would align with the new party when they entered the active electorate.

Table 4.1 shows the proportion of the total white non-Latino Catholic electorate who identify either as Democrats or Republicans. Immediately following each are three sets of numbers to describe Democrats and Republicans, respectively:

- *Loyal Partisans*: The percentage of all adult white, non-Latino Catholic (Democrats) (Republicans) who are both partisan and loyal to their partisan preference (i.e., a Catholic Democrat who turns out and votes Democratic for president).
- *Stay-at-Home Partisans:* The percentage of all white non-Latino Catholic (Democrats) (Republicans) who are partisan but do not turn out.
- *Defecting Partisans*: The percentage of all white non-Latino Catholic (Democrats) (Republicans) who are partisan, turn out, but vote counter to party preferences (e.g., a Catholic Democrat who turns out but votes for Nixon, the Republican candidate in 1972).

The middle panel of the table presents *partisan advantage*—the percentage difference between loyal Democrats and loyal Republicans. (A positive number favors Democrats; negative, Republicans.) To provide an indication of group magnitude, we also present the number of cases used in the analysis along the horizontal axis of this panel. Partisan "leaners" (i.e., those who call themselves independents but report in a follow-up question that they feel closer to one of the parties) have been included with their fellow partisans, so the actual proportion of true independents among Catholics, while fluctuating, is quite modest.

Several conclusions can be drawn from these data:

- The culture of Catholic party identification has favored Democrats until the late 1980s.
- White, non-Latino Catholics have either heavily favored Democratic candidates for president or slightly favored Democrats, again until the late 1980s.
- Catholics, while identifying as Democrats, are quite willing to defect to Republican presidential candidates. Democratic defections were massive in 1972 in the Nixon-McGovern race but also quite high in the Eisenhower and Reagan races. Catholic Republicans are less likely to defect, but their highest cross-over voting was to Kennedy-Johnson and Clinton.
- Failure to vote is often as common among white non-Latino Catholic Democrats (WNLCD) as is cross-over voting. It was relatively high among white non-Latino Catholic Republicans (WNLCR) only in 1988 and 2008.

- The greatest partisan loyalty and highest turnout among WNLCD came in 1960 with a fellow Catholic on the ticket. The higher turnout/high Democratic loyalty pattern of WNLCD was not replicated with John Kerry, a fellow Catholic, in 2004, but it did incrementally increase in the 2000s.
- There has been a gradual realignment of WNLC over the time span. Part of what appears as realignment is simply the move back to normalcy after the extraordinary Kennedy election, reaching a plateau in the seventies. Realignment or Republican alignment accelerated steeply in the Reagan years, to the point where Democrats have little advantage among WNLC party identifiers and no partisan advantage at all in actual vote.
- The rigidity of partisanship has quickened among WNLC in the 2000s. Defection is lower, and turnout is modestly higher, except for Republicans in 2008. The proportion of Catholics being psychologically available to *swing* in any given election may be declining. WNLC appear to be a deeply divided electorate.

Strong cultural identification may have kept Catholics in the Democratic fold longer than their rising class status would have predicted. Further, as wedge issues moved to the forefront, we should expect that some of the perturbations and general trends evident in Table 4.1 should reflect value differences.

In research presented elsewhere, we analyzed the forces that led to low turnout and defection among white, non-Latino Catholic Democrats from 1960 to 1996. This work uses complex statistical tools to interpret why Catholic Democrats did not remain loyal partisans during the post–New Deal period.[27] First, we teased out common factors (i.e., underlying dimensions) from respondents' feelings toward groups and positions on issues in any given presidential election. There is basic continuity in the importance of each factor from 1964 to 1996. Second, the factors that explain failure to vote and crossing over to the opposition are analyzed. Substantively, they show that the heavy defections of white non-Latino Catholic Democrats to Nixon or Wallace in 1968 were based on negative feelings toward African Americans and toward government policies presumably aimed at enhancing equality of opportunity. They also tell us that in 1980 WNLCD defection to Reagan was not so much his conservative family values positions (abortion, women's rights, etc.) or his economic philosophy; rather, it resulted more from negative feelings on race and the role of government. Family values were not independently important in WNLCD defection until after four years of the Clintons. Throughout the entire post–New Deal period and especially from 1964 to 1992, Democrats lost adherents among white non-Latino Catholics because Republicans were able to find an acceptable language that rubbed salt on the open wounds of racial grievances and created a sense of relative deprivation among whites. Family values issues merged with the dominant race-based party ideology factor in 1972, 1992, and 2000. In both 1964 and 1992, appeals to patriotism were also sources of instability in Democratic loyalty.

The other source for change from the Democratic-favoring culture is the diminishing distinctiveness of Catholic life. Earlier, we spoke about the process of assimilation and upward mobility. Here, it is more important to note the drastic change in mass-attendance patterns.[28] At the end of the time-series, frequency of mass attendance in all Catholic age cohorts is greatly reduced. Attendance dropped precipitously in the 1970s, and only among Catholics who came of age during the New Deal was it partially restored. Ironically, this is the age cohort that is both most conservative on family values but has remained, until recently, the most loyal to the Democrats. Attendance among others never recovered, and it is lowest among Catholics younger than forty-five on down to the most recent new voters. Yet, with the exception of the youngest Catholics in 2008, the greatest growth in Republican affiliation has come in the younger age cohorts. The growth is disproportionately among the younger men, who again show weaker attendance than the younger women. Neither younger men nor younger women are especially inclined to buy into Republican appeals on family values and abortion. According to ANES data, the younger men prefer Republican economic and racial policies. The younger women prefer Democratic economic and social justice policies. In that respect, neither is greatly distinctive from their age cohorts outside Catholicism. There is slightly more recognition and acceptance of Catholic social teaching among the younger women but of course they are more loyal in mass attendance.

These kinds of findings have led Leege et al., Abramowitz and Saunders, and Mockabee to suggest that Catholics are gradually moving away from a system of partisanship based on group identity toward partisanship based on liberal or conservative ideology.[29] In that respect, they may be moving toward the patterns of split partisanship found within mainline and evangelical Protestants.

Latino Catholics

Intensive analysis of ANES data shows that white non-Latino Catholics did not differ significantly from white non-Latino Protestants in their party identification, turnout, or vote choice in 2008. They were slightly more Democratic, Obama-leaning, and likely to vote but not at a level of statistical significance. They were very different from Latino Catholics, however. Forty-eight percent of non-Latino white Catholics chose Obama; a whopping 73 percent of Latino Catholics chose him. Forty-five percent of non-Latino white Catholics were Republican, and 44 percent were Democratic. Among Latino Catholics, conversely, only 27 percent were Republican, and 63 percent were Democratic. In contrasting 2004 and 2008, the gap between white non-Latino Catholics' vote and Latino Catholics' vote grew significantly: 50 percent of the former voted Kerry, whereas 63 percent of the latter voted Kerry (fourteen-point gap); 48 percent of the former voted Obama, whereas 73 percent of the latter voted Obama (twenty-five-point gap). Further, for reasons

outlined in Espinosa's chapter on Latinos (Chapter 10), Hispanic Catholics were more mobilized in 2008 than in any previous year. They were critical to Obama's success among Catholics overall.

We cannot address *long-term* trends in the partisan loyalties of Latino Catholics because of insufficient ANES time-series data and will leave this to Espinosa with other data. There are knotty measurement problems in deciding when a Latino is actually a Catholic, although in the country of origin they may have been baptized Catholic and imbibed Catholic culture. We have enough of a baseline in ANES data to claim that in 2004, there was substantial movement by Latinos in a Republican direction. The magnitude is in dispute. Pre-election surveys and trend data during the campaign cannot sustain the 44-percent Republican claim of the exit polls.[30] The National Annenberg Election Study of 2004 can support a 39-percent figure. It also observes more movement to the Republicans among Latino evangelicals than among Latino Catholics. The former tend to resemble the movement in the last two decades of non-Latino evangelicals. In 2008, without a doubt, Latino Catholics were solidly in the Democratic column. They and black Catholics accounted for Obama's comfortable margin among all Catholics.

Catholic Women and Obama

The gender gap between white non-Latino men and women virtually disappeared in 2004 and stayed that way in 2008. However, there may be a curious dynamic operating. The younger women are remaining stable in their party loyalty (i.e., Democrats choose a Democrat, etc.). The younger men, the data hint, were increasingly likely to identify as Republicans between 2004 and 2008 but to defect and vote for the Democrat Obama. As Knutson points out in her chapter on women, the young men appear to have bucked their generational trend in becoming Republican, in that respect acting more like older generations of Catholic men; yet, when it came down to vote choice they were more likely to comply with the generational trend of younger Americans toward the Democratic candidate. The most Republican generation remains Baby Boomers (ages forty-eight to sixty-two). And, as expected, those of higher socioeconomic status and those residing in the South were likely to vote for McCain (Table 4.2).

Catholic Religious Practices, the God Gap, and Barack Obama

As is usually the case, the "God Gap" was smaller among Catholics than among Protestants. Differences in white non-Latino Catholics' voting across levels of religious involvement are shown in Table 4.3. Although weekly mass attendance, daily prayer, and receiving guidance from religion are associated with increased support for McCain, none of these relationships reaches statistical significance (i.e., it could occur by chance).

TABLE 4.2 Vote choice of white, non-Latino Catholics by demographic information

(Percent of white Catholic voters in each category noted in parentheses)	*Major party presidential vote*	
	Obama (%)	*McCain (%)*
Generation		
WWII or before [age 63 and up] (31%)	54	46
Baby Boomers [age 44–62] (35%)	44	56
Generation X [age 29–43] (18%)	47	53
Generation Y [age 28 and under] (17%)	50	50
Education⋆		
High school diploma or less (31%)	66	34
Associates or bachelor's degree (64%)	41	59
Advanced degree (5%)	27	73
Income (household)⋆		
Less than $49,999 (35%)	72	28
More than $50,000 (65%)	32	68
Sex		
Male (42%)	47	53
Female (58%)	49	51
Marital Status		
Married (51%)	43	57
Not married (50%)	53	47
Region of residence⋆		
Southern (29%)	36	64
Non-southern (71%)	53	47

Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding. Data are from the 2008 American National Election Studies Time Series Study.
⋆Relationship is statistically significant at $p < .05$, Chi-square test

Beginning in 2006, the ANES added new measures that permit scholars to see whether the manner in which a person is religious affects partisanship and vote choice. Until now, ANES religiosity measures tapped behaviors that are especially normative for evangelical Protestants (midweek attendance, private prayer, Bible reading, etc.) but overlooked the sacramental, incarnational, justice-oriented styles of religiosity more characteristic of Catholics (Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, some Lutherans). The former we have called *religious individualists* and the latter *religious communitarians.*[31] Our results for white non-Latino Catholics do not show statistically significant differentiation in Obama or McCain support along this dimension. For Latino Catholics, conversely, small samples do not allow the observation to

TABLE 4.3 Vote choice of white, non-Latino Catholics by religious practice

(Percent of white Catholic voters in each category noted in parentheses)	*Major party presidential vote*	
	Obama (%)	*McCain (%)*
"Born-again" self-identification⋆		
Born-again (17%)	20	80
Not born-again (83%)	53	47
Frequency of attendance at worship services		
Never (27%)	54	46
Monthly/yearly (39%)	49	51
Weekly (35%)	43	57
Religion provides guidance in day-to-day living		
None/religion not important (20%)	51	49
Some (24%)	52	48
Quite a bit (18%)	53	47
A great deal (38%)	42	58
Frequency of prayer		
Never (7%)	50	50
Weekly (64%)	53	47
Daily (29%)	38	62
When respondent has tried to be a good Christian…		
Tried to help others [communitarian religiosity] (69%)	49	52
Tried to avoid sin [individualist religiosity] (31%)	43	57

Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding. Data are from the 2008 American National Election Studies Time Series Study.
⋆Relationship is statistically significant at $p < .05$, Chi-square test

reach statistical significance, but there is a tendency for people who try to be good Christians by helping others in need to be Obama supporters, whereas those who try to be good Christians by avoiding sin choose McCain. This is an interesting subtext on differences between personal righteousness and social justice. Religion means different things to different people and it may have political consequences.

Catholics, Obama, and Domestic and Foreign Policy

Vote choice involves not only the characteristics of the voter but his or her opinions on campaign issues. So we turn next to Table 4.4, which displays the vote as a function of policy attitudes. In the domestic policy realm, significant associations are found with attitudes on abortion, gay marriage, universal health care, and the state

TABLE 4.4 Vote choice of white, non-Latino Catholics by issue positions

(Percent of white Catholic voters in each category noted in parentheses)	*Presidential vote*	
	Obama (%)	*McCain (%)*
Domestic policy		
Abortion★		
Never permitted (13%)	26	74
Some exceptions (rape, incest, mother's life, etc.) (64%)	47	53
Always permitted (23%)	62	38
Same-sex marriage★		
Not allow (36%)	46	54
No marriage, but allow civil unions (29%)	30	70
Allow (34%)	62	37
Spending on the poor★		
Decrease or cut entirely (9%)	53	47
Keep the same (37%)	33	68
Increase (53%)	58	42
Increase/decrease immigration levels		
Decrease (42%)	50	50
Keep the same (43%)	42	58
Increase (15%)	53	47
Universal health care★ †		
Oppose (49%)	29	71
Neither favor nor oppose (7%)	29	71
Favor (44%)	70	30
Evaluation of nation's economy in past year★		
Somewhat better (1%)	0	100
Stayed about the same (4%)	11	89
Somewhat worse (23%)	38	63
Much worse (72%)	54	36
Foreign policy		
Government efforts to reduce terrorism★		
Approve (69%)	34	66
Neither approve nor disapprove (14%)	79	21
Disapprove (17%)	78	22
Handling of the Iraq War★		
Approve (33%)	21	79
Neither approve nor disapprove (12%)	32	68
Disapprove (55%)	68	32
Spending on foreign aid		
Decrease or cut entirely (16%)	33	67
Keep the same (42%)	50	50
Increase (42%)	51	49
Spending on border security★		
Increase (47%)	55	45
Keep the same (41%)	46	54
Decrease or cut entirely (12%)	25	75

Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding. Data are from the 2008 American National Election Studies Time Series Study.

★Relationship is statistically significant at $p < .05$, Chi-square test

†Question asked of only half the ANES sample

of the economy—all issues that were discussed repeatedly in the 2008 campaign. Immigration, emphasized far less by the candidates than the other issues, is not a statistically significant predictor of vote choice. On the foreign policy side, approval/disapproval of the government's handling of the prevention of terrorism and the war in Iraq are related to the vote, as is spending on border security.

The analysis thus far has examined only two variables at a time, but we know that the vote decision is a complex choice involving multiple considerations simultaneously. Thus, our final step in analyzing the ANES data is to build a multivariate model; that is, a statistical procedure that helps us to assess the *relative impact* of each predictor variable (e.g., race or age or economic attitudes or church attendance) while controlling for the effects of all other variables. Because the major-party vote choice is dichotomous—either Obama or McCain—we have used a statistical technique called *logistic regression*. This technique generates predicted probabilities of voting for Obama based on independent variables we have placed into the equation. The predictor variables in the model include demographic characteristics, religiosity, party identification, and positions on policy issues.[32] Table 4.5 presents the findings.

As is often the case in this kind of analysis of voting, party identification is the most potent predictor. Moving from identification as a strong Democrat to strong Republican generates a decrease of .87 in the mean predicted probability of voting for Obama, all else being equal. Several other variables emerge as statistically significant (i.e., findings beyond what might be expected by chance alone) even when controlling for partisanship and other factors. Among white non-Latino Catholics, higher socioeconomic status, as measured by education and income, was strongly associated with a vote for McCain. Those taking the most pro-choice position on abortion were more likely to support Obama than were those who preferred abortion to be restricted to hard cases. Disapproval of the handling of the Iraq war was a significant predictor of a vote for Obama, whereas opposition to government aid for blacks had a significant effect in not voting for Obama. The Iraq war was the most potent of the issues that predicted a vote for Obama among white non-Latino Catholics (.69), followed by position on government aid to blacks (.63), whereas abortion was the least potent of the three issues (.15).

These findings are consistent with the historical summary presented above in several important respects. First, McCain, who could "speak Catholic" on other issues, could not completely shed the albatross of the Iraq war issue. Second, increases in social status push Catholics toward the Republicans. However, the potency of the "aid to blacks" variable suggests that the role of racial resentment in pulling white Catholics away from the Democrats throughout the past three decades persisted in 2008. Finally, abortion remains an important issue for some Catholics, but its impact is often overstated, particularly relative to other policy concerns. Despite them, Obama has continued to reach out to Catholics by making visits to the Vatican to meet with Pope Benedict XVI and promoting Catholic-friendly domestic policy issues (Figure 4.6).[33]

TABLE 4.5 Model of 2008 Presidential vote choice, white non-Latino Catholics

	Coefficient	*Std. Error*	*Potency*
Abortion always permitted	2.777	1.011	*0.15
Abortion never permitted	–0.094	1.119	
Gay marriage not allowed	–0.015	0.878	
Increase/decrease immigration	–0.05	1.845	
Increase/decrease federal aid to poor	–0.351	0.929	
Government aid to blacks (+ oppose)	–2.935	1.513	*0.63
Evaluation of national economy	–0.189	3.04	
Disapproval of government handling of terrorism	1.289	1.222	
Disapproval of government handling of Iraq war	3.06	1.478	*0.69
Party identification	–6.044	1.498	*0.87
Religiosity – individual piety	–0.438	1.264	
Religiosity – communitarian	–0.119	0.894	
Female	0.32	0.922	
Baby boomer generation	2.22	0.988	*0.01
Generation X	5.002	1.588	*0.02
Generation Y	1.701	1.302	
Income	–5.829	1.889	*0.45
Education	–6.014	1.864	*0.69
South	0.009	0.912	
Constant	6.342	3.682	
Number of cases:	156		
% correctly predicted:	90		
Nagelkerke R^2	0.784		

* $p < .05$

Data from 2008 ANES Time Series Study. Model estimated using logistic regression. Dependent variable is coded 1=vote for Obama, 0=vote for McCain.

In sum, the 2008 election contest between Obama and McCain displayed electoral cleavages long in the making but also revealed the potential for new alignments with the Republican or Democratic parties in subsequent elections. Will the younger Catholics who were attracted to the fresh face of Obama remain in the Democratic fold? Can Obama solidify a new base among young progressives and cultivate a Religious Left? Although the raw numbers of young progressives appear small in any given election, their importance as a base for the party grows in succeeding elections. Or, can Republicans who made progress with Protestant

FIGURE 4.6 President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama meet with Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican, Rome, Italy, on July 10, 2009. Courtesy: Official White House photo by Pete Souza.

Latinos in 2004 find the right combination of candidate and message to attract Latino Catholics in the future? Regardless of which way their votes swing in the future, it seems safe to assume that Catholics will continue to be the focus of intense campaign efforts by both political parties and the focus of considerable interest from the scholarly community. They are too big and split too evenly not to notice.

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27 Leege et al., *Politics of Cultural Differences*, 132–134, 160–168.
28 David C. Leege and Paul D. Mueller, "How Catholic Is the Catholic Vote?"
29 See Leege et al., *Politics of Cultural Differences;* Alan I. Abramowitz and Kyle L. Saunders, "Rational Hearts and Minds: Social Identity, Ideology and Party Identification in the American Electorate," paper presented to the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, 2004; and Stephen T. Mockabee, "The Political Behavior of American Catholics: Change and Continuity," 81–104, in J. Matthew Wilson, ed., *From Pews to Polling Places: Faith and Politics in the American Religious Mosaic*. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2007).
30 David L. Leal, Matt A. Barreto, Jongho Lee, and Rodolfo de la Garza, "The Latino Vote in the 2004 Election," *P.S.: Political Science and Politics* XXXVIII (January 2005), 41–49.

31 See Stephen T. Mockabee, Kenneth D. Wald, and David C. Leege, "Is there a Religious Left? Evidence from the 2006 and 2008 ANES," paper presented to the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Toronto, September 3–6, 2009.

32 Notably absent from the vote model is a health care measure. The 2008 ANES Time Series Study employed several split-half designs in which only a randomly chosen half of the sample received a given policy question. Unfortunately only half of the sample was asked about their views on whether the government or private insurers should provide health insurance (while the other half got an entirely different question about universal coverage). We could not produce a usable hybrid. Pew surveys identified health care as one of the three most important issues for white Catholics, but the small numbers of cases available in the ANES for analysis preclude using one or the other variable in our model.

33 Until the policy on the coverage of contraception by insurance companies was announced in early 2012, President Obama showed a pattern of deferential consultation with Catholic leadership on policy matters and often compromised with them before a controversial policy was announced. In this instance, conversations were held, compromise was not reached, the bishops worked with public relations consultants for seven months, and coterminous with Obama's announcement of the policy, the bishops launched a full-scale campaign framing the issue as one of religious liberty. Even after the Administration announced a compromise that the bishops initially found a step in the right direction, they decided to stick to their campaign. There was now a clearer rationale for the bishops' paradoxical reluctance to accept many of the features in the earlier health care reform that were consistent with Catholic social teaching—namely, the potential loss of autonomy in fulfilling the mission of Catholic institutions. Republican campaigners welcomed the opportunity this conflict opened for them in the 2012 campaign.

5

JEWS AND THE 2008 ELECTION

Kenneth D. Wald

To the astonishment of many social scientists, American Jews have long been a mainstay of the Democratic coalition. In the mid–twentieth century, Allinsmith and Allinsmith discovered that Jews were more lopsidedly Democratic than any other major religious group.[1] The pattern was remarkable because Jews had on average higher levels of education and income than most religious groups, traits that usually inclined voters to favor Republicans. Decades later, social scientists were equally perplexed to find that the pattern had persisted into the twenty-first century. Unlike Catholics, who had moved away from the Democratic Party as they climbed into the middle class in the decades after World War II, American Jews remained firmly anchored on the Democratic side of the presidential equation.[2]

This pattern of electoral stability—indicated by Figure 5.1—has been difficult to explain because it runs counter to conventional wisdom. Whereas Jewish commitment to the Democratic Party might have made sense when Jews were poor immigrants threatened by discrimination and prejudice, it seemed to defy rationality once Jews became widely accepted as full members of American society. What would it take, the Jewish neoconservatives of the 1970s wondered aloud, for Jews to abandon their "political stupidity" (by which they meant voting Democratic) and start voting Republican consistent with their economic self-interest?[3] In the late 1960s and 1970s, when Israel fell out of favor with many on the Left, blacks and Jews quarreled over affirmative action and urban crime, and the Republican Party moved to embrace Israel's cause, some observers saw the stirrings of partisan transformation.[4] Although there was some evidence of that trend in the presidential elections of 1976 and 1980 and in Jewish sympathy for selected Republican candidates in a few sub-presidential elections, the erosion in Jewish Democratic support was halted in the 1990s. From 1992 on, the Jewish presidential vote ran 3.5:1 or 4:1 in favor of Democrats.

Source: National exit polls reported in http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/national-exit-polls.html

FIGURE 5.1 Jewish percentage support for Democratic presidential candidates compared to entire electorate 1972–2004

Perhaps the presidential election of 2008 would change that pattern. Early in the campaign, it seemed that Jews might finally be on the verge of, if not realignment, at least a significant reconsideration of their historical voting patterns. As a leading scholar of American Jewish politics opined, "there is some reason to believe that this election may see a narrowing of the traditional gap between Jews and other Americans in their vote for president."[5] As we shall see below, this potential shift had much to do with the candidate who began as a long shot, became the front-runner and, in time, claimed the Democratic presidential nomination—Senator Barack Obama of Illinois.

Obama ended up doing just as well among Jewish voters as his immediate Democratic predecessors, Clinton, Gore, and Kerry. Much as Sherlock Holmes once solved a case by noticing a dog that did not bark, I will try to explain why the 2008 presidential campaign among Jews failed to produce electoral change. I contend that Jewish electoral stability in 2008 can be explained by an effective pro-Obama campaign that rebutted most of the accusations leveled against him by Jewish opponents and by the inability of the Republican Party to overcome deep-seated Jewish concerns about the GOP's commitment to social and religious pluralism.

This chapter examines the campaign with an eye on three major factors: the issues that made Senator Obama seem likely to do less well among Jews than his Democratic predecessors, the active campaign to frame him as hostile to Jewish interests, and the equally spirited response by Obama's supporters within the Jewish community. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the election outcomes and thoughts on where Jewish voters are likely to go in the future.

Obama's Jewish Problem

If a casting agency had been asked to create the perfect presidential candidate for American Jews in 2008, they might have sent somebody who looked a lot like

Barack Obama. Obama's compelling personal history would likely resonate with Jews, who could admire a candidate who was born in humble circumstances, raised by a single mother, and transformed by the dogged pursuit of education that led him to Columbia and Harvard, two Jewish favorites. His success against the odds would no doubt engender a feeling of common fate among Jews, who had a history of supporting other minorities who broke down political barriers.[6] By spurning a lucrative legal career for a stint as a community organizer and law professor, Obama displayed commitment to public service and social justice, two highly respected priorities in the Jewish community. Well-spoken, attentive to family, respectful of his elders, Obama could be described as a Jewish mother's dream child.

So why then was his political emergence thought likely to trouble the American Jewish community? Why did it threaten the venerable tradition of Jewish support for Democratic presidential candidates? In a few words: the Middle East and race.[7]

Dalin and Kolatch have demonstrated that Jews have looked to the American president to (1) speak out against anti-Semitism and advocate on their behalf as full citizens of the United States, (2) issue foreign policy statements against anti-Semitism and persecution of Jews around the globe, and (3) extend recognition of Jews by providing them with appointments to key government positions.[8] On the first two of these criteria, candidate Obama seemed a risky bet.

Although American Jews differ among themselves over Israeli policies and practices, the community is nonetheless united by a concern for Israel's survival. As Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab pointed out, the "American government's support for Israel" has for decades been "the top public affairs item" on the American Jewish political agenda.[9] In 2008, that concern was manifested principally over Iran. With its apparent commitment to obtaining nuclear weapons and history of subsidizing anti-Israel terrorist groups such as Hezbollah, Iran loomed as an existential threat to Israel. Furthermore, Iran's president publicly denied the Holocaust and threatened jihads that would wipe Israel—which he called "a stinking corpse"—off the map. Though these rants may have built up his popularity among the Iranian masses, they raised anxiety in the American Jewish community.

Although he condemned Iran and opposed its nuclear development in the same language as the other candidates in 2008, Senator Obama may have lacked credibility on the issue in the eyes of some American Jews. Part of the problem was his relative lack of a foreign policy record, the product of a very short national political career. So it was easy to use Obama's statement that he would meet face-to-face with Iranian leaders to resolve the conflict over Iran's nuclear ambition to portray the senator as hopelessly naïve and unschooled in power politics. By contrast, Senator John McCain, the Republican nominee, was a familiar face in American politics and, as a military hero, was presumed to exhibit the kind of toughness needed to confront Iran and other states that promoted anti-Israel terrorism.

For Jewish voters, concern about Israel was not solely a matter of Senator Obama's inexperience in world affairs. When voters are unfamiliar with a candidate's position

on an issue, they often make inferences about likely preferences from the candidate's personal traits such as race and religion.[10] Knowing little about his positions on the Middle East, some Jews were particularly concerned by Senator Obama's disputed Muslim background and undeniable Arab name.[11] Because Israel has been engaged in more than a half-century of war against Arab-Muslim states and movements that often preach vicious anti-Semitism, critics argued that personal ties to Islamic culture would dispose him to sympathize with Arabs and Muslims more than the Jewish state.

The Middle East was not the only issue threatening Jewish ties to the Democratic presidential nominee; race also emerged as a potential source of division. The long and tangled relationship between blacks and Jews in the United States has left many in both communities persuaded that people on the other side are hostile to them. Although Jews continue to support African American struggles for equality more fully than other white ethnoreligious groups, Jews nonetheless perceive a high degree of anti-Semitism in the black community.[12] In this case, what Jews knew about Senator Obama—that he had risen to prominence in Chicago politics—stoked racial concerns.

During his career as a community organizer and state legislator, Obama had occasionally interacted with two prominent members of Chicago's African American community—the Rev. Jesse Jackson and Minister Louis Farrakhan. Jews recalled Rev. Jackson's use of the slur term "Hymies" during the 1988 presidential campaign and Farrakhan's long history of anti-Jewish diatribes as head of the Nation of Islam. Keeping company with such men would certainly raise alarm among some in the Jewish community. Those concerns were exacerbated by the personal relationship between Senator Obama and his longtime pastor at the Trinity United Church of Christ, Reverend Jeremiah Wright. An exponent of Black Nationalist Christianity, Wright was pilloried for his contentious comments about American foreign policy, the treatment of black people, and wrongdoing by white power holders. Among Jews, Wright's harsh criticisms of Israel and what some interpreted as anti-Semitic comments particularly drew attention. Although Senator Obama stressed his differences with Rev. Wright over these issues and insisted that Wright was his spiritual rather than political mentor, the connection troubled many.

It is important to remind readers I am not saying that Jewish concerns about Obama's ties to Islam were necessarily the consequence of ethnic prejudice. Given the widespread perception that Islam is hostile to Israel's existence, it was rational for Jews to wonder about the loyalties of a candidate who had connections of some kind to Islam and no extensive foreign policy history. Similarly, it is not automatically a manifestation of racism to wonder whether an African-American candidate who had some kind of relationship with Jesse Jackson, Louis Farrakhan, and Jeremiah Wright might share their attitudes toward Jews. When one knows relatively little about the candidate, as was the case with Obama at the outset of the

TABLE 5.1 Jewish voters intended presidential vote in American Jewish Committee surveys

Intended presidential vote	*2004⋆ (%)*	*2008† (%)*
Democratic	69	57
Republican	24	30
Other	3	–
Not sure	5	13
Total	101	100
	(n =1000)	(n =914)

⋆Suppose the next general election for president were being held today and you had to choose between George W. Bush, the Republican, John Kerry, the Democrat or Ralph Nader, the independent – for whom would you vote?
†If the election for president were being held today, for whom would you vote – John McCain, Republican, or Barack Obama, Democrat?
‡Total does not equal 100% due to rounding error

2008 campaign, the candidate's opponents call attention to him or her. This does not mean that some Jews were not in fact motivated by ethnocentrism or racism but merely to insist that anxiety and concern among them had some legitimate basis. Like it or not, Americans generally reason about politics through group images and stereotypes.[13]

Given these issues, many observers foresaw potential for change in Jewish voting patterns in 2008. Polls released during the summer and early fall revealed some fire beneath the smoke. Surveys reported by the Gallup Organization, an advocacy group called the J Street Coalition, the American Jewish Committee, and the Berman Jewish Policy Archive at New York University all suggested that the Jewish support for Obama was not nearly as solid as it usually was for the Democratic nominee in presidential campaigns. The American Jewish Committee poll was especially revealing because the 2008 results could be compared with the same poll administered during the 2004 campaign (Table 5.1).[14]

Two things stand out from the comparison of the 2004 and 2008 results in Table 5.1. First, Barack Obama was the choice of a significantly smaller share of the Jewish population than had indicated a preference for the Democratic nominee in 2004, John Kerry. Although Obama still enjoyed majority support, his share of Jewish voters was 12 percent below Kerry's and the pro-Democratic gap between the two major candidates among Jews was much smaller in 2008 (27 percent) than in 2004 (45 percent). Second, opinion within the Jewish community was much less crystallized in 2008. The proportion of participants who said they were unsure who they would support in the presidential election was almost three times as large in 2008 as in 2004.[15] These results underlined Senator Obama's image problem with American Jews and how much work lay ahead for the Obama campaign.

The Anti-Obama Campaign

Political issues typically arise from conscious campaigns by political activists called "issue entrepreneurs" to put these subjects on the public agenda. In politicizing cultural differences, ambitious politicians attempt to identify issues that will raise concern and anxiety among their opponent's core supporters.[16] Dividing the electorate into "us" and "them," opposition research identifies susceptible components of the rival's likely voters and floods them with powerful symbols meant to instill doubts about how well the candidate actually represents their interests and values. The goal is to reduce support for the rival, encouraging the targeted groups either to sit out the campaign or to vote for the other candidate or party.

That script was followed to the letter (but without much success) during the 2008 campaign against Obama. As one target constituency, Jews were flooded with communication from Obama's opponents in the Jewish community almost moments after he declared his candidacy. Using electronic transmission, the anti-Obama forces deployed emotionally laden symbols to undercut support for the eventual Democratic nominee among Jewish voters. Late in 2007, a series of e-mails began to circulate among American Jews and others raising questions about Senator Obama on Israel/Iran and his views toward Jews (see Figure 5.2).[17] These e-mails contained a substantial number of allegations that respected non-partisan fact checkers such as Snopes.com and FactCheck.org considered false and misleading. Nonetheless, as we shall see, the charges took on a life of their own and became a matter of discussion among Jewish voters and leaders.

With regard to Iran and the Middle East, the critics claimed that Obama, a member of the United Church of Christ and a self-described Christian, was secretly a Muslim who swore his Senate oath of office on a Koran. As will be pointed out in the chapter on Muslims (Chapter 6), Obama was said to be not just a closet Muslim but a devotee of the fundamentalist style of Wahhabi Islam as a result of attendance at a madrassa (Muslim religious academy) during his childhood residence in Indonesia.[18] Further "proof" of Obama's real sympathies was provided by evidence that he roomed in college with two students from Pakistan and visited that country on a world tour as a young adult—something, it was alleged, only a Muslim would do.[19] Similarly, much was made of Obama's friendship with Rashid Khalidi, described as a "radical Palestinian activist" but in fact a respected if controversial scholar of Middle East affairs. Inculcated in anti-Jewish sentiment, it was claimed, Obama would undoubtedly swing American support to the anti-Israeli coalition.

The same tools were utilized to play up ties between Senator Obama and black leaders who had expressed anti-Semitic positions. In 2004, to take one such case, Michelle Obama attended a women's luncheon sponsored by Jesse Jackson's influential Operation Rainbow/PUSH organization in Chicago. This was not an occasion to be missed by the wife of an African-American candidate for the U.S. Senate in Illinois. In a published photo of the event, Mrs. Obama appeared with a

This email, distributed widely among American Jews and others, was apparently sent in January, 2008:

If you do not ever forward anything else, please forward this to all your contacts...this is very scary to think of what lies ahead of us here in our own United States...better heed this and pray about it and share it.

Who is Barack Obama?

Probable U. S. presidential candidate, Barack Hussein Obama was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, to Barack Hussein Obama, Sr., a black MUSLIM from Nyangoma-Kogel, Kenya and Ann Dunham, a white ATHEIST from Wichita, Kansas. Obama's parents met at the University of Hawaii.

When Obama was two years old, his parents divorced. His father returned to Kenya. His mother then married Lolo Soetoro, a RADICAL Muslim from Indonesia. When Obama was 6 years old, the family relocated to Indonesia. Obama attended a MUSLIM school in Jakarta. He also spent two years in a Catholic school.

Obama takes great care to conceal the fact that he is a Muslim. He is quick to point out that, "He was once a Muslim, but that he also attended Catholic school." Obama's political handlers are attempting to make it appear that he is not a radical.

Obama's introduction to Islam came via his father, and this influence was temporary at best. In reality, the senior Obama returned to Kenya soon after the divorce, and never again had any direct influence over his son's education.

Lolo Soetoro, the second husband of Obama's mother, Ann Dunham, introduced his stepson to Islam. Obama was enrolled in a Wahabi school in Jakarta. Wahabism is the RADICAL teaching that is followed by the Muslim terrorists who are now waging Jihad against the western world. Since it is politically expedient to be a CHRISTIAN when seeking major public office in the United States, Barack Hussein Obama has joined the United Church of Christ in an attempt to downplay his Muslim background. ALSO, keep in mind that when he was sworn into office he DID NOT use the Holy Bible, but instead the Koran.

Barack Hussein Obama will NOT recite the Pledge of Allegiance nor will he show any reverence for our flag. While others place their hands over their hearts, Obama turns his back to the flag and slouches.

Let us all remain alert concerning Obama's expected presidential candidacy.

The Muslims have said they plan on destroying the US from the inside out, what better way to start than at the highest level - through the President of the United States, one of their own!!!!

FIGURE 5.2 A publicly disseminated email to American Jews and others, January 2008. Source: http://www.snopes.com/politics/obama/muslim.asp

judge, a former POW in Iraq, several ministers, the wife of an influential minister, and other prominent women from Chicago's African-American community. The presence at the luncheon of Khadijah Farrakhan, wife of Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, somehow became evidence to certain bloggers that Mrs. Obama shared the hateful anti-Jewish attitudes expressed by Louis Farrakhan and that the Nation of Islam was part of Senator Obama's "inner circle."[20]

There is a qualitative difference between the kinds of legitimate anxiety Jews might have about Obama's background, especially given their unfamiliarity with him prior to the presidential campaign, and the willful, sometimes bizarre misrepresentations promoted by anti-Obama forces. Even so, none of this discussion is meant to imply that all Jewish opposition to the Obama campaign was driven by this effort or that Jews were unable rationally to prefer other candidates to

FIGURE 5.3 Postcard from extreme anti-Obama campaign directed to Florida's Jewish community. Source: http://atlasshrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas_shrugs/2008/10/the-great-rever.html

him. Jewish Republicans—typically 20 percent to 25 percent of the community—would certainly be expected to prefer their party's own candidate to any Democratic nominee. The most prominent Republican outreach to the Jewish community, independent Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, criticized Obama's foreign policies as naïve and unrealistic without repeating the wilder arguments circulating on the Internet.

Discovering the source of these e-mail and web-based attacks is challenging because most left no tracks.[21] At one time or another, journalists speculated that the e-mails and web postings came originally from Obama's opponents in the campaign for the Democratic nomination, extreme right-wing groups, and Republican sources. Regardless of origin, these attacks created an environment that could enable the senator's rivals to use careful language that would effectively convey coded messages. It would be much easier, for example, to distrust Senator Obama's commitment to Israel—the message of mailings to Jewish voters by the Florida Republican Party—if one had already heard that the candidate was a devotee of a radical form of Islam and a pal of Israel's most ruthless critics (see Figure 5.3). As often happens, the subterranean campaign did the heavy lifting so that the manifest campaign could offer cooler, more cerebral messages.

The Response

As one of the best organized and funded campaigns in recent memory, the Obama organization understood the candidate's vulnerability to attacks aimed at the Jewish community. Reacting to the charges circulating among Jewish voters, a small but important constituency, the Obama campaign mounted an impressive counter-offensive to blunt the impact of the attacks and draw Jews back to their customary Democratic loyalty. Indeed, it is hard to recall another Democratic presidential campaign that directed so much effort to the Jewish community.

One tactic was to emphasize the senator's high level of Jewish support in Illinois among people who knew him best. In fact, Obama's rise to national prominence had been anchored by strong support from the Jewish community in Chicago.[22] During his legislative career, Obama represented heavily Jewish areas of the city and became comfortable campaigning among Jewish voters. He was mentored by Abner Mikvah, a federal judge and fixture in Chicago politics with strong roots in the Jewish community. Obama drew heavily on the Jewish community for his organization, entrusting direction of the campaign to David Axelrod and utilizing a number of other influential Chicago Jews to assist his campaign fundraising. Through their connections, Obama's Chicago supporters emphasized that he was, as the saying goes, good for the Jews. Shortly before the crucial Ohio primary, the senator appeared in a well-publicized meeting with several hundred Jewish leaders in Cleveland.[23] Most of the attendees were positively impressed by his performance, and this verdict was widely publicized to the Jewish community. Later in the campaign, the senator fielded a conference call with a reported 900 rabbis and benefited from the formation of "Rabbis for Obama," believed to be the first rabbinical association ever formed to support a presidential candidate.[24]

To combat his perceived weakness on Israel, Obama took a well-publicized Middle East trip in July, 2008, with stops at the Western Wall and other locales that would be familiar to an attentive Jewish audience. He met with Israeli leaders, including Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, and reassured them of his continuing commitment to the safety and security of the Jewish state. Shortly after winning the Democratic nomination in early June, he appeared at the annual Policy Conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, considered the most influential pro-Israel organization in Washington. Obama began by referring humorously to the "provocative" e-mails sent to many in the Jewish community:

> They're filled with tall-tales and dire warnings about a certain candidate for President and all I want to say is let me know if you see this guy named Barack Obama because he sounds pretty scary. But if anybody has been confused by these emails I want you to know that today I'll be speaking from my heart and as a true friend of Israel.[25]

FIGURE 5.4 The Jewish Council for Education and Research promoted "The Great Schlep," which was to have Jewish grandchildren visit their grandparents in Florida, educate them about Obama, and swing the crucial Florida vote in his favor. Courtesy: The Jewish Council for Education and Research.

His speech earned rave reviews, and he was deemed acceptable by American Israel Public Affairs Committee leaders.

During the campaign, the Obama organization made special efforts to appeal to the large concentration of Jewish voters in South Florida. Hoping to put the state in the Democratic column, there was particular concern that Jewish retirees and seniors in the Sunshine State were wavering in their commitment to Obama.[26] The most amusing effort to overcome this problem, the so-called Great Schlep (Yiddish for a burdensome journey) urged young Jews to visit their grandparents in Florida and threaten to withhold future visits if the grandparents did not vote for Obama.[27] The organizers of this campaign enlisted the comedienne Sarah Silverman to make a series of videos that became YouTube favorites (Figure 5.4).

The Outcome

On the basis of exit polls, Jewish support for Senator Obama reached 78 percent on election day (and 76 percent in Florida), a figure right on the mark achieved by Democratic nominees in the three preceding presidential elections. Though it is tempting to dismiss the anti-Obama campaign among Jews as an abject failure, there are some signs the negative campaign in the Jewish community might have had some impact. Given the collapse of the financial sector during the presidential campaign and the general rise in Obama support among many electoral groups, one might have expected the Jewish Democratic vote similarly to increase a few points.

It could be that the e-mails and web postings did constrain some Jews who might otherwise have moved into the Obama camp.

This overall pattern of the election returns may disguise significant differences among Jews. Lacking data from election-day or post-election surveys with large numbers of Jewish respondents, we turn instead to the voting intentions of Jews in the September survey by the Berman Jewish Policy Archive.[28] Like the AJC survey reported in Table 5.1, the Berman survey indicated that the 70 percent of Jews who had decided on a candidate favored Obama by roughly two to one.

In considering potential divisions within the Jewish community, we must start with the major political cleavage dividing Orthodox from non-Orthodox Jews in the United States.[29] Unlike their non-Orthodox brethren, the Orthodox usually take fairly conservative positions on social issues (such as abortion) and on Israel and have increasingly favored Republican presidential candidates. That was certainly true in 2008. In the Berman survey, the Orthodox respondents who had decided on a presidential candidate favored John McCain over Barack Obama by 50 percent to 18 percent. Among the non-Orthodox who declared a preference (80 percent), Obama was preferred over McCain by 56 percent to 24 percent. Just 10 percent of the Jewish community in most surveys, the Orthodox do not dramatically influence the overall tenor of Jewish politics nor do they prevent American Jews from standing out politically from other religious groups in their overwhelming Democratic bias. However, because they are both more conservative *and* more religiously observant, they may suggest a stronger religious influence on the Jewish vote than actually obtains. Because so many apparent political differences between Jews based on religious commitment turn out to largely reflect the influence of the Orthodox, I employ statistical controls to adjust for their distinctive behavior.

Table 5.2 presents data on presidential preference by religious commitment for non-orthodox American Jews. Researchers have suggested the presence of a "God Gap" in American politics such that highly religious citizens are more attracted to conservative and Republican candidates than the less religious.[30] Though there were some differences consistent with this hypothesis among the Jewish participants in the Berman survey, they were not large and did not appear on all questions. Even discounting the Orthodox, Jews who believed in God were much less likely to favor Obama and more likely to prefer McCain than nonbelievers. On this measure, however, both Jewish believers and skeptics preferred Obama to McCain overall. There were few meaningful differences in presidential preference among Jews on three subjective measures of religious attachment: importance of religion in life, importance of being Jewish, and commitment to faith. Though higher levels of private prayer did encourage a higher level of support for McCain, there were no notable differences associated with attendance at worship services or synagogue membership. And although Israel was presumed to be a problem issue for Obama among Jews, the Berman poll showed to the contrary that having visited Israel had

TABLE 5.2 Jewish presidential preference by religious traits (percent)

	Obama	*McCain*	*Undecided*	*Total*
Believes in God				
Yes (953)	49.5	27.9	22.6	100.0
No (431)	71.0	15.6	13.4	100.0
Considers religion _____ important.				
Very (287)	51.9	27.6	20.5	100.0
Somewhat (527)	53.0	24.4	22.7	100.1
Not (571)	61.8	21.8	16.5	100.1
Being Jewish is _____ important				
Very (625)	55.4	24.3	20.3	100.0
Somewhat (494)	55.8	24.7	19.5	100.0
Not (270)	59.2	21.8	19.1	100.1
Commitment to religious faith is ____ strong.				
Very (328)	56.3	24.5	19.3	100.1
Somewhat (466)	54.0	26.8	19.2	100.0
Not (594)	58.1	21.5	20.4	100.0
Attends religious services				
Monthly or more (278)	55.2	27.1	17.7	100.0
A few times a year (366)	52.1	24.3	23.5	99.9
Yearly (299)	54.9	25.4	19.7	100.0
Never (445)	61.5	20.8	17.7	100.0
Prays				
At least daily (293)	47.7	31.9	20.4	100.0
Monthly (288)	57.4	24.6	18.0	100.0
Yearly (295)	55.2	23.4	21.4	100.0
Never (510)	61.0	19.6	19.4	100.0
Synagogue member				
Yes (442)	54.8	24.8	20.4	100.0
No (915)	56.7	23.8	19.4	99.9
Been to Israel				
Yes (449)	56.5	24.9	18.6	100.0
No (935)	56.1	23.6	20.4	100.1
Is _____ emotionally attached to Israel				
Very (334)	50.3	31.3	18.4	100.0
Somewhat (574)	55.4	26.8	17.9	100.1
Not (480)	60.7	16.2	23.1	100.0

no impact on presidential preference. Being strongly emotionally attached to it produced larger but still moderate effects.

Strikingly, Table 5.2 shows that once the Orthodox are removed from the analysis, all categories of Jews preferred Obama to McCain regardless of their religious traits. One way to emphasize the uniqueness of Jews is to compare them with non-Jews. Recall that there was a 30+ percentage point difference in Obama's lead over McCain among Jews with both strong and weak levels of religious commitment. For non-Jews, by contrast, respondents who were strongly committed to their religious faith preferred McCain over Obama by 30 percent whereas those who were not strongly attached to religion favored Obama by 5 percent. Though the removal of the Orthodox amplifies the difference between Jews and non-Jews, it did not account for it entirely.

Some of the reasons for Obama's subsequent success with Jewish voters in November were apparent from the issue basis of candidate preferences in the Berman poll. Figure 5.5a shows the issues where Senator McCain had the largest edge over Senator Obama among poll participants who declared a presidential preference in September. Figure 5.5b displays a number of Senator Obama's best issues. The percentage just below each issue label indicates the percentage of respondents who ranked that issue among the three most important reasons for their candidate preference.

In September, Obama appeared to be winning the issues that commanded the most concern from Jewish voters in the survey. Among respondents identifying the economy and health care as major concerns—the two issues that generated far more salience than any other—Obama was preferred to McCain handily. The five issues on which Senator McCain was preferred to Senator Obama were ranked among the top three concerns by an average of just 12 percent of the sample. By contrast, the issues favoring Obama were highly salient to 26 percent of the sample.

Furthermore, the gaps in voter preference between the two candidates among Jewish voters were much wider on Obama's core issues than those issues associated with McCain. Note that Obama's worst issue among those where he was favored, the economy, yielded a gap between Obama and McCain that was only slightly smaller than McCain's best issue, immigration. A 36-percent gap in Obama's favor on an issue of concern to three-fifths of the sample produced much better results than a 44-percent gap favoring McCain on an issue such as immigration, which was salient to just a handful (7 percent) of Jewish voters.

The three issues heavily promoted by the anti-Obama forces—Iran, terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—did cut in McCain's favor among Jews at the beginning of the campaign. Whether this was because the electronic campaign had worked or simply because McCain entered the race with what were considered better foreign policy and security credentials, these issues were considered marginal by respondents who had made up their minds about the presidential

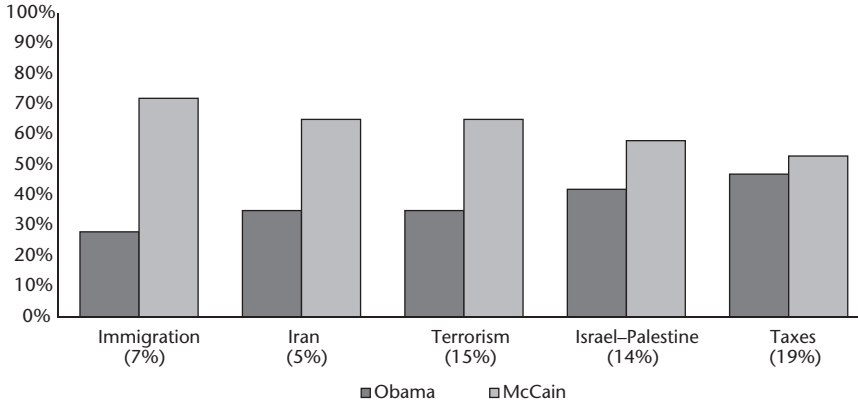

FIGURE 5.5a Jewish Obama and McCain votes by immigration, Iran, terrorism, Israel, and taxes

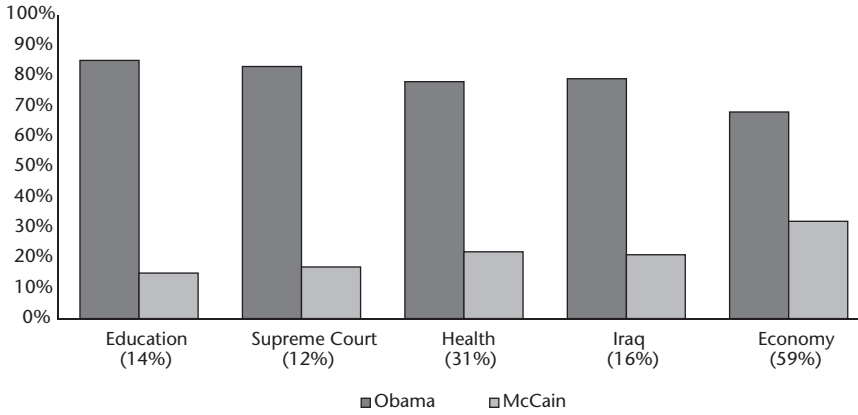

FIGURE 5.5b Jewish Obama and McCain votes by education, Supreme Court, health, Iraq, and the economy

race. On the issues that mattered to far more Jewish respondents in September, Obama had a strong lead. Even on Iraq, an issue that might be expected to have cut in McCain's favor because of his military background, the 16 percent of voters who considered Iraq a top-three issue favored Obama by almost 60 percent. Most Jewish voters who regarded Iraq as a high priority may have been registering a vote of no confidence in the continuing American occupation rather than endorsing the war effort.

Given the lopsided Jewish support for Obama in 2008, the campaign against him can hardly be considered a ringing success. Although the Jewish/non-Jewish gap in Democratic support did narrow a bit, that was because non-Jewish voters increased their support for the 2008 nominee and moved in the direction of Jews.

Why Jews Stood Pat

Why did Jews not respond more to the anti-Obama blandishments directed to them? Part of the answer is likely to be the energetic counter-campaign mobilized to retain Jewish support. However, this campaign worked to a considerable degree because the ground had been prepared over preceding decades.

Though there are many reasons commonly offered to explain continuing Jewish support for the Democratic Party, the most persuasive emphasizes self-interest. Self-interest is not simply or solely a matter of economics, as many believe, but reflects deeper concerns about group identity. In the case of American Jewry, the consistent priority has been attaining and preserving full membership in American society. Despite their economic success, American Jews remain alert to the possibility of discrimination and prejudice against them. As such, Jews have become devotees of classic liberalism, the doctrine that asserts the incompetence of the state in matters of religion.

At the founding of the United States in the late eighteenth century, Jews campaigned successfully to remove religious definitions of citizenship. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, communal energy was devoted principally to protecting Jews from discrimination in housing, education, occupational mobility, and other domains. From at least the 1920s on, Jews have believed that the Democrats are more committed to a liberal society than are Republicans. Though this image may have frayed in the 1970s, it was burnished in the 1980s and thereafter by the growing prominence of Evangelical Protestants in the GOP.

Jews regard Evangelicals as committed to a sectarian (that is, Christian) definition of the United States and consider such commitment a fundamental threat to their own place in society. Just how much this factor still drives Jewish voting behavior became apparent in a 2007 Pew survey.[31] Respondents were asked about their willingness to support presidential candidates from various groups. Consistent with their commitment to pluralism, Jewish respondents were far more willing than the public as a whole to support Catholic, female, black, Latino, Mormon, Muslim, and atheist presidential candidates. Yet there was one exception. A majority of Jews—53 percent—said that they would be less likely to support a presidential candidate who was an Evangelical Christian, a view shared by just 17 percent of the non-Jewish American public. Lest there is any doubt about why Jews are so negative about Evangelicals as candidates, 70 percent (versus 45 percent of the population) said they were uncomfortable when candidates talked about how religious they were, and 87 percent (against just 41 percent of all respondents) agreed that religious conservatives had too much control over the Republican Party.[32] Hence, the presence of Evangelical Christians in the Republican Party, something Corwin E. Smidt points out elsewhere in this book, has kept Jews leery of the GOP.[33]

This concern was magnified in 2008 by McCain's vice presidential nominee, Sarah Palin. Governor Palin was put on the ticket precisely to energize the Evangelical wing of the Republican Party, which had largely been indifferent to

Senator McCain's candidacy and had preferred former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee, a Southern Baptist minister.[34] For Jews, Palin's religious style was a major problem. Palin was raised in an Assembly of God church in the Pentecostal tradition and eventually switched to a nondenominational Christian congregation that welcomed speakers who openly sought to convert Jews to Christianity. Just weeks before her nomination, in fact, Governor Palin sat in the pews and heard a guest speaker attribute terrorist attacks on Israelis to their failure to embrace Jesus.[35] Her socially conservative positions on issues such as abortion, gay marriage, and stem cell research mirrored those of evangelical activists in the Republican Party, not the Jewish mainstream. The claim that U.S. troops in Iraq were on a "task from God" did not sit well with the many Jewish critics of the war. Beyond the religious difference, however, Governor Palin was not a natural "cultural" fit with Jews who had concerns about the Democratic ticket. Her ability to field-dress a moose, trumpeted during the Republican national convention, probably did not do much because Jews, as Jackie Mason once joked, do not hunt.[36] All in all, Palin was precisely the wrong vice presidential candidate to woo Jews from their customary voting. In the end, as Jonathan Sarna quipped, "Sarah Palin had a much more dramatic effect on the campaign than Sarah Silverman."[37]

After the Election: Jewish Appointments in the Obama Administration

Since the nineteenth century, American Jews have looked to the presidency and to individual presidents for political recognition and representation in the form of presidential appointments to judicial and diplomatic posts, to the president's cabinet, and to the White House staff.[38] And they were not disappointed in their expectations of the White House. During the twentieth century, from President Theodore Roosevelt's historic appointment of Oscar Straus as Secretary of Commerce and Labor in 1906, the first Jew appointed to a president's cabinet, and Woodrow Wilson's equally historic appointment of Louis Brandeis to the Supreme Court in 1916, to the extraordinary and unprecedented number of Jewish appointments made by President Bill Clinton during the 1990s, American Jews have received ever-greater political recognition through presidential appointments, which have been one of the most important vehicles for Jewish participation in American politics and government.[39] During his eight years in the White House, President Bill Clinton appointed more Jews to cabinet and sub-cabinet posts, to ambassadorial posts, and to White Staff positions than had any other president.[40] During his first few months in office, President Obama followed in Clinton's footsteps, appointing a number of Jews to important administration positions. Several of President Obama's Jewish appointees, who now serve in important policymaking and advisory positions throughout the executive branch of the federal government, had earlier served in the Clinton administration.[41]

Rahm Emanuel, who had been Senior Advisor for Policy and Strategy on the White House staff during the Clinton years and had subsequently served three terms in Congress as a U.S. Representative from Chicago, was named White House Chief of Staff, the first major appointment announced by President-elect Obama. One of President Obama's closest political confidantes and advisors, Emanuel, the second Jew in American history to serve as White House Chief of Staff,[42] was especially welcomed by the Jewish community because of his strong personal identification with, and public support of, the State of Israel.[43] His father was born in Jerusalem and the younger Emanuel had attended summer camp in Israel and served as a civilian volunteer with the Israel Defense Forces during the 1991 Gulf War. The appointment of Emanuel, a religiously observant Jew and staunch supporter of the Jewish state, was especially reassuring to the many Jewish voters who had voiced concerns about Obama's support for the State of Israel's security. Also reassuring to these Jewish voters was the fact that campaign manager David Axelrod, another Obama confidante with strong roots in the Chicago Jewish community and a strong track record of support for Israel, was appointed senior advisor to the president.

In the economic sphere, President Obama reached out to several veterans of the Clinton administration. Lawrence Summers, Secretary of the Treasury in the Clinton Administration and subsequently the first Jewish president of Harvard University, was appointed director of the White House's National Economic Council. Other key Jewish members of Obama's economic team included Peter Orzag, Mary L. Schapiro, and Gary Gensler. Even though he was originally appointed by George W. Bush, Ben Bernanke was re-nominated by President Obama as chairman of the Federal Reserve Board.

Following the trend of both Republican and Democratic administrations, President Obama appointed a number of Jews to key foreign policy roles regarding the Middle East. Richard Holbrooke, one of America's most experienced diplomats who helped negotiate peace agreements in Bosnia and Kosovo, was appointed by President Obama as his administration's Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Dennis Ross, another Clinton appointee, had advised the Obama presidential campaign on Middle East policy and was appointed President Obama's chief advisor on Iran. Two other top positions in the new Obama State Department also went to Jews: James B. Steinberg, who had earlier served as Deputy National Security Advisor to President Bill Clinton, was appointed Deputy Secretary of State for Policy, and Jacob Lew, an Orthodox Jew who had previously served in the Clinton Administration, was appointed Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources.

Another of President Obama's prominent Jewish appointees was Elena Kagan, Associate White House Counsel and deputy director of the White House's Domestic Policy Council during the Clinton Administration and subsequently dean of Harvard Law School. Kagan was appointed Solicitor General, the first Jewish woman, and

the third American Jew, to serve in that position. When Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens announced his retirement in 2010, President Obama nominated Kagan as Stevens' replacement, making her the third Jewish justice and the second Jewish woman serving on the current Supreme Court.

These appointments did not guarantee that the President's policies would be approved by Jewish voters—who, in any case, disagree among themselves on these matters—and some critics quickly pounced on White House statements regarding Israeli West Bank settlements as evidence of hostility to the Jewish state. Nonetheless, they undermined the claims circulated by anti-Obama forces in the American Jewish community.

Conclusion

For Jews, the 2008 election was the revolution that was not. Despite a candidate with vulnerabilities and a determined campaign to alert Jewish voters to them, Jews—especially the non-Orthodox—remained safely in the Democratic fold. Obama's victory has not stopped the Jewish critics from sending out vitriolic e-mails and creating web sites that emphasize his alleged shortcomings. However, if 2008 is any indication, these efforts are unlikely to yield any harvest of Jewish votes in subsequent elections.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to David Dalin for his suggestions and good humor. For sharing data, granting us permission to use restricted material, or just offering good ideas, we thank State Senator Nan Rich (D-Florida), Steven M. Cohen, Clyde Wilcox, Aaron Howard, and Ari Wallach.

Notes

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Goldstein, *Politics in a Pluralist Democracy: Studies of Voting in the 1960 Election* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974).

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8 David G. Dalin and Alfred J. Kolatch, *The Presidents of the United States and the Jews* (Middle Village, NY: Jonathan David, 2000).

9 Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, *Jews and the New American Scene* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 157.

10 Donald Granberg, "An Anomaly in Political Perception," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 49 (1985), 504–516.

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12 James M. Glaser, "Toward an Explanation of the Racial Liberalism of American Jews," *Political Research Quarterly* 50 (1997), 437–458. According to the 2006 survey by the American Jewish Committee, more than a fifth of Jews consider "many" or "most" blacks anti-Semitic. See www.ajc.org/site/apps/nl/content2.asp?c=ijITI2PHKoG&b=2174431&ct=3152891.

13 David O. Sears, Richard L. Lau, Tom R. Tyler, and Harris L. Allen, Jr., "Self-Interest vs. Symbolic Politics in Policy Attitudes and Presidential Voting," *American Political Science Review* 74 (1980), 670–684.

14 The major difference was question order. In 2008, the presidential vote question was one of the first asked in a short survey whereas the 2004 vote question followed a long list of inquiries about domestic and international concerns.

15 The 2004 question virtually forced voters to select a candidate by using the phrase, "if you had to choose." In 2008, by contrast, voters were simply asked who they intended to vote for, a difference that probably encouraged undecided respondents to report their uncertainty. Nonetheless, the 2000 survey, using the 2008 wording, recorded only 5 percent of respondents as undecided.

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18 The school he attended was a Catholic institution that provided general instruction in world religions.

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26 Jodi Kantor, "As Obama Heads to Florida, Many of Its Jews Have Doubts," *New York Times*, May 22, 2008.

27 See www.thegreatschlep.com.

28 We are grateful to Steven M. Cohen for making these data available. Cohen and the Berman Archive bear no responsibility for our analysis or conclusions.

29 The difference between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews is not primarily creedal, as is common in Christianity, but principally about the authority of Jewish law and tradition. The Orthodox generally believe that Jewish law, particularly as expressed in the Talmud, remains binding on Jews today whereas the non-Orthodox generally support adapting the law to contemporary circumstances.
30 Laura Olson and John C. Green, "The Religion Gap," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39 (2006), 455–459.
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32 Despite these data, Jews have in fact strongly supported presidential candidates from Evangelical Christian backgrounds—Harry Truman, Lyndon Johnson, Bill Clinton, and Al Gore. None of these candidates engaged in much "God talk" during their campaigns and administrations. Jimmy Carter, an Evangelical who emphasized his born-again roots, had to work hard to win over Jews in 1976 and performed badly among them in 1980. No doubt George W. Bush's overt religiosity contributed to some degree to his unpopularity among Jewish voters.
33 Eric M. Uslaner and Mark Lichbach, "The Two Front War: Jews, Identity, Liberalism, and Voting," *Politics and Religion* 2 (2009), 395–419.
34 Michael D. Shear and Juliet Eilperin, "With Palin On the Ticket, Evangelicals Are Energized," *Washington Post*, September 1, 2008.
35 Richard Silverstein, "Kissing the Jewish Vote Good-Bye," *Guardian*, September 4, 2008.
36 Jewish law prescribes explicit procedures for the humane killing of animals that prevents hunting under most circumstances.
37 Quoted in Aaron Howard, 'How Obama Won 78% Of the Jewish Vote," www.byaaronhoward.com.
38 David G. Dalin, "Jews and the American Presidency," in *Race, Religion and the American Presidency*, ed. Gastón Espinosa (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), 130–132.
39 Dalin, "Jews and the American Presidency," 132–152.
40 Indeed, "in the eight years of his presidency, Bill Clinton appointed almost as many Jews to cabinet posts as did all of his predecessors combined." Dalin, "Jews and the American Presidency," 151.
41 For background information on these Clinton-era officials serving in the Obama Administration, see Dalin, "Jews and the American Presidency," 148 (Emanuel, Holbrook); Dalin and Kolatch, *Presidents and the Jews*, 271 (Lew), 272 (Holbrooke), 275 (Ross), 278–282 (Emanuel).
42 President Bush appointed Joshua Bolten, a veteran of the Bush White House, to the position in April, 2006 and he served until early 2009.
43 Jeffrey Goldberg, "Rahm Emanuel and Israel," *The Atlantic,* November 6, 2008, at jeffreygoldberg.theatlantic.com/archives/2008/11/rahm_emanuel_and_israel.php.

6

MUSLIMS AND THE 2008 ELECTION

Brian Calfano, Paul A. Djupe, and John C. Green

Barack Obama's election to the U.S. presidency was a monumental occurrence. Given the political history of African Americans, Obama's election was a triumph over centuries of both overt and symbolic discrimination. Yet it was not only the African American community that took great solace in the results of the 2008 election. American Muslims, many of whom are African American, had a litany of reasons to be thrilled about the public's selection of the candidate who would follow George W. Bush as commander-in-chief.

Obama, of course, was dogged during the presidential campaign by rumors that he was a Muslim himself. This suspicion did not abate in some political quarters, despite Obama's unequivocal statements that he is a practicing Christian. Part of the fuel for suspicion about Obama's "true" religious identity is based on the president's personal history as the son of a Kenyan father who was Muslim (although not a close follower of his faith's traditional practices). Obama's middle name—Hussein—was also problematic in quieting rumors about his faith. Given his personal linkage to Islam and the political stakes of being perceived as a non-Christian in the middle of a presidential race, Obama's electoral strategy could have been to run as far away from Islam and the American Muslim community as possible. Yet the exact opposite happened.

Barack Obama reached out to American Muslims and global Islam in a way not seen in American politics before. As the man who would take control of the executive branch from a predecessor whose policy decisions concerning Islam and international relations had caused significant controversy, Obama might have been a welcome change in the eyes of some simply because he was a Democrat. However, Obama's desire to go much farther than he arguably needed to politically in identifying his presidency with respect for Islam and American Muslims deserves

comment and consideration. In part, we examine Obama's outreach through his own words. We also contextualize the role of the U.S. president both pre- and post-September 11th in serving as a protector and advocate of political minority groups.

Finally, we look into the motives that individual members of the Muslim community in America had to so enthusiastically support Obama. Part of our analysis is based on an examination of Muslim voting data from 2008 and prior general elections. We supplement this macro-approach with insights from interviews with American Muslims about their perceptions of Obama.

Our efforts to understand American Muslims and their political behavior is positioned through the lens of social and political scrutiny. Specifically, we define scrutiny as non-Muslim suspicion or maltreatment (real or perceived) of American Muslims by American Muslims. Our point, of course, is not that all non-Muslims abuse their Muslim neighbors or that American Muslims have avoided political and economic assimilation in the United States. Instead, and reflecting the findings of numerous opinion surveys of American Muslims, this group, more so than any other religion-based community, shows the highest rates of perceived sustained anxiety and perceived scrutiny while experiencing the lowest levels of personal or collective satisfaction in life.[1]

These opinion characteristics are likely the result of Muslim fatigue with the prevailing perception that they lack an inherent loyalty to their country of residence. It is difficult to conceive of a social or political group in contemporary America that triggers such consistent, and at least somewhat widespread, suspicion based on a classic fallacy of composition. In this case, it is assuming that most or all American Muslims harbor the same preferences and intent as those Muslims who entertain or engage in terroristic goals. The treatment Muslims perceive or encounter from non-Muslims, and from various sectors of the U.S. government, especially after September 11th, makes the responsiveness of the nation's political institutions (including and especially the presidency) to the plight of the Muslim community an important empirical consideration.[2]

Given the timeframe in which Obama appeared as a credible candidate on the national political stage, our previous statement about any Democrat doing well with American Muslims holds some truth. After all, President George W. Bush's foreign and domestic policies in regard to law enforcement and preemptive war were extremely unpopular among American Muslims. One might argue that the circumstances of the September 11 attacks and the prevailing public mood that followed placed Bush in a difficult position to pursue policies that American Muslims would have approved. To his credit, Bush's public rhetoric throughout the fall of 2001 reflected the need for tolerance and an accurate characterization of Islam as a peaceful religion, even as many in the Muslim community lodged complaints about the administration's handling of FBI investigations into the activities of community members and affiliated organizations. Despite his rhetorical efforts, Bush failed to convince a majority of the Muslim community that his policies had

its best interests at heart. Hence, by the time the Democrats were working in early 2008 to determine who their presidential nominee would be, it was not a stretch to imagine large percentages of American Muslim voters supporting whoever won the rancorous struggle between Obama and then-New York Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Yet, it is hard to imagine that American Muslims would have been as enthusiastic about Clinton as they became of Obama. Much of Obama's appeal, as noted, was not his personal history with Islam, but his desire to embark on a policy trajectory far more anti-Bush than Clinton, including his pledge to end the detention of terror suspects at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, positioned Obama as the candidate who simply did not happen upon the support of American Muslims: His proposed policies went a long way in helping him earn it. Of course, with Obama having reversed his Guantanamo policy agenda in early 2011 and taking his administration into various levels of entanglement with an assortment of Middle East uprisings, it will be interesting to see what Obama's standing with American Muslims translates into in terms of votes in 2012.

As we cannot yet fully judge Obama's foreign policy decisions from his first term in their effect on American Muslim opinion, we are left to focus on Obama's recent political past, including comparison of his 2008 campaign and initial months in office *vis-à-vis* his immediate predecessors. Importantly, the consideration of presidential outreach to American Muslims involves a very short list of White House occupants. To be sure, presidents as far back as John Adams have had cause to engage in diplomatic actions in which Islam and Muslims were tangentially involved. However, presidential focus on Islam, and particularly during the Cold War, was not on the American Muslim population.

In the aftermath of events such as the Iran hostage crisis, the Marine bombing in Lebanon, the PLO, and the Gulf War sitting administrations—all of which involved some degree of covert or direct U.S. military operations in states with large Muslim populations—U.S. presidents were compelled to acknowledge, almost as an afterthought, the difficult position in which American Muslims were placed by these international circumstances. Yet, no coherent attempt to reach out to American Muslims as a community separate from U.S. foreign policy pursuits was undertaken by an American president until after the Cold War.

This began to change in the early 1990s. The first attack on the World Trade Center in New York City in 1993 reminded the U.S. government that threats from Middle East terror networks needed to be taken seriously. This included rethinking how the government relates to American Muslims as potential partners in deterring terrorist activities encouraged by radical clerics operating internationally and domestically. Around the same time, and because of his strong interest in brokering peace in the Middle East and Bosnia (where Muslim and non-Muslim conflict was raging), President Bill Clinton appeared quite eager to support the American Muslim community as an entity separate from international or terrorist-oriented

agendas. And, as stated, George W. Bush made attempts to reach out to American Muslims before and after September 11th. Despite the efforts of his immediate two predecessors, however, and for reasons that we explore in this chapter, Barack Obama was uniquely positioned to appeal to American Muslims in 2008 in ways that these former presidents could not.

American Muslims: Size, Diversity, and History

In understanding Obama's appeal to the American Muslim community, it is important to spend some time discussing characteristics of the Muslim population in the United States. Along the way, several misconceptions may be dispelled, starting with the notion that American Muslims are a generally homogenous group. Though we refer to the "American Muslim community" at several points in this chapter, it is more accurate to say that American Muslims, while sharing a common faith, are splintered into a variety of subgroups along lines of race, ethnicity, language, and national origin. Indeed, American Muslims, as a population, possess a level of diversity that rivals that of Christians and Jews in the United States.

If American Muslims seem to be more homogenous than they really are, it is likely because their community status is in many ways the product of a high degree of government and non-Muslim scrutiny. This scrutiny, in which the subgroup distinctions among Muslims are hardly considered by nonbelievers, solidifies a prevailing assumption about American Muslims by the non-Muslim majority while instilling a level of common identity between Muslims of various social, political, economic, and geographic distinctions.

In traditional political terms, there are some general similarities between American Muslims, although it is not clear whether these similarities are based on anything having to do with their common Islamic faith or are the product of an exogenous influence from their experience as a scrutinized political minority. Not surprisingly given events of the last decade, American Muslims identify as Democrats. However, their aggregate ideology cannot be classified as liberal. In some instances, American Muslims would be more at home siding with the Republican Party's policy positions, but the issues of greatest salience to American Muslims likely makes this alignment difficult at best. Still, American Muslims, perhaps due to their inherent disunity as a "community," have not yet established a reputation as an automatically reliable Democratic Party constituency—at least one that can be taken for granted. After all, American Muslims backed George W. Bush by a plurality percentage in 2000.

Bush's various initiatives following September 11th and the Iraq War pushed American Muslims significantly in the direction of the Democrats, where they overwhelmingly backed John Kerry in 2004. As the breakdown of our original polling data shows here, American Muslims backed Obama in 2008 even more enthusiastically than they did Kerry. This makes the 2000 pendulum swing toward the Republicans an interesting one. American Muslims gave the bulk of their

support to Bill Clinton in 1996 and, before that, any polling data on the American Muslim vote in presidential elections appear unavailable.

With only a relatively small number of data points available to assess trends, one could plausibly argue that the American Muslim community is susceptible to idiosyncratic or personality-specific appeals that certain candidates might possess. Bush's garnering of Muslim support may have been due to Muslim perception of how the then-Texas governor would engage the "peace process" with Israel and the Palestinians or his initial promise not to pursue nation building. It may have been a way to punish then-Vice President Al Gore's policy legacy related to unpopular policies pursued by the Clinton Administration. Or, the 2000 Muslim vote may have been in reaction to something intangible about George W. Bush's candidacy that appealed to a wide cross-section of American Muslims. Regardless, the possibility exists that American Muslims, representing a collection of disparate subgroups that have been placed into a largely artificial category within American society, are open to attaching themselves to candidates based not on traditional partisan loyalties (of which the Muslim "community" really has none) but on more candidate- and campaign-specific items.

Perhaps adding to the degree of diversity within the Muslim population, Islam is widely characterized as the fastest growing faith in the United States.[3] Not surprisingly, ethnic diversity among Muslims in the United States is growing. Though another misconception about American Muslims is that they are mainly Arab, the population consists of four substantially sized racial and national origin categories: African Americans, South Asians (e.g., Pakistanis and Indians), Africans, and Arabs (e.g., Saudis and Yemenis). Interestingly, estimates place the largest percentage of American Muslims in the South Asian group.

Though there is significant diversity among Muslims in terms of race and national origin, none of the predominant subcategories can be mistaken for majorities in the larger American social and political context. As such, it is not surprising that American Muslims across these major groupings support policies that can be seen as protecting minority status both in the United States and around the world—universal health care, eliminating racism, stricter environmental laws, increased after-school programs for children, more aid to the poor, and foreign debt relief for poor countries.[4] Of course, these issues were not the most salient in the 2004 or 2008 presidential elections, but they were much more likely to be championed by the Democratic candidates in those respective years, especially Barack Obama.

What is intriguing about American Muslims politically and why it would be a mistake for either party to assume that it had a lock on the population's electoral support is that they tend to hold conservative policy preferences in areas such as sexuality and the public expression of religion. A recent opinion poll showed 55 percent of American Muslims favored limiting abortion, 85 percent opposed same-sex marriage, and three-fourths favor banning the sale of pornography, with only modest variation by ethnicity within the population. Roughly two-thirds favor

faith-based social services and school vouchers. This places American Muslim much closer to the positions taken by George W. Bush in 2000 and 2004 and John McCain in 2008. It may also explain why a plurality of Muslims voted for Bush in 2000, although it does not explain support for Clinton in 1996.[5] If anything, it is a reminder that American Muslims may be animated by individual candidate appeals and make voting decisions based on context-specific factors rather than long-term party attachments.

The varying nature of American Muslim political behavior may also be the result of a lack of American-led war in the Middle East in 1996 and 2000. Just two-fifths of the Muslim population supported the war in Afghanistan by 2004, and even fewer backed the war in Iraq. On the latter, one-sixth or fewer believed the Iraq war was worth the cost, supported the war effort, or backed sending more U.S. troops.[6]

By 2001, more than two-fifths of Muslim Americans identified as Democrats, a little less than one-third as independents, and the remaining one-fourth Republicans.[7] A majority of African Americans were Democrats, as was a plurality of every group. Arabs and South Asians, the most affluent, were the most Republican, with almost one-third of both groups identifying with the GOP. By 2004, American Muslim partisanship had changed substantially because of 9/11 and Bush's perceived war on terror (read in many Muslim circles as a "war on Islam"), so that a clear majority of Muslims identified as Democrats. Meanwhile, Republican identification dropped to 12 percent. This shift reveals how ephemeral partisan identification can be, especially among recent immigrant publics.

In comparing Muslim partisanship to that of other American religious groups, 2004 data show that 56 percent of white evangelicals considered themselves Republican, 44 percent of mainline Protestants affiliated with the GOP, whereas 41 percent of Roman Catholics identified as Republican (see other chapters in this volume for updated data on partisanship within these other religious groups).[8] In 2008, American Muslim party identification was largely unchanged from what is was four years earlier, and according to our 2009 opinion poll, 59 percent of American Muslims identify themselves as Democrats (Figure 6.1).[9]

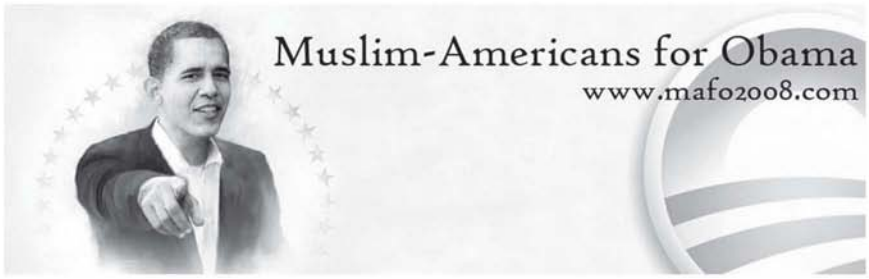

FIGURE 6.1 In 2008, American Muslims created the Muslim-Americans for Obama website and public relations website to promote Obama to the nation. Courtesy: Muslim-Americans for Obama.

TABLE 6.1 American Muslim Vote, 2000-2008

Year	*Democratic (%)*	*Republican (%)*	*Other (%)*
2000 male	36	47	16
2000 female	36	48	17
2004 male	63	6	9
2004 female	65	4	8
2008 male	70	5	7
2008 female	74	3	5

2000 and 2004 data provided by Project MAPS. 2008 data provided by the 2009 American Muslim Survey conducted through Missouri State University. Those who indicated not voting in 2004 and 2008 are not included in the response percentages (making totals less than 100 percent).

As the focus of this chapter is the American Muslim population's reaction to Barack Obama, we turn now to consideration of just how strongly Muslims supported Obama in 2008. Table 6.1 contains a summary comparison of the American Muslim vote in presidential elections from 2000 to 2008. According to a national opinion poll of American Muslims that we conducted in the months immediately after the 2008 election, 71 percent of American Muslims voted for Obama,[10] the highest margin of support from Muslims for any U.S. presidential candidate in the last decade. Indeed, 70 percent of male and 74 percent of female Muslims supported Obama.

This made American Muslims the second most supportive group of the Obama candidacy—behind African Americans. African American Muslims constitute between one-fifth and one-third of the American Muslim population (31 percent in our 2009 survey). Though it is possible that disproportionately high support among this subgroup of Muslims helped to boost Obama's support among Muslims in general, the relatively strong level of support among other racial and ethnic groups in the American Muslim population was likely enough to ensure an overwhelming degree of support for Obama irrespective of how African American Muslims voted (see Table 6.1).

With such high support across racial and gender categories, it is not surprising that Table 6.2 shows that there is little difference in the level of support Muslims gave Obama according to their degree of religious practice. Among those who might be considered the least religiously observant according to attendance at religious services, 61 percent voted for Obama. Large majorities of those who say they pray and read the Koran the least among Muslim respondents were also found to support Obama—71 percent and 60 percent, respectively.

There was also little difference in terms of the degree to which Shi'a and Sunni Muslims supported Obama, with 91 percent of Shi'a and 81 percent of Sunni pulling the level for the president (Table 6.3).

Finally, there was little difference in support for Obama when examining the American Muslim population along socio-demographic lines. Perhaps one of the biggest questions regarding the Obama candidacy concerned the role race would

TABLE 6.2 Vote choice of American Muslims by religious practice

(Percent of American Muslims falling into each category noted in parentheses)	*American Muslims*	
	Obama (%)	*McCain (%)*
Frequency of reading sacred texts		
A little (11%)	71	14
Some (37%)	79	11
A great deal (52%)	86	6
Frequency of prayer		
Never (3%)	67	24
Weekly (24%)	85	4
Daily (73%)	92	2
Frequency of attendance		
Never (9%)	69	27
Monthly/yearly (47%)	82	12
Weekly (44%)	89	7

2008 data provided by the 2009 American Muslim Survey conducted through Missouri State University.

TABLE 6.3 American Muslim vote by religious identification, 2008

	Democratic (%)	*Republican (%)*	*Other (%)*
Sunni	81	4	15
Shi'a	91	7	2
Nation of Islam	99	0	1

2008 data provided by the 2009 American Muslim Survey conducted through Missouri State University.

play in affecting voter support. Despite a consistent lead in the polls, some were cautious in the months and days leading up to the 2008 election that Obama might be the victim of voters claiming their support in public opinion polls only to turn around on Election Day and support another candidate due to race. Those concerns were not realized, especially among American Muslims.

As referenced earlier, across all racial and ethnic categories, American Muslims showed vociferous support for the Obama candidacy. As Table 6.4 shows, 98 percent of African American, 73 percent of Arab, 89 percent of African, and 66 percent of Asian Muslims supported Obama. Of those Muslims born outside the United States and eligible to vote, 91 percent voted for Obama, whereas 81 percent of college graduates and 86 percent of Muslims older than the age of sixty also voted for the president.[11] In all cases throughout the four tables, the support American Muslims provided Barack Obama approximates or exceeds the levels of support given to John Kerry in 2004.[12]

TABLE 6.4 2008 vote choice of American Muslims by demographic information

(Percent of American Muslims falling into each category noted in parentheses)	*American Muslims*	
	Obama (%)	*McCain (%)*
Age		
Under 30 (39%)	87	10
30-59 (42%)	75	20
Over 60 (19%)	86	9
Education		
High school diploma or less (33%)	90	5
Associates/bachelor's degree (57%)	82	15
Advanced degree (10%)	79	20
Income (household)		
Less than $49,999 (68%)	77	24
More than $50,000 (42%)	81	14
Race		
Arab (28%)	73	21
African American (31%)	98	1
African (15%)	89	6
Asian (19%)	66	27
Sex		
Female (46%)	85	6
Male (54%)	80	11

2008 data provided by the 2009 American Muslim Survey conducted through Missouri State University.

Unlike many of the other groups examined in this volume, American Muslim support of Barack Obama in 2008 was undoubtedly uniform across all standard social and political measures. Though this makes assessment of the Muslim population somewhat straightforward, it also leaves considerable room for additional exploration of the motivating factors behind its support. As there is no significant difference between, say, the level of support that African American and Asian Muslims provided Obama, we take a different tack in our approach to understanding Muslim appraisal of the forty-fourth president. Specifically, we look to macro-factors that might explain why American Muslims across socio-demographic categories hold Obama in such high regard.

Given the support for Obama among the vast majority of American Muslims, one might conclude that the "out group" status granted to them by non-Muslim America was the determining factor in their identifying with the Obama candidacy.

Yet, these opinion data do not say much about *why* American Muslims were galvanized to support Obama by such large margins. As we discussed previously, the reaction to Obama may stem from the American Muslim community's affinity for candidate-centered campaigns involving candidates with qualities that somehow capture the attention and ideals of the community itself. At least part of the reason why Muslims might be willing to show strong support for the candidate and not necessarily her or his party or policy agenda has to do with both the relative newness of Muslims as a bona fide political constituency in the United States and the underlying fragmentation of the Muslim population in America. Having delineated the basic issues of interest concerning Muslim support for Barack Obama and the level of Muslim support for the president in 2008, we transition now to a more qualitative approach to understanding the connection between Muslims and Barack Obama.

Behind Barack's Appeal—A Look from Outside America's Urban Centers

What makes American Muslims "tick" politically? What are their self-perceptions as perhaps the quintessential American outsiders? How does their relative sense of status and perceived scrutiny from non-Muslims, especially over the past decade, make them more or less interested in a candidate such as Barack Obama? Clearly, these are variations on broader research themes that scholars have investigated for several decades. Yet, what has usually been true about extant studies of Muslim politics in America—a focus on Islamic populations in major urban areas—is the opposite of the data and analysis presented below. This is because we suspect that some of the dynamics of Muslim life in America are appreciably different for Muslims located in communities where their religious in-group is relatively small.

In those circumstances, it is arguably impossible for Muslims to "blend in" without altering some aspect of their identity, particularly if their racial and ethnic characteristics are also significantly different from the majority's. Of course, even Muslims living in major urban centers are not immune to these same sociological dynamics. Coupled with the existing fragmentation among American Muslims, an incentive structure to create for oneself a unique national and political identity that maintains its Islamic character while adopting aspects of one's surroundings may be a significant influence on how Muslims view the social and political structures around them. In these instances, American Muslims may be compelled to see both their coreligionists and non-Muslim neighbors in ways that break down ties to specific identity touchstones such as political party and national origin. As a result, Muslims living outside of urban centers may exhibit a rather pronounced form of identity making that sees coreligionists and those with amalgamated identities in a very favorable light.

To help shed light on the complex political, social, and religious identity crosscurrents that are the reality of Islamic life in the United States, we examine the experiences of Muslims living outside a major urban center in—"Middle America"—Springfield, Missouri. Though the estimated size of the Springfield Muslim community is fewer than 1,000 and cannot be considered representative of American Muslims more generally, the relative constraints imposed by life in Springfield may lend a great deal of insight about Muslim identity formation and Muslims' perception of others with complex identities—including Barack Obama. It is here, for example, that we would expect individual Muslims to more fully feel the effect of their minority status, especially given the sizeable Christian community in this region of the United States (The Assemblies of God, for example, have their international headquarters here.) Not only are Springfield and the surrounding region predominantly Evangelical Christian, they are predominantly Caucasian, which goes even farther in highlighting differences between the majority white Christian public and those outside of it.

The center of the Springfield Muslim community is an Islamic Center that, until recently, was housed in a rented space. Contact was made with leaders of the center to set up focus group–style interviews for center members who volunteered as participants. The interviews took place in small focus-group settings with four to six participants in each group. The format was conversational, with the interviewer posing some general questions about the respondents' experiences as Muslims in Springfield, their view of American politics, and how they perceive Barack Obama's efforts to reach out to their faith community.

Twelve of the fifteen respondents identified themselves as Democrats and three as Republicans. Nine were professionals (doctors, college professors, lawyers, etc.), and six were university students. Only one respondent was female. The respondents represent a microcosm of the larger Muslim community itself. Respondents, though all but one male, were of Asian (three), Arab (nine), and African American (three) backgrounds.

Springfield Muslim Perceptions of Barack Obama

Though the focus-group interviews were conducted after the 2008 election, all fifteen respondents had vivid recollections of their impression of then-candidate Obama. The impression was favorable and appears connected to a sense of shared religious heritage. As one stated, "It was hard not to think that Obama was like us because of his name." Indeed, Obama himself facetiously noted at the Al Smith Dinner in October 2008 (a Catholic fund raiser named after the former governor of New York) that his parents must have thought he was destined to become president because of the name they bestowed him.

The almost immediate identification of Obama's religious affiliation as Muslim by members of the Islamic community is understandable, but it proved problematic

for Obama's outreach to other segments of the electorate. Opinion surveys noted as late as summer 2008 that more than 10 percent of the general public believed Obama was a Muslim.[13] This required a firm response from the then-Illinois Senator. Speaking to Jewish leaders, Obama attempted to distance himself from Islam:

> My grandfather, who was Kenyan, converted to Christianity, then converted to Islam. My father never practiced; he was basically agnostic. So, other than my name and the fact that I lived in a populous Muslim country for four years when I was a child, I have very little connection to the Islamic religion.[14]

Interestingly, when read this quote, none of the respondents felt differently toward Obama or even suspicious about his ties to Islam. When pressed for why this was the case, the replies were varied. One suggested that "Obama was just trying to make nice with others. He wasn't offending us. He was showing the world that Islam is a religion of peace and acceptance." Another stated that "Obama is in a hard place. He doesn't know how to go about stopping suspicions about his faith in God, so he has to make people see him as less Muslim and more Christian." These sentiments were more or less held by the entire group.

One might counter the group sentiment by pointing out that, empirically, Obama is *not* a Muslim. He has said as much. Unless people can consider themselves both a Christian *and* a Muslim, a choice in one's religious affiliation must be made and presumably acknowledged by others. In listening to the responses of the focus group participants, it became clear that though Obama downplayed his past ties to Islam and forcefully asserted his personal Christian identity on several occasions, the group was not perturbed. In the words of one participant, "We saw Obama as telling the rest of the world something, and winking to us at the same time."

However, if Obama says he is a Christian, can he seriously be considered a Muslim? In putting this question to the group, we were careful to ensure that the respondents understood that we wanted them to assess Obama's faith in his own words, not according to a perception they may have of him. The overall group response was still one of denying that Obama's ties to Islam were severable. Many pointed to Obama's own words in his speech to the Muslim world in June 2009:

> I am a Christian, but my father came from a Kenyan family that includes generations of Muslims. As a boy, I spent several years in Indonesia and heard the call of the *azaan* at the break of dawn and the fall of dusk. As a young man, I worked in communities where many found dignity and peace in their Muslim faith.[15]

Though this speech came after the 2008 election, it confirmed to group members that Obama still refuses to close the door on his Islamic heritage—which is what they suspected during the course of the election. The question

is why would American Muslims have such certainty about Obama's religious affiliation if he was doing whatever he could to dispel his affiliation with Islam during the campaign?

The answer is quite possibly found in the identity flexibility discussed previously. If Muslims see their racial, ethnic, and national identities as part of a malleable conception of self that must find a way to merge aspects of their Muslim and non-Muslim life experiences, it is arguable that Muslims, especially those in the middle of a largely homogenous community, project the same malleability on others. Barack Obama's actual statements about his faith notwithstanding, here was a black man who had spent several years of his life in Muslim countries and was now running for president as the nominee of a major American party.

If for no other reason than the hope these Muslims had that Obama's candidacy represented some form of systematic cultural change for their treatment as a political minority, their borderline illogical association of Obama as Muslim makes some sense. This, just as the linkage of Obama to Islam by those on the political Right, can be understood as a product of anxiety and threat perception related to a minority politician. In other words, American Muslims may have projected their own hope for what Obama represented for their community, irrespective of his personal association, or lack thereof, with Islam, whereas non-Muslims projected their fears about what Obama represented in their erroneous characterization of his faith.

The willingness among our group members to suspend disbelief regarding Obama's faith was likely also due to the long-standing lack of descriptive representation in national political life. Until 2006, when Keith Ellison became the first Muslim member of Congress by winning a seat in the House of Representatives, American Muslims were shut out of the halls of power in Washington. Hence, until Ellison, it was only *non*-Muslim politicians calling for tolerance and acceptance of Islam and its followers. Though many American Muslims likely appreciated these efforts, members of the Springfield focus group were consistent in expressing their sense that they never felt very close to typical American politicians.

"They were speaking for us, but we did not see them as one of us," said one respondent. Another offered that

> I remember feeling afraid that the political leaders were going to finally say that they were tired of worrying about Muslims. We always seem to find leaders saying something for the moment, and then going back on what they told everyone. That was Bush. He came out after September 11th to tell everyone about not doing violence, because that kind of thing is just what bin Laden wants us to do. That was correct for him to say. But then his government started going against us. The FBI started going against us. They didn't respect our worship. They arrested people for no reason except they were Muslim. Then what did Bush say? Nothing! Once they invaded Iraq,

FIGURE 6.2 Keith Ellison was the first Muslim elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Federal Government in 2007. He was a strong supporter of Obama. Courtesy: Official Congressional Portrait of Congressman Keith Ellison.

> no one mentioned anything about the Muslims. It was all about freedom and stopping new attacks, but we were still being abused by the government, and no one seemed to care.

Another group member made a similar point and one that helps to locate the source of the group marginalization felt by many American Muslims:

> I don't think people fully understand what it means to worship Allah and live in this country. Imagine always having to look over your shoulder because you're never sure if the people who you just caught looking at you are going to try something hurtful. You just never know. And that feeling really doesn't go away. Even if people might not know you're a Muslim by looking at you, if you have a Muslim name, like most of us do, they will back off once they know your name. This means you think that no one except those who are with you in faith can stand with you. I have some friends who aren't Muslim here, and they are very nice. But they don't get me talking about this feeling that I don't fit with their world because they are part of the big class who doesn't worry about being picked out.

The respondent offering this quote was an Arab, which helps to explain the concern regarding Muslim-sounding names. However, even the Asians in the

group, who did not have names one would necessarily associate with Islam, shared the perceptions of being on the outside of American politics.

An obvious question related to identity creation and flexibility concerns the perception that Muslims had of Obama not simply as a Muslim but as a *black* Muslim. This question was especially relevant for the three African Americans in the focus group. When asked about their perception of Obama, each of the African Americans gave different answers. Said one,:

> It occurred to me that he's a black man, but I don't think I ever stopped to say that my enthusiasm for the man was because he's black. To me, he understands what it's like to be treated unfairly because of being accused as a Muslim. There's nothing that's more important when I think of Barack Obama than that.

This view was contrasted by the perspective of another African American in the group:

> I do not think I would have related as well to him if I did not have this in common with him. There's something about sharing the experience of being black that goes beyond other things for me. I have experienced persecution as a Muslim, especially in this area. However, that can't compare to what I face as a black man, not here, but all over. You don't ever lose the idea that your skin is a shade darker than most. People might not like that I'm a Muslim, but they won't know I'm a Muslim unless I tell them, at least most of the time. I can't hide being black. So, when I think about Barack Obama, I see him as a black man, and I feel close to him because he's a black man, and so am I.

The third African American in the group expressed a similar sentiment:

> All I needed to know about Barack is that he's black—that was it for me. He was getting my help no matter what. That he had this Muslim past made me like him even more, but it wouldn't have mattered so much if he didn't have Islam in his life. He was the first black man with a real chance to become President of the United States. That is amazing. It's double that he understands my faith, but he's still black first, you know?

Given the responses of the African American group members, it appears that race may have been a greater determining factor in the support offered from this segment of the Muslim community *vis-à-vis* the others. To examine this possibility, we asked the remaining group members whether race was a motivating factor in their appraisal of Obama. In stark contrast to the African Americans, the Arabs and

Asians stated that though they were aware that Obama is black and that this has significant meaning in the context of American political history, their attraction to him was firmly based on their sense that Obama shares a common faith identity. Only the Africans in the group were more willing to echo the sentiment raised by the African Americans, although their comments could be characterized as a bit more mixed in regard to any trade-off between religion and race. As one African stated,

> It is clear that Obama is a black man with Muslim ties. This is all true. However, I don't see things as being all race. I think it's because I am an immigrant to this country. We have different histories from others in this group. We share the same race, but it is Barack Obama's respect and understanding of Islam that makes him attractive.

The information from these focus group interviews is telling, especially concerning the degree to which American Muslims perceive and evaluate aspects of Obama's personal and political identity through the lens of the Muslim experience in America. Though we are careful not to suggest that these findings can be easily extrapolated to the American Muslim population at large, we have some confidence, given the group's racial and ethnic diversity, that some of the same sentiments expressed by the group are true of the larger population as well. Most intriguing is the willingness of all group members to see Obama as having some sort of Muslim affiliation, despite the president's public affiliation as a Christian.

Of course, that Obama has been somewhat ambiguous in how he has characterized his past experiences with the faith may be an impetus for American Muslims to take this perspective. Yet, the desire to see Obama as having some tacit Muslim identity is likely based on both the general status of Muslims in American society and the inherent flexibility Muslims show in determining their own religious identities. Perhaps seeing Obama as Muslim provides hope and comfort to American Muslims because they can see themselves achieving greater status in the United States. The political implications of this perspective on Obama may go far in solidifying American Muslims as a reliable Democratic constituency (assuming no credible Muslim candidate from the Republican Party appears in the near future). Given this, it is not likely lost on Obama that his appeal to American Muslims has important political implications for his administration and party. Though the political Right has used Obama's historical ties to Islam to characterize him as sympathetic to Middle East regimes and an undermining of what they view as America's Christian identity, Obama appears to have made the political calculation that appealing to Muslims, both in the United States and globally, is a worthwhile policy. We explore why this might be so in the following section.

The Responsive Presidency after September 11th

Obama's relationship with the Muslim population, both in the United States and around the world, is noteworthy not only because of his boyhood proximity to Islam but because of the chilly reception that his predecessor, George W. Bush, had with the Muslim community. Presidents and presidential candidates have a rational interest in how they are perceived by constituent groups, especially groups with a proclivity to vote for them. It is, therefore, logical for presidents to reach out to these groups.

Research suggests that presidential responsiveness to voters is positively related to a shortened time period to reelection and is negatively related to increased presidential popularity.[16] At the same time, responsiveness has been considered easier for presidents to undertake when key constituencies are less sure of the policy outcome they desire, thereby giving the president flexibility to explore alternatives to the status quo that do not engender strong resistance.[17] As it regards presidential responsiveness to American Muslims, the literature suggests that national political dynamics, especially after September 11th, constrain presidential responsiveness. At the same time, however, a president with the level of personal appeal that Obama brings to his relationship with American Muslims might be a different matter altogether.

Given the extent to which relations between the U.S. government and both the American and international Muslim communities reached a low point by the end of the Bush presidency, Obama found himself with an important opportunity to repair America's image with this constituency both at home and abroad. The best example of Obama's public outreach occurred in the aforementioned speech he delivered in Cairo, Egypt on June 4, 2009.[18] In it, Obama first struck a conciliatory tone with the Muslim world: "The relationship between Islam and the West included centuries of co-existence and cooperation…"

He then expressed concern about the desire of some to use Islam as a means to justify attacks on civilian populations and a call for an end to the mutual suspicion that has characterized U.S. relations with the larger Muslim world:

> Violent extremists have exploited these tensions in a small but potent minority of Muslims…This has bred more fear and mistrust. So long as our relationship is defined by our differences, we will empower those who sow hatred rather than peace, and who promote conflict rather than the cooperation that can help all of our people achieve justice and prosperity. This cycle of suspicion and discord must end.

Obama then transitioned to praise Islam's contributions to human development and, perhaps more important for American Muslims, situate the contributions Muslims have made to the United States:

> As a student of history, I…know civilization's debt to Islam. It was Islam… that carried the light of learning through so many centuries, paving the way for Europe's Renaissance and Enlightenment. It was innovation in Muslim communities that developed the order of algebra; our magnetic compass and tools of navigation; our mastery of pens and printing; our understanding of how disease spreads and how it can be healed. Islamic culture has given us majestic arches and soaring spires; timeless poetry and cherished music; elegant calligraphy and places of peaceful contemplation. And throughout history, Islam has demonstrated through words and deeds the possibilities of religious tolerance and racial equality.

Again, Obama transitioned to calling on the Muslim community to contribute to the new relationship with the United States:

> …that same principle must apply to Muslim perceptions of America. Just as Muslims do not fit a crude stereotype, America is not the crude stereotype of a self-interested empire. The United States has been one of the greatest sources of progress that the world has ever known. We were born out of revolution against an empire. We were founded upon the ideal that all are created equal, and we have shed blood and struggled for centuries to give meaning to those words—within our borders, and around the world…freedom in America is indivisible from the freedom to practice one's religion. That is why there is a mosque in every state of our union, and over 1,200 mosques within our borders.

Obama has also spoken on behalf of Muslims in public statements made inside the United States. He used a White House Ramadan dinner on September 1, 2009 to highlight the struggles and sacrifices American Muslims have made.[19] Overall then, it is clear that Obama has made public responsiveness to the Muslims both in the United States and around the world an important part of his administration. Whether these efforts translate into policy success for Obama is not yet known. However, his efforts are likely to perpetuate the already strong support the president receives from the American Muslim population.

Given his previous behavior and stated objectives, it is highly unlikely that Obama will face the decline in Muslim support in 2012 that plagued George W. Bush's reelection effort in 2004. As our focus group findings show, American Muslims, perhaps through the flexibility of personal identity conception, found a particular connection with Obama that made the forty-fourth President of the United States seem like a close comrade in the fight for equality and gave them a sense of place in American political life.

Conclusions

We have argued that the American Muslim community, once ripe for appeals from the Republican Party, has become a reliably Democratic constituency. Although not as liberal on various social policies as other Democratic interests, American Muslims have perhaps been indelibly alienated from the GOP because of Bush-era policies. Hence, it was not surprising that American Muslims supported Barack Obama so strongly in the 2008 presidential election. After all, one might argue that *any* Democratic candidate would have enjoyed the support of large Muslim majorities. This is not to suggest that the GOP can never again be competitive for the American Muslim vote, but electoral inroads may require a significant period of time and a marked change in direction from the Bush era policy approach.

We posited, however, that there was more to the story concerning Muslims and Obama. Based on the notion that American Muslims, with their disparate amalgam of racial, national, and geographic differences, are motivated to see their identity in America as malleable, this malleability was transferred to their appraisal and ardent support of Barack Obama. Indeed, the arrival of a candidate with a relationship with Islam on the national stage represented perhaps a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity in the minds of many in the Muslim community.

Part of the community's support is undoubtedly based on their expectations of how Obama would act toward Muslims both in the United States and abroad, though that belief was vindicated only after Obama took office. As we saw through the speech excerpts provided in this chapter, the president has not disappointed. Whether he is successful in substantially fostering the vision of harmony articulated in the Cairo speech remains an open question.

Also unknown is the extent to which American Muslims will remain a reliably Democratic constituency. Though President Obama has shown unprecedented responsiveness to American Muslims, it is important to keep in mind that, even if he serves two terms, he will hold the presidency only until January 2017. As American Muslims really only became conscious of their power as a voting bloc in the late 1990s, there are opportunities for entrepreneurial Republican candidates to make appeals to this growing religious constituency. Indeed, there is no reason to expect that all Muslims who desire to run for elective office will run under the Democratic label. Given the extent to which Muslims tend to hold socially conservative positions, it will be intriguing to see whether coalitions of convenience between Muslims and like-minded evangelicals and Roman Catholics on issues such as abortion and gay marriage will develop in the coming years.

Irrespective of the direction in which Muslim electoral loyalties progress, it is clear that American Muslims have arrived as a political force in American politics, even if they are not yet numerous enough to determine national election results. The election of Barack Obama in 2008 represented a significant shift in the degree

to which Muslims perceived having a voice in government. The Obama candidacy represented the potential for a level of government responsiveness that had not previously existed for this group. As we have seen through our focus group study, underlying Muslim support for Obama was the sense that a history of minority-based experiences in American politics might be overcome by the election of the junior senator from Illinois. These expectations have found justification thus far, but whether they will continue to be met remains to be seen. It perhaps goes without saying that American Muslims have hope that they will.

Notes

1 Some of the material in this chapter first appeared in Paul A. Djupe and John C. Green, "The Politics of American Muslims," in J. Matthew Wilson *From Pews to Polling Places: Faith and Politics in the American Religious Mosaic* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2007), 213–250, and "Muslims and the American Presidency," in Gastón Espinosa *Religion, Race, and the American Presidency* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 155–182. Material is included here with permission.

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7

SECULARS AND THE 2008 ELECTION

Lyman A. Kellstedt and James L. Guth

The study of religion and politics in the United States is a growth industry. Much attention has been paid to evangelicals' emergence as a key constituency of the Republican Party. Other favorite topics have included the decline of Mainline Protestants, divisions among Roman Catholics, and the transition of these two groups from their historic dominance of the GOP and Democratic Party, respectively, to diverse political communities "up for grabs" today. Scholars have also considered the crucial political role of growing religious "minorities" such as black Protestants and Latino Catholics and Protestants.

One group that has been neglected is the secular population, those with no religious preference or commitments.[1] Not only have scholars failed to devote much energy to defining and describing these voters, but there has been little attention paid to their political proclivities. Despite some disagreement over the number of "seculars," there is no doubt they are fairly numerous and have exhibited a growing affinity with the Democratic Party. Indeed, Democratic pollster Stanley Greenberg argued that "Secular Warriors," about 15 percent of the electorate, were "the true loyalists in the Democratic world."[2] Although Greenberg saw this development as both a boon and a liability in building a majority electoral coalition, other Democratic thinkers argued that the party's future lay in unabashed commitment to the liberal values of this growing contingent.[3]

The role of secular forces in the Democratic Party became more than an academic concern after the 2004 election. John Kerry won 72 percent of Greenberg's "Secular Warriors," compared to Al Gore's 58 percent in 2000, but still lost the election to George W. Bush, who made successful appeals to religious voters, especially traditionalists.[4] As a result, the Democratic Party began a period of soul searching, seeking to attract more religious voters to complement its secular constituency,

overcoming the "God Gap" and putting the party back on the path to victory in 2006 and 2008. Democratic National Committee Chair Howard Dean sought to make the party friendlier to religious voters and, with the help of the congressional campaign committees, recruited many religious candidates for Congress in 2006, meeting with some protests from secular activists but aiding the party's return to power on Capitol Hill.[5]

The Democrats' religious appeal only intensified as the 2008 presidential primaries approached. The two leading candidates, Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, both advocated a more explicit appeal to religious voters as the vehicle back into the White House. Both candidates were active Christians, Senator Clinton, a lifelong United Methodist and Senator Obama, a member of a large African American congregation of the liberal mainline United Church of Christ. During the primaries, they and other Democratic candidates actually engaged in formal debates addressing the role of faith and values in policy and politics. This overt religious discussion was in stark contrast to John Kerry's reluctance to address religiously freighted issues in 2004, causing more than a little consternation among secular Democratic activists and voters.

Senator Obama's eventual triumph paved the way for a unique political juggling act. Although both Obama and Clinton made "faith-friendliness" a central appeal, they attracted different religious constituencies. Senator Clinton did better among Catholics, Jews, most white Protestants, and more-observant Democrats, whereas Obama had an increasingly strong appeal to black Protestants, Latino Catholics, and Latino Protestants—and to secular voters. During the fall campaign, Obama sought to unite all the religious groups by frequent personal references to faith, his campaign's formal outreach to religious voters, and the assistance of liberal religious interest groups. At the same time, he burnished his strong appeal to seculars by a consistently liberal image and liberal positions on issues such as abortion and the Iraq war.

Thus, secular voters were more important than ever in the 2008 presidential election. They contributed to Senator Obama's victories in the hotly contested Democratic primaries and were an important target of his electoral strategy in the fall campaign. And yet the candidate was notably different from previous Democratic nominees not only in his willingness to address religious audiences and issues but in his apparent ease and comfort in doing so. And these were traits that persisted beyond the campaign right into President Obama's first months in office, giving pause to many secular supporters.[6]

This, then, is the electoral context of our analysis. In this chapter, we provide a political profile of the secular electorate. We consider first a critical question often ignored: Who counts as a "secular" voter? Are all Americans unidentified with a religious community quite similar politically? In fact, religiously unaffiliated voters really come in several types, which share some common traits but are quite distinct on others. We consider changes in the size of these sub-communities over recent

decades, critical to their political influence. Next, we address a set of issues that may critically divide secular voters from religious ones: the role of religion in public life. Then we look at how secular groups differ on major public policy questions. Finally, we consider their political orientations and electoral behavior in 2008 and offer some observations about the future role of secular voters.

Is There a Variety of Seculars?

Almost forty years ago, sociologist Glenn Vernon argued that social scientists have "tended to ignore a category of religious phenomenon which appears to be of significance and an understanding of which provides a more complete understanding of religious behavior. That category is the religious 'nones.'"[7] Leading sociologists Gerhard Lenski, Charles Glock, and Rodney Stark had begun to explore religion using in-depth surveys but had not really considered the secular or unaffiliated population.[8] Vernon pointed out the problem, but the lack of a national sample made it impossible to estimate the size of the "nones."

Indeed, Gallup polls going back to the 1930s collected data on affiliation, beliefs, and religious practices, but scholars did not use these data to estimate the size of the "secular" population until the 1980s, when John Benson, Norval Glenn, and Andrew Greeley addressed the issue.[9] Glenn's focus was on those who claimed no religious affiliation, Vernon's nones. Greeley was mainly concerned with refuting the "secularization hypothesis," the assumption that modern societies inevitably lose their religious flavor. In fact, he concluded that "religion does not seem to have been notably weakened in the United States during the past half-century, insofar as we are able to measure its strength from survey items."[10] As his extensive analysis was more concerned with the *presence* of beliefs and practices rather than the *absence* of religion, he did not examine the possible varieties of seculars or even give much attention to religious nones.This inattention to seculars is somewhat paradoxical given the prominence of secularization theory in the social sciences.[11] In this literature, much attention is given to the secularization *process* but very little to the *product*. If secularization is occurring in America, the secular population should be growing, but the survey evidence is difficult to assess.[12] Generally, scholars classify individuals as secular on the basis of absence of affiliation. Gallup surveys since the 1940s provide some evidence about the number of unaffiliated Americans. Immediately after World War II, Gallup found that 6 percent said "none" when asked their religious preference. This figure decreased to about 2 percent in the 1950s and early 1960s, as many veterans of the war began to raise families and participate in a religious revitalization.[13] Kohut and colleagues classified about 10 percent of the population in 1965 as secular, combining both unaffiliated and the nominally religious.[14] Since that date, the unaffiliated alone increased to around 9 percent according to Kosmin and Lachman.[15] Hout and Fischer show that the figure has risen significantly in the past decade to about 14 percent.[16] Even more recently, the Pew Forum on Religion

and Public Life found that "unaffiliateds" reached 16 percent of the population in 2007, a potentially significant political bloc.[17]

Is "non-affiliation," however, really equivalent to "secular"? Some respondents may give an "affiliation" response based on family history but show no evidence of religious belief or practice. Others may do so because the pervasive religiosity in the United States makes it socially desirable to give a "religious preference." In addition, many affiliation questions encourage an "affiliated" response by assuming that everyone has a religious "preference."[18] Conversely, absence of affiliation is not a foolproof indicator of secularity. Some people without a current affiliation may hold strong religious beliefs and participate in religious practices. They simply may not be affiliated at the time of the survey, "in between" specific houses of worship as a result of a geographical move or other personal transition—or they may hold some form of strong, but "privatized" faith. Thus, the absence of a religious preference should not always be taken as evidence of secularity.

In addition, some respondents—*nominal religionists*—name an affiliation but lack basic beliefs or practices—do not believe in God or life after death, never darken the door of a house of worship or engage in prayer. Thus, they may resemble the unaffiliated in social and political attitudes and behavior in that they pick up few, if any, religious cues. We suspect that such "nominals" are numerous, but deciding who qualifies as a nominal is a tougher question. Non-belief in God and life after death might suggest nominal status, as would a total absence of religious observances, public and private. Or, we might regard those who say that religion is unimportant in their lives as nominal even if they claim an affiliation. Generally speaking, nominal religionists have been ignored in scholarly research: Kohut and colleagues do take notice of them but combine them with the "no-affiliation" category for analysis.[19]

So far, our discussion suggests three groups of possible seculars: (1) the unaffiliated who exhibit little or no religiosity; (2) the *nominal religionists*, who affiliate but show little evidence of religious traits; and (3) the religiously unaffiliated who nonetheless believe and practice. In addition, we would ideally like to break down the first group into three subcategories: atheists, agnostics, and the remaining nonreligious unaffiliated.[20]

Why are these distinctions important? In the 2008 election, secular activists and voters may well have played a crucial role, first in Barack Obama's nomination and, second, in his general election victory. Furthermore, in few recent campaigns has the role of religion in public life been more visible, addressed by candidates on both sides of the partisan divide. These issues should be of special salience to secular voters. In addition, an unusually full agenda of controversial issues that are often related to religious faith agitated the electorate, making the responses of secular voters of special interest. Are the theoretical distinctions we have made among types of seculars useful? Are different groups of seculars alike in their political attitudes and behaviors? How much do they differ from those who affiliate with a religion and hold at least a modicum of religious beliefs and engage in some religious practices?

Locating the Seculars over Time

To begin our analysis, we need to map changes in the size of secular groups over time. This is not easy, but careful use of available evidence allows us to provide a useful picture. General Social Survey (GSS) data from 1972 to 2002 permit an estimate of changes in the "no-affiliation" category. Use of the GSS also allows us to create our other secular categories, as church attendance was gauged each year as, in most years, was belief in life after death. Thus, those who claimed an affiliation, attended church once per year or less, *and* did not believe in life after death were classified as *nominal religionists*.[21] The unaffiliated who reported a belief in the afterlife and attended church on a regular basis were categorized as *religious unaffiliated*. Finally, the unaffiliated not showing these markers of religious faith were classified as *nonreligious unaffiliated*.

For 2004 and 2008, we employed the National Survey of Religion and Politics (NSRP), conducted at the University of Akron. These surveys interviewed 4,000 respondents using a large battery of religious measures, allowing us to compare five groups of potential seculars: *atheists* and *agnostics* (combined in the 2004 survey, but distinguished in 2008); the *unaffiliated nonreligious, nominal religionists*, and the *unaffiliated religious*. Finally, we use the extremely large 2007 Pew Forum Landscape Survey, with more than 35,000 respondents to confirm results from the GSS and NSRP.

How large are secular groups, and how has that size changed since the early 1970s?[22] As Table 7.1 shows, the "no-affiliation" category grew significantly up to 2004 before declining slightly in 2007 and 2008, with both religious and

TABLE 7.1 Size of "secular" groups over time (percent)

Religious groups	*1972–1980*	*1996–2002*	*2004*	*2007*	*2008*	*Gain/loss over time*
Unaffiliated	7.3	13.4	17.1	16.2	14.9	7.6
Religious	0.3	0.7	0.8	2.4	1.5	1.2
Non–religious	7.0	12.7	13.0	9.8	10.9	3.9
Agnostic	*	*	3.5	2.4	1.1	
Atheist	*	*		1.6	1.4	
Nominal religionists	13.6	9.6	5.0	3.4	5.6	–8.0
No affiliation + nominal religionists –religious unaffiliated	20.6	22.3	21.3	17.2	19.0	–1.6

*No data available.
Source: GSS 1973-2002; National Survey of Religion and Politics 2004, 2008; Pew Forum Landscape Survey 2007.

nonreligious subgroups growing slightly. Agnostics and atheists probably followed a similar pattern, combining for 3.5 percent in 2004, 4 percent in the 2007 Landscape Survey, but only 2.5 percent in the 2008 NSRP. Our final secular group, nominal religionists, has shrunk significantly in the past forty years. These two trends—increases among the unaffiliated and the decline of nominal affiliators—suggest that there is less pressure today for nonreligious respondents to "discover" an affiliation. Indeed, these two groups resemble each other in many ways, and "movement" from one to the other may not be a large step. Indeed, as Table 7.1 shows, if the religious unaffiliated are omitted from the totals, the secular total has remained at about a fifth of the population since 1972. For the rest of the analysis, we examined four putative secular groups—atheists, agnostics, the nonreligious unaffiliated, and nominal religionists—and the religious unaffiliated, who are commonly assigned to a secular category, but do not belong.[23]

Civil Religion and the Role of Religion in American Elections

The political emergence of secular voters challenges the role of religion in public life. Scholars have long noted the presence of *civil religion* in the United States, beliefs that connect religious faith with political life. At a minimum, seculars should be indifferent, or perhaps even hostile to, the intertwining of religion and public life.

To illustrate the range of public differences on civil religion, Table 7.2 includes the religious group most sympathetic to the role of religion in public life, evangelical traditionalists.[24] As the table shows, the gaps between traditionalists and secular groups are very sizeable and, on all items, the agnostics and atheists anchor the opposition to civil religion. They do not think it is important that the president be a person of faith and are clearly uncomfortable when politicians talk about their religious convictions. In addition, they disagree that religious groups should "stand up" for their beliefs but think they should stay out of politics. And, naturally for these voters, religious beliefs are unimportant in their own political calculations. The nominal religionists and nonreligious unaffiliated also tend to oppose civil religion but not to the same extent as the agnostics and atheists. To summarize, we report the percentage of each group above the midpoint on an "anti–civil religion scale." Traditionalist evangelicals are on the low end, favoring a much larger role for religion, the religious unaffiliated fall close to the middle, and the four secular groups are on the high end, led by the agnostics and atheists.

The 2008 NSRP also asked four questions about the role of religion during the campaign (see bottom of Table 7.2). We find a pattern quite similar to that for civil religion. Dramatic differences appear between the four secular groups and traditionalist evangelicals on the importance of religious faith in their vote decision, with the former giving it no importance. In addition, only the four secular groups felt that religion was discussed too much in the campaign, that there was too much discussion of issues in churches, and that the latter were too involved in mobilizing

TABLE 7.2 Civil religion, campaign religion, and "secular" groups in 2008 (percent)

	Evangelical traditionalists	*Religious unaffiliated*	*Nominal religionists*	*Non-religious unaffiliated*	*Agnostic*	*Atheist*
Civil religion						
(Percent of sample)	(10.4)	(1.5)	(5.6)	(10.9)	(1.1)	(1.4)
Not important that president have religious beliefs	6.8	30.8	54.0	69.5	91.3	98.0
Religious groups should not stand up for their beliefs in politics	9.0	40.3	45.2	50.3	55.6	61.6
Religion not important to my political thinking	10.5	39.5	63.4	70.3	75.6	79.7
Uncomfortable with religious talk in politics	14.8	28.6	57.8	54.5	73.9	71.7
Religious groups should stay out of politics	26.0	55.8	65.4	69.7	83.0	71.2
Low Civil Religion Index	10.8	44.6	75.9	79.2	97.8	100.0
Religion in the campaign						
Faith not important to my vote	7.8	54.9	78.1	81.0	87.5	97.3
Religion discussed too much	6.5	12.5	27.5	40.2	60.6	42.5
Too much church activity in getting out vote	8.9	20.0	21.4	26.8	35.7	46.9
Too much discussion of issues by churches	12.6	15.6	31.3	26.2	62.1	42.9
Low Campaign Religion Index	14.5	39.2	51.8	73.2	100.0	69.2

Source: National Survey of Religion and Politics, 2008

voters. A summary measure of attitudes toward religion involvement in the campaign at the bottom of the table shows that 100 percent of agnostics fell on the high end of the opposition scale, with other secular groups trending in the same direction.

In conclusion: The role of religion in public life and politics creates a yawning chasm between the secular groups and their mirror image, the traditionalist evangelicals. This finding helps us to understand the heated rhetoric of recent presidential campaigns over just such issues, as one side demands a prominent role for religion in politics and the other decries just such involvement. And it seems unlikely that this gap will close in the near future.

Secular Groups and Political Issues in 2008

Since at least the 1950s, political scientists have documented the important role that political issues play in vote decisions.[25] Some observers assume that the only differences dividing secular groups and committed evangelicals are *moral* issues such as abortion and gay rights, but we expect that such disagreements may extend to *social welfare* and other domestic issues and *foreign policy.*[26] We present evidence from the 2008 NSRP in Table 7.3, using summary measures to simplify the presentation.

First, the *moral issue* entries report the percentages on the "liberal" side of that index. Atheists and agnostics clearly anchor the liberal end, followed closely by the nonreligious unaffiliated and the nominal religionists. The religious unaffiliated, conversely, are about equally divided, whereas traditionalist evangelicals hold down the "conservative" end, as expected. All four secular groups are pro-choice on abortion and strongly favor gay rights, whereas traditionalist evangelicals hold strongly opposing views (data not shown in table). Atheists and agnostics favor same-sex marriage, whereas the nonreligious unaffiliated and nominal religionists lean in the same direction. In contrast, traditionalist evangelicals strongly support traditional marriage. Finally, similar patterns appear on stem cell research, although the somewhat greater division among traditionalist evangelicals means that the intergroup gaps are not as wide as on other moral issues.

A liberal-conservative *domestic* policy scale also shows that secular groups are much more liberal than traditionalist evangelicals but that there is little difference among secular groups themselves, except for the agnostics' greater liberalism. Here, even the religious unaffiliated look like the secular groups. On individual issues, the agnostics are extremely liberal, favoring comprehensive national health care, stronger environmental regulations, fighting hunger and poverty, and support for minorities.[27] In sum, the domestic policy issues do divide the secular groups from their evangelical protagonists, although not quite to the extent that we found on moral issues.

Foreign policy issues also played a major role in the 2008 campaign. The Iraq war, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the war on terror are just three issues preoccupying policy makers and voters. Surveys of the mass public have gauged

TABLE 7.3 Liberal issue positions and secular groups in 2008* (percent)

	Evangelical Traditionalists	*Religious Unaffiliated*	*Nominal Religionists*	*Non-Religious Unaffiliated*	*Agnostic*	*Atheist*
(percent of sample)	(10.4)	(1.5)	(5.6)	(10.9)	(1.1)	(1.4)
Policy scales						
Moral policy	10.8	46.6	64.3	74.6	91.3	81.5
Domestic policy	25.5	54.8	61.2	54.3	76.1	58.2
Militant foreign	23.8	53.4	66.7	68.2	84.8	92.6
Cooperative foreign	34.4	58.9	56.4	55.7	58.7	58.2
Other issues						
Pro-immigration	26.7	35.6	28.9	41.5	50.0	35.0
Oppose tax cuts	30.3	36.5	49.6	47.5	48.9	42.1

*Percentages represent the proportion of each group that falls in the "liberal" half of moral, domestic, and two foreign policy issue scales. See text for issues included on each scale. Reducing immigration and tax cuts did not fit on the domestic policy issue factor but are included in the table for information.
Source: National Survey of Religion and Politics, 2008

opinions on these and other topics but have not usually considered religion as a source of attitudes.[28] Much of the research shows that many public attitudes on foreign policy cluster on a dimension called *militant internationalism*, whereas another set coalesces around *cooperative internationalism*.[29]

Militant internationalism emphasizes a strong national defense, willingness to use American military forces, and an aggressive fight against terrorism. Our militant internationalism scale comprised eight such items. As Table 7.3 shows, secular groups differ from traditionalist evangelicals in much the same way as they did on moral issues. In particular, agnostics and atheists stand out in opposition to a militant foreign policy, outpacing their secular counterparts among the nominal religionists and nonreligious unaffiliated. The latter, in turn, take more liberal positions than the religious unaffiliated, with traditionalist evangelicals on the "militant" end. On the component items, for example, atheists argue strongly that the Iraq war was not justified and that it is time to bring the troops home, tend to favor the Palestinians in the conflict with Israel, and strongly oppose preemptive strikes by the U.S. military, positions shared but taken less strongly by other secular groups. And, as expected, traditionalist evangelicals hold the opposite views on all these issues, supporting the Iraq war, backing Israel over the Palestinians, and being open to preemptive military action to protect American interests.

Cooperative internationalism, as the name suggests, represents attitudes that welcome cooperative ventures to solve global problems such as hunger, poverty, and global warming, preferably through international venues such as the United Nations (UN). There has been much recent discussion about a "new" willingness of religious conservatives, religious liberals, and seculars to join in such international policy ventures. If this is true, we might find fewer intergroup differences here. And, in fact, although the cooperative internationalist scale still divides secular groups from traditionalist evangelicals, the differences are not as dramatic as those on militant internationalism. More than a third of the traditionalist evangelicals score high, compared to well more than half in each of the five other groups, who do not differ at all. Thus, issues such as the priority of strengthening the UN, fighting world hunger, and dealing with global environmental concerns do not have the same divisive character as the issues on the militant internationalism or moral issue scales. Even here, however, there are some differences on the component issues: fighting world hunger has a strong appeal across all groups, whereas strengthening the UN and dealing with the global environment has more support among secular groups.

Table 7.3 includes two "hot button" items that do not fit with the indices previously discussed: immigration and tax cuts. Although the politics of immigration is complicated, dividing customary ideological camps, in 2008 a majority of Americans favored some restrictions on immigration. As we might expect, only about a fourth of traditionalist evangelicals opposed such restrictions, but the secular groups exhibit higher but varying levels of opposition to immigration curbs. Apparently, stances toward immigration have not polarized the country "religiously" to the extent that

moral and militant internationalist issues have. A similar tendency exists for secular groups to oppose large tax cuts more often than traditionalist evangelicals do but, once again, the differences do not approach the size of those on other issues.

Thus, we find that the gap between the most conservative religious group in the public—the traditionalist evangelicals—and secular groups is fairly wide, ranging across moral, domestic, and foreign policy issues. That these cleavages are cumulative and not overlapping means that traditionalists and seculars consistently find themselves at two opposite poles of American ideological politics, perhaps even as lead protagonists in something such as James D. Hunter's *Culture Wars*.[30]

Secular Groups and Political Behavior

Clearly, secular groups differ from their "mirror image" counterparts—the evangelical traditionalists—on the proper role for religion in American society and on an entire host of issues. In Table 7.4, we turn to ideological and partisan differences that we expect to be equally divisive.

We begin with party identification, long recognized as the single best predictor of voting decisions. The table reports the number in each group identifying with or leaning toward the parties, with pure independents omitted for ease of presentation. All four secular groups prefer the Democrats by at least two to one, with agnostics and atheists favoring them by ratios of five to one. The religious unaffiliated once again differ from secular groups by actually leaning in a Republican direction but with a significant Independent contingent. Predictably, traditionalist evangelicals strongly support the GOP, called by some "God's Own Party." These partisan preferences no doubt reflect the cumulative effect of all sorts of political attitudes, as confirmed by self-reported political ideology ("moderates" are omitted). Although Americans overall have a slight preference for "conservative," differences between traditionalist evangelicals and secular groups are quite large. The traditionalists are overwhelmingly conservative, the religious unaffiliated and nominal religionists have solid conservative pluralities, but liberals increasingly dominate as we move toward the atheists.

Presidential campaigns often involve "retrospective voting," constituting a referendum on the past administration. Thus, evaluations of the incumbent president are almost always important in voting decisions; in 2008, both the primary and regular election campaigns were filled with attacks on the outgoing Bush administration. Predictably, secular groups gave the president poor job ratings, with agnostics and atheists in the lead, whereas traditionalist evangelicals came to Bush's defense. Of course, attitudes toward the 2008 candidates themselves influence vote choice.[31] Secular groups viewed McCain unfavorably but had much more positive perceptions of Obama. The pattern was reversed for traditionalist evangelicals, although this group was lukewarm about the non-evangelical McCain, despite their strong Republican and conservative hue. Thus, McCain had to make an

TABLE 7.4 Political attitudes and voting behavior of "secular" groups in 2008 (percent)

	Evangelical Traditionalists	*Religious Unaffiliated*	*Nominal Religionists*	*Non-Religious Unaffiliated*	*Agnostic*	*Atheist*
(Percent of sample)	(10.4)	(1.5)	(5.6)	(10.9)	(1.1)	(1.4)
Party ID:						
Republican	70.9	32.9	27.2	21.3	14.9	11.1
Democratic	16.1	28.8	51.8	47.0	74.5	55.6
Ideology:						
Conservative	80.6	35.6	41.8	25.6	20.9	14.1
Liberal	7.1	24.6	32.6	45.2	66.7	71.7
Bush job: poor or very poor	22.6	55.7	62.5	63.0	87.2	88.9
Feel close to						
McCain	49.0	23.1	19.5	21.7	15.6	20.5
Obama	11.4	48.1	56.1	54.4	62.5	69.4
Palin	61.3	28.0	19.7	19.2	8.7	10.3
Biden	11.1	31.4	33.5	34.7	40.6	49.6
Clinton	11.0	54.0	41.1	41.3	42.0	50.0
Voting behavior						
Turnout	64.9	33.7	57.3	49.7	79.1	57.0
Obama	11.7	41.2	64.5	73.8	88.0	72.7
Vote Coalition %						
McCain	21.8	1.2	4.1	4.7	0.4	0.7
Obama	2.5	0.8	6.4	11.5	2.4	1.7

Source: National Survey of Religion and Politics, 2008.

enormous effort to woo this group—the Republican Party's religious base—during the campaign. One way he did this was choosing Sarah Palin as his running mate. She clearly drew rave reviews from traditionalists but was a polarizing figure, with secular groups actually feeling closer to McCain than to Palin. Democratic vice-presidential candidate Joe Biden was seen somewhat less positively than Obama among secular groups but got the same low marks from traditionalists as did the man at the top of the ticket.

To provide some intra-party perspective, we also included Hillary Clinton in the analysis. Note that traditionalist evangelicals gave both Democratic primary finalists very low grades, but the secular groups, though warm toward Clinton, gave a substantial advantage to Obama, explaining perhaps his greater support from seculars during the primary campaigns.[32]

The bottom portion of Table 7.4 examines voting behavior in the 2008 election. First, we examine voting rates, as groups maximize or minimize their contribution to election results depending on their turnout.[33] In 2008, almost two-thirds of evangelical traditionalists voted, above the national average of about 60 percent but below their turnout rate in 2004, when their enthusiasm for the GOP candidate was much higher. Among secular groups, turnout varied widely, with agnostics exhibiting very high rates, whereas other secular groups fell below the national average. And only about a third of the religious unaffiliated came to the polls, perhaps reflecting their weak partisan and ideological commitments.

When it came to candidate choice, secular groups were strong supporters of Obama: Agnostics led the way with 88 percent, and nominal religionists trailed with a still-robust 65 percent. The chasm we have seen between religious traditionalists and their secular counterparts throughout this chapter is apparent again in voting decisions: Fewer than one in eight traditionalist evangelicals voted for Obama. Note also that the religious unaffiliated who did vote tended to support McCain, confirming once again that they should not be included in the secular camp.

What factors explain the strong preference of all four secular groups for the Democratic candidate? We ran several multivariate analyses to tease out the way that "secularity" is conducive to a Democratic vote. First, social and demographic differences do not explain why seculars were more Democratic. In fact, when we controlled for education, gender, income, and other demographic traits, these groups actually became *more* prone to vote Democratic. Further analysis suggested that the distinct *religious* characteristics of these voters leads to liberal policy stances on a wide range of issues, making Democratic partisanship and vote choice the "appropriate" response for this sector of the electorate (data not shown in table).

Once in office, politicians inevitably try to please the major constituencies in their electoral coalition. In the last part of Table 7.4, we answer a vital question: How important were secular groups in the "voting coalition" of each party? Once again, we find stark differences: Just more than one-fifth of McCain's total vote came from traditionalist evangelicals (almost two-fifths came from the evangelical tradition as a

whole). In contrast, the four secular groups made a contribution of about the same magnitude to Obama (22 percent). Conversely, traditionalist evangelicals made only a token contribution to the Obama vote (2.5 percent), whereas all four secular groups combined provided about 10 percent of the GOP vote.

Thus, seculars are an important part of the Democratic coalition but certainly do not dominate it. Notably, "religious" groups such as black Protestants and Latinos, both Protestant and Catholic, made an even larger total contribution to Obama's totals. Thus, in a religious sense, Democratic voters run the gamut, with black Protestants and Latinos among the most religious and the secular groups the least so. Bringing these groups together electorally was a great accomplishment of the Obama campaign. In the primaries, he quickly came to dominate among black Protestants and seculars and drew Latinos away from Clinton by the end of the contest. In the general election, he united all these groups strongly behind his candidacy. Of course, holding these disparate parts of the Democratic coalition together became even more important as President Obama sought to advance his presidential agenda.

Summary and Conclusions

There is no doubt that secular voters are becoming an important force in American politics. Although reports of rapid growth in the secular population are probably overstated, reflecting a new tendency of those with only vestigial religious attachments to forego claiming even those, seculars certainly are becoming more self-conscious politically, perhaps in response to the mobilization of the Christian Right in recent decades. The number of formal organizations representing this sector of the population has certainly increased, and seculars are a disproportionate part of the Democratic Party's activist corps.[34]

This chapter has considered in depth the possible impact of this sector of the electorate on presidential politics. We have shown that secular groups do have distinctive political preferences, almost invariably on the liberal side of the Democratic Party. They oppose the tenets of American civil religion, resent the role that religious faith and institutions play in elections, and hold very liberal views on moral issues and liberal stances on social welfare policy. They are also quite distinct in their opposition to militant internationalism, although they differ less on the cooperative dimension of American foreign policy. Among the secular groups, agnostics and atheists usually stand to the left of the nominal religionists and the nonreligious unaffiliated. All four of the secular groups had strong Democratic preferences in the 2008 election and were especially warm toward Barack Obama. Our analysis has also shown that not all of the unaffiliated should be included in a "secular" category. Many religiously unaffiliated Americans are actually quite committed to their faith, and their political choices are, as a result, often more conservative and Republican.

Much of the "action" involving seculars, then, will take place within the Democratic Party. Seculars have become an important part of the Democratic electoral coalition but one that stands in some tension to others. On moral issues, for example, the seculars stand far away from black Protestants and Hispanics, both Catholic and Protestant, increasing the possibility of intra-party conflict. Their reluctance to contemplate the use of American military force abroad obviously creates some dilemmas for a Democratic president confronting continued conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. And their strong liberalism on issues such as health care, aid to minorities, and environmental policy create other tensions within a victorious congressional party that now extends from northeastern and western secular progressives to religious Midwestern and southern "Blue Dogs." The fate of the Obama administration's policies may well depend on the ability of Democratic leaders to manage this diverse and quarrelsome religious-secular coalition.

Notes

1 By "secular," we mean *relatively secular*. Even many atheists exhibit some aspects of religiosity. "Unaffiliated" is sometimes employed, but our analysis shows that there are wide variations in religiosity among unaffiliated respondents.
2 Stanley B. Greenberg, *The Two Americas: Our Current Political Deadlock and How to Break It* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2004), 129.
3 John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira, *The Emerging Democratic Majority* (New York: Lisa Drew/Scribner, 2002).
4 Greenberg, *The Two Americas*, 319
5 For the candidates' religious strategies, see James L. Guth, "Religion in the 2008 Election," in *The American Elections of 2008*, ed. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier and Steven E. Schier (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 117–136.
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7 Glenn M. Vernon, "The Religious 'Nones': A Neglected Category," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 7 (1968): 219–29.
8 Gerhard Lenski, *The Religious Factor* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1963); Charles Glock and Rodney Stark, *Religion and Society in Tension* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965); Charles Glock and Rodney Stark, *Christian Beliefs and Anti-Semitism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966); and Rodney Stark and Charles Glock, *American Piety* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).
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10 Greeley, *Religious Change*, 128.
11 For a reinterpretation of the secularization debate with special attention to politics, see Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
12 For the ways that survey organizations measure religious affiliation, see Lyman A. Kellstedt, "Seculars and the American Presidency," in *Religion, Race, and the American Presidency*, ed. Gastón Espinosa (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 294–295, n. 8.
13 Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (Garden City, NJ: Anchor Books, 1955).
14 Andrew Kohut, John C. Green, Scott Keeter, and Robert C. Toth, *The Diminishing Divide: Religion's Changing Role in American Politics* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000).

15 Barry Kosmin and Seymour Lachman, *One Nation Under God* (New York: Harmony Books, 1993.)
16 Michael Hout and Claude S. Fischer, "Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Politics and Generations," *American Sociological Review* 67 (2002): 165–190.
17 The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey* (Washington, DC: Pew Forum Web Publishing and Communications, 2008), 10.
18 Kathleen McCourt and D. Garth Taylor, "Determining Religious Affiliation through Survey Research: A Methodological Note," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 40 (1976): 124–127; and Wade Clark Roof, "The Ambiguities of 'Religious Preference' in Survey Research—A Methodological Note," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 44 (1980): 403–407.
19 Kohut et al., *Diminishing Divide.*
20 Lyman A. Kellstedt and Nathan J. Kelly, "Seculars and Political Behavior: The Neglected Segment of the U.S. Population." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, September 3–6, 1998.
21 For the problems in using the GSS to classify "nominal religionists," see Kellstedt, "Seculars and the American Presidency," 295–296, n. 18.
22 We have omitted GSS data from 1981 to 1995, as little change took place during this period.
23 The secular groups do have distinct characteristics. Naturally, religious variables distinguish these groups. Led by agnostics and atheists, seculars are not strong religious believers, engage in only limited religious practice, and say that religion is unimportant in their lives. Although the nominally religious and the nonreligious "nones" show more traces of faith than atheists and agnostics, they exhibit fewer than the "religious nones" do. Secular groups are disproportionately male and single, particularly when compared to the religious unaffiliated, with atheists leading the way. In addition, nonreligious nones and the nominally religious have less education and lower income than the agnostics and atheists but fare better than the religious nones. Unsurprisingly, secular groups are young and disproportionately from the west—a secular haven—with the nominally religious an exception in both cases. In sum, social characteristics differentiate the secular groups just as they did in the 2004 National Survey of Religion and Politics (Kellstedt, "Seculars and the American Presidency") and in the 2007 Pew Forum Landscape Survey.
24 This group affiliates with evangelical denominations and local churches, holds orthodox beliefs, and exhibits high levels of religious practice. Cf. Corwin E. Smidt, Lyman A. Kellstedt, and James L. Guth, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 24–28.
25 For a review of "issue voting," see Warren E. Miller and J. Merrill Shanks, *The New American Voter* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 326–369.
26 For domestic and foreign policy issues, see J. Matthew Wilson, "Religion and American Public Opinion: Economic Issues," and James L. Guth, "Religion and American Public Opinion: Foreign Policy Attitudes," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and American Politics,* ed. Corwin E. Smidt, Lyman A. Kellstedt, and James L. Guth (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 191–216, 243–265.
27 The greater domestic policy liberalism of agnostics compared to atheists is puzzling, but may reflect the fact that they are significantly more female and single, traits sometimes associated with economic liberalism.
28 Guth, "Religion and American Public Opinion: Foreign Policy Attitudes."
29 Eugene R. Wittkopf, *Faces of Internationalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990). For these dimensions, see James L. Guth, "Militant and Cooperative Internationalism Among American Religious Publics." Presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, New Orleans, February 18–21, 2010.
30 James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991). Recently, James Wood argued for just such an interpretation of traditionalists and seculars:

> In recent years, a resurgent evangelical Christianity, marked by Biblical literalism, belief in a "personal God," hostility to scientific rationality and progress, and a deeply conservative politics, has, strangely enough, been contested by a resurgent atheism, marked by its own kind of Biblical literalism, hostility to faith in a personal God, a deep belief in scientific rationality and progress, and, typically, a committed liberal politics.
>
> "God in the Quad," *New Yorker*, August 31, 2009, 75.

31 Miller and Shanks, *The New American Voter,* 389–437.

32 Guth, "Religion in the 2008 Elections."

33 Surveys always overestimate turnout, and this is the case in the 2008 NSRP. We used a correction procedure that matches the turnout of respondents with the turnout rate from official sources.

34 John C. Green and John S. Jackson, "Faithful Divides: Party Elites and Religion," in *A Matter of Faith: Religion in the 2004 Presidential Election*, ed. David E. Campbell (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2007), 44.

8

WOMEN, RELIGION, AND THE 2008 ELECTION

Katherine Knutson

When Republican presidential candidate John McCain announced his choice of running mate on August 29, 2008, many of the national political reporters covering the story did not even know how to pronounce Sarah Palin's last name. Within minutes, the quest began to define this newcomer to the national political scene. One important dimension of Palin's identity involved her religious beliefs. In fact, many observers suspected that a major reason McCain selected Palin was to appease Christian conservatives who had not yet warmed to him. Others suggested that McCain was attempting to appeal to female voters who had supported Hillary Clinton in the Democratic primaries and wanted to see a women elected to office. The selection of this woman who emphasized her religious faith and the ensuing controversy over her candidacy highlight the important role sex and religion played in the 2008 presidential campaign and election, both in terms of voters and the candidates themselves.[1]

No women, and thus, no women of faith, have been elected president or vice president of the United States. However, women of faith across the political spectrum have been active and influential participants in presidential politics. Though much research addresses the impact of sex on political behavior and opinion[2] and a growing body of research examines the role of faith in politics,[3] little research explores the convergence of these two important aspects of identity as they relate to political opinion and behavior.

This chapter examines the impact of religion and sex on political campaigns and voting behavior in the 2008 presidential election. The 2008 election was particularly unique in that two of the major candidates identified as religious women and negotiated the challenges of both these dimensions of their identity. However, the experiences of Clinton and Palin differed substantially, in large part because of

the expectations and behavior of key demographic groups within the two major political parties. Clinton faced the challenge of running as a religious woman in a Democratic primary, where religious and racial minorities make up key voting blocs and antagonism to religion still exists among some party adherents. In contrast, Palin faced the challenge of running as a religious women representing the Republican Party in the general election, where she struggled to appeal both to religious and economic conservatives within the party and tried to appeal to the moderate and independent voters necessary to win a general election. The differences between these two contexts (the primary versus the general election), the two parties each represented (Democratic versus Republican), and the religious traditions of each (Mainline Protestant versus Evangelical Protestant) resulted in very different campaign approaches for each candidate in her efforts to appeal to voters. Perhaps most interestingly, the very notion of what it meant to be a "Christian woman" in the context of a presidential election was very different for Clinton than it was for Palin.

In this chapter, I first explore the way the Clinton and Palin campaigns navigated these two dimensions of identity in the context of the primary (for Clinton) and general (for Palin) elections. Using data collected by the American National Election Study, I then examine how religious women responded to these political messages in terms of their candidate preferences in the general election. Finally, I explore how differences in religious traditions and behaviors and demographic differences affect candidate preferences.

Clinton, Palin, and the Negotiation of Identity

The presidential election of 2008 was historic in that it featured two strong female candidates: Democratic presidential contender Hillary Clinton and Republican vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin. Each professed deep-held religious beliefs and their own understanding of feminism, particularly as applied to the world of contemporary politics. In their campaigns, each worked to communicate an image of themselves that would resonate with key demographic groups. Given that women, and religious women in particular, make up a significant portion of the electorate, Clinton and Palin both sought to appeal to this important voting bloc. For Clinton, this meant communicating the message that she was a woman of deep faith, a woman who expressed traditional family values by staying in a relationship despite her husband's very public infidelity, a woman who would be able to speak for religious women in the White House. For Palin, this meant communicating her identification with evangelical voters while not alienating other groups of voters, all while trying to manage a string of public revelations about her private life that did not correspond to public expectations of a traditional evangelical woman.

One of the best indications of the important role religion played in the 2008 election was the fact that the first meeting of the two general election candidates

came not at a media-sponsored debate but at an August forum sponsored by influential evangelical author and pastor Rick Warren at Saddleback Church in southern California. Though the candidates overlapped only briefly, they used the forum to address topics of concern to religious voters such as abortion, same-sex marriage, and stem cell research. Earlier in the campaign, the progressive religious group Faith in Public Life sponsored a ninety-minute forum featuring Democratic contenders Clinton and Barack Obama discussing issues such as poverty, climate change, and human rights.

As these two examples indicate, there was a great demand for the candidates to address questions of religion in the campaign, and most of the candidates responded to this demand with enthusiasm. The sex of the candidates was also a reoccurring theme throughout the campaigns. Female candidates worked to overcome stereotypes about women and fought against subtle forms of media bias against female candidates. Even the male candidates struggled in debates not to appear to be "bullying" their female opponents. These sorts of interesting sex dynamics resurfaced throughout the campaign. In this section, I focus on the two female candidates, Clinton and Palin. Taking each candidate in turn, I first provide a brief overview of their religious background and then explore the ways in which they negotiated the two dimensions of their identity— sex and religious belief— within the campaign.

Hillary Clinton

Raised in the Methodist church, Senator Clinton actively participated in church-related activities throughout her childhood and adolescence. As an adult, Clinton continued her participation, teaching adult Sunday school classes at First United Methodist Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, attending Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, and participating in weekly Senate prayer groups associated with a low-profile but powerful Christian group in Washington known as the Fellowship. The United Methodist Church, of which Clinton is a part, is one of the largest Protestant denominations in the United States. Scholars consider the denomination to be part of the mainline Protestant tradition. Like many other denominations within the mainline tradition, the United Methodist Church supports legalized abortion, civil rights and liberties for gays and lesbians, and the inclusion of women in leadership positions (the Methodist Church voted to allow the ordination of women in 1956). Thus, Clinton grew up in a denomination that modeled a progressive model of female leadership and during a time when the feminist movement was particularly strong (Figure 8.1).

Throughout her public statements on the campaign trail, Clinton repeatedly referenced her religious faith. At a debate in Texas in February of 2008, Clinton said,

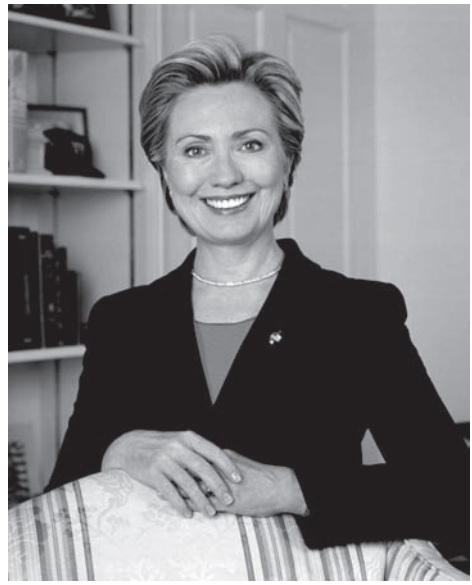

FIGURE 8.1 New York Senator Hillary Clinton. Courtesy: Official Congressional Portrait of Congresswoman Hillary Clinton.

> I resolved at a very young age that I'd been blessed, and that I was called by my faith and by my upbringing to do what I could to give others the same opportunities and blessings that I took for granted. That's what gets me up in the morning. That's what motivates me in this campaign.

Earlier in the debate circuit, at a forum held by the evangelical group Sojourners/Call to Renewal in June 2007, the moderator asked Clinton whether her faith had helped her to get through the public revelation that her husband had been unfaithful. Clinton responded, "Well, I'm not sure I would have gotten through it without my faith."[4]

Comments such as these played well to a liberal Christian audience, many of whom were voters in the Democratic primaries. However, her attempts to highlight her religious faith did not win her any support among the conservative Christian community. Conservative Christians claimed that her discussion of faith seemed "scripted," and an editor at the *Weekly Standard* described Clinton's faith as believing in "everything but God."[5] Clinton responded to the criticism by making a concerted effort to appeal to religious voters. She worked to create a message that would both inspire the base of Democratic voters and resonate with moderate and independent voters in the general election, thus the emphasis on her personal faith. She hired Burns Strider, an evangelical Christian, to coordinate outreach to religious voters and included houses of worship and religiously affiliated schools as regular stops on the campaign trail.[6] Ultimately, it is not clear that these efforts were worth the trouble at

this stage in the campaign. Many voters for whom religion mattered, particularly the evangelicals targeted by Strider, identified as Republicans, and religious voters in the Democratic primary ultimately split their support among the various contenders.

Though Clinton worked to highlight her religious convictions, it seems that the media was more interested in emphasizing her sex. Media coverage was quite critical in this regard, and many within the Clinton campaign alleged sexism by the media. Journalists and pundits criticized Clinton's physical appearance, the sound of her voice, and any displays of emotion (or lack thereof).[7] In addition to anecdotal evidence, there is preliminary empirical evidence to support the claim that journalists held Clinton to a different standard than male candidates.[8] Mark Halperin, the editor at large for *Time* magazine said, "She's just held to a different standard in every respect…the press rooted for Obama to go negative, and when he did he was applauded. When she does it, it's treated as this huge violation of propriety."[9] Aside from the double standard in behavior, the media devoted time to Clinton's physical appearance and feminine characteristics. The liberal media watchdog, Media Matters for America, found that MSNBC spent nearly twenty-four minutes discussing Clinton's cleavage on July 20, 2007.[10] Journalists also devoted an inordinate amount of time commenting on her hair and clothing.

Many female voters connected to Clinton because of her sex, and Clinton cultivated those connections by hiring six full-time staffers to do outreach specifically to women voters.[11] She also gained financial support from several women's interest groups such as EMILY's list.[12] In November 2007, EMILY's List released a study that found that Senator Clinton held "a wide lead over all her opponents among women voters in the primary election because they believe she has the experience and background to handle the job."[13] Asked which candidate they would support in the primary election, 54 percent of women voters chose Senator Clinton. Only 18 percent of women voters said they were most likely to vote for Senator Obama.[14]

As the Democratic primary campaign progressed, Clinton and Obama emerged as the two frontrunners in a contest in which voters tend to be more liberal than general election voters. An analysis of the voters in the Democratic primaries found that each drew from different pockets of support within the Party.[15] The largest gaps involved race, age, and education, with Clinton voters tending to be less ethnically and racially diverse, older, and with lower levels of education. However, there was also a difference involving religious affiliation and sex. Catholic and Jewish primary voters favored Clinton, whereas those with no religious affiliation favored Obama. Clinton and Obama split the Protestant vote. Exit and entrance poll data from the state contests indicated that Clinton's support from women lasted throughout the primary season and that, despite the growing sense that Obama would win the nomination, Clinton continued to amass support from female voters. In fact, some of her largest margins of victory among female voters occurred late in the process.

After Clinton conceded to Obama on June 7, 2008, some of her female supporters had trouble deciding where to throw their support. In a poll taken ninety days before the general election, 76 percent of Clinton supporters reported that they would vote for Obama whereas 18 percent said they would vote for McCain. Overall, 10 percent of women voters were still undecided.[16]

Sarah Palin

Baptized as a Roman Catholic but raised in an Assemblies of God church in Wasilla, Alaska, Sarah Palin was a leader of her high school chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, an evangelical parachurch organization. Palin attended the Wasilla Assembly of God from the time she was four until 2002, when she joined the Wasilla Bible Church. While she was Governor of Alaska, she attended the Juneau Christian Center during her time at the state capital. All three of these churches fall within what scholars categorize as the evangelical Protestant tradition. Evangelicals take a literal view of the Bible, emphasize the importance of making a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, and believe in sharing the message of Christ through evangelism. Politically, many evangelical churches and members of evangelical churches hold conservative positions on issues such as abortion, gay rights, and women in leadership (the Assemblies of God denomination, however, has ordained women since 1914).

FIGURE 8.2 Alaska Governor Sarah Palin visiting U.S. troops in Kuwait, July 24, 2007. Courtesy: U.S. Department of Defense photo by Pfc. Christopher Grammer.

Though Palin had a clear history of involvement in evangelical churches, she preferred to describe herself as a "Bible-believing Christian" rather than as an evangelical in interviews. One reason for the hesitancy may be because two of the churches she had attended—Wasilla Assembly of God and the Juneau Christian Center—are associated with the Pentecostal movement, which is sometimes in tension with the mainstream evangelical movement.[17] The notion that Palin's religious beliefs were out of the mainstream was exacerbated during the campaign by video clips circulating on the Internet that highlighted Palin's religious beliefs. One controversial clip from 2004 showed a Kenyan preacher at the Wasilla Assembly of God Church praying for Palin to be protected from witchcraft during her campaign for governor. Other clips featured Palin claiming policy decisions, such as building a gas pipeline in Alaska, as being part of "God's will."

For many within the evangelical community, Palin's statements and religious beliefs were nothing out of the ordinary and were actually reassuring, especially in light of John McCain's candidacy. McCain had a strained relationship with the evangelical community, which reached a low point after the 2000 South Carolina primary when McCain told reporters that the Religious Right was an "evil influence." McCain spent the ensuing years trying to mend relations; however, at the time he declared his candidacy for the 2008 election, evangelical leaders were still wary. During the primary campaign, McCain accepted the endorsement of evangelical televangelist, Reverend John Hagee. However, Hagee made public statements offensive to Catholics, Jews, gays and lesbians, and other minority groups, and the uproar caused McCain to renounce his endorsement three months after accepting it.

Raised in an Episcopal church, McCain was notoriously private about his religious beliefs. Prominent evangelicals criticized the widely circulated story McCain most often referred to when asked about his faith. The story involved a Vietnamese prison guard who drew a cross in the sand to share his Christian faith with McCain while McCain was a prisoner of war. Some religious leaders criticized the story because it did not focus on McCain's personal faith journey but rather focused on another person's faith. McCain was very interested in finding ways to appeal to religious conservatives because evangelicals, in particular, make up such a strong component of the Republican coalition. Therefore, the selection of Palin as a running mate provided McCain with an easy way to reach out to the evangelical voting bloc. In fact, McCain's appeal to evangelicals changed drastically after announcing Palin as his pick for running mate, and several prominent leaders, including Dr. James Dobson, endorsed him. This endorsement was especially surprising because Dr. Dobson earlier announced he would not vote for McCain under any circumstances.

Palin entered the campaign in the wake of Clinton's failed attempt to secure the Democratic nomination and in the midst of attempts by McCain to reach out to a broad audience of general election voters. Like most political candidates, Palin faced intense scrutiny by the media, but the scrutiny was gendered in ways reminiscent of

the Clinton campaign. Journalists focused on her wardrobe, the tone of her voice, and her balance between work and motherhood. Palin was criticized for spending $150,000 on clothes, hair, and makeup during the campaign, and some observers questioned her commitment to her family because of her decision to join the ticket despite being a mother of five, including an infant with Down syndrome. Others criticized her parenting skills after news of her teenage daughter's pregnancy emerged. These themes led one religious women's interest group, Concerned Women for America (CWA), to issue a series of press releases defending Palin. In one, CWA political commentator, Dr. Janice Shaw Crouse, charged, "attempts to blame Bristol's [Palin's oldest daughter] mother and to discount abstinence programs based on one teen's mistake marked an all-time-low in bottom-feeding journalism. Even feminists have shown their true colors in below-the-belt attacks against a woman just because she is conservative."[18]

This spirited defense of Palin highlights the complex interplay of religion, sex, and political ideology at work within the campaign. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, conservative religious groups pointed to the breakdown of traditional sex roles and the rise of feminism as being central causes of the social and political problems facing the nation. As more and more women joined the workforce and began to demand equal pay and equal opportunities, conservative religious groups linked the rise of feminism to the passage of "antifamily" policies such as no-fault divorce and abortion. Within this context, groups on the Religious Right stressed the importance of raising children in traditional, two-parent families where the mother would stay home to provide childcare. The heated rhetoric against feminism subsided in the 1990s and 2000s as issues such as homosexuality took center stage, but the notion of traditional sex roles still looms large for these groups.[19]

Palin emerged as a vice presidential candidate who could speak the language of religious conservatives, but she certainly did not fit the mold of the traditional evangelical woman. Despite traditional prohibitions on out-of wedlock sexual activity, Palin married after learning she was pregnant with her first child. She was a working mother and returned to work as governor of Alaska a mere three days after giving birth to a son with Down syndrome. These were certainly not the characteristics of a "good Christian woman" advanced by religious conservatives. Yet, Palin embraced the notion of a new model of Christian feminism. She touted her membership in the anti-abortion group, Feminists for Life and, during her gubernatorial race, told a reporter that no woman should have to choose between her career, her education, and her child.[20] Palin's strong defense of conservative causes and her easy use of religious language resulted in evangelicals embracing her candidacy despite the unorthodox aspects of her personal story.

In pre-election polls, Palin received her strongest support from evangelical women older than age thirty, but there was a significant gap between younger and older evangelical women. Though 60 percent of older evangelical women felt "warmly" toward Palin, fewer than half of evangelical women younger than age

thirty felt that way.[21] This pattern is quite similar to the pattern that emerged with Clinton, with older women leaning toward Clinton and younger women toward Obama. This is interesting because we might expect older women, particularly religious women, to be less comfortable with the idea of a strong female in a leadership position. Instead, the opposite was true: Older women were more likely to support the female candidates. In the end, Obama carried 56 percent of women voters whereas the McCain/Palin ticket attracted only 43 percent of women voters. Democratic candidates won a majority of women voters in the previous four presidential elections, so this outcome is not unique.[22] However, the fact that the 2008 campaign included a female vice presidential candidate but that female voters still favored the Democratic ticket by such a large margin is notable.

Candidate Preferences of Religious Women in the 2008 Election

The impact of gender and sex in the 2008 elections was nothing new. Studies find that differences between voters with different religious beliefs and between male and female voters have grown substantially in the last thirty years. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter was in a heated reelection battle against the actor-turned-governor, Ronald Reagan. In post-election analyses, two blocs of voters emerged as having played notable roles in the election—women and religious conservatives. Female voters favored Carter, and this difference between male and female voting patterns was termed the "gender gap." Although some scholars note that the gender gap trend emerged as early as the election of 1952,[23] the 1980 election was the first time this phenomenon received widespread public attention.[24] Scholars propose a number of factors that account for the difference in voting preferences between men and women, including their views on economic and social issues,[25] factors associated with marital status,[26] participation in the workforce,[27] and trends in voter turnout.[28] Other scholars argue that the gender gap has less to do with changes among female voters and more to do with male voters, who have become more conservative over time.[29] Whatever its cause, the gender gap is an important strategic consideration for presidential candidates because women tend to vote at higher rates than do men.[30]

In addition to recognition of the gender gap, the 1980 election also reflected a growth in the power of conservative Christian groups.[31] Recently mobilized by the Supreme Court decision to legalize abortion (*Roe v. Wade*, 1973), the persistent debate over teaching evolution in schools, and the successful battle against the proposed Equal Rights Amendment, conservative Christian groups channeled their energies into electing Reagan (despite Carter's evangelical credentials). The combined efforts of Christian Right groups, including the newly formed Moral Majority and Christian Voice, yielded approximately 2 million new voters in the 1980 election.[32] Perhaps because of these groups' efforts, white Protestant and Catholic voters switched allegiance from Carter to Reagan in this election. The perceived impact of religious conservatives was evident when, shortly after the 1980 election,

Jerry Falwell appeared on a variety of television programs to claim that evangelicals had provided the votes behind Reagan's victory.[33]

The electoral impact of women and conservative Christians are particularly interesting because they are not mutually exclusive categories. In fact, a majority of people professing religious beliefs are women. This creates an interesting paradox: Studies find that women are more likely than men to hold liberal views on political issues and to vote for Democrats,[34] but women are also more likely than men to say they are religious, and research suggests that religious people tend to hold more conservative views and vote for Republicans.[35]

The question posed by this paradox is what happens when these two facets of identity—gender and religious beliefs—combine in a single voter? Do religious women support different presidential candidates than religious men or nonreligious women? How do religious women differ from nonreligious women or religious men in their views on critical policy issues. What differences, if any, exist between women of different religious traditions or levels of religious behavior when it comes to voting in presidential elections?

Using data collected from the American National Election Survey (ANES) between 1980 and 2008, I examined these questions regarding the voting behavior of religious women.[36] I created four categories of survey respondents—religious women, nonreligious women, religious men, and nonreligious men—using the respondents' gender and their response to the statement, "Religion is an important part of my life."[37] Though this question oversimplifies the nature of religious beliefs, it provides a benchmark to separate the clearly nonreligious from those professing any sort of religious belief. As is the case in other national surveys, most respondents claim to be religious. Religious women make up the largest bloc of the population and, therefore, the largest potential group of voters. Between 1980 and 2008, religious women made up approximately 42 percent of voters. Religious men made up the next largest group, averaging 31 percent of the population. Nonreligious women represented slightly more than 9 percent of the population, and nonreligious men made up 13 percent of the population. Put another way, about 80 percent of women reported that religion is an important part of their lives, whereas only about 70 percent of men said the same. These numbers are remarkable consistent throughout the time period examined here, making religious women a key target for political campaigns.

Religious and nonreligious women supported Obama in the 2008 election. However, though more than 70 percent of nonreligious women expressed support for Obama, only 52 percent of religious women did so. This finding of general female support for the Democratic candidate is part of a longer trend. Between 1980 and 1988, both religious and nonreligious women tended to support Republican candidates, though by a relatively slim margin. In 1992, however, religious and nonreligious women shifted their support to Democratic candidates. In all subsequent elections, religious and nonreligious women have expressed more

support for Democratic candidates, though nonreligious women do so by margins larger than those of religious women.

With this simple division, the data indicate that religious women tend to vote much like nonreligious women (for Republican candidates in elections between 1980 and 1988 and for Democratic candidates in elections since 1992), but not all religious women express the same voting preferences. In particular, this category of "religious women" masks significant differences between women of different religious traditions and for women of different levels of religious commitment. Scholars generally identify five major religious traditions in America—evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, black Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish—that share history and a set of basic theological beliefs.[38] Scholars also identify an important difference between religious persons holding traditional, or orthodox, beliefs and those holding modernist beliefs.[39]

To gauge some of the differences that exist among religious women in terms of candidate preference in the 2008 election, we can look at differences among white Protestants who do and do not identify as being born-again, black Protestants, white and Hispanic Catholics, and Jews. The division between those who identify as born-again and those who do not creates categories that roughly approximate the division between mainline and evangelical Protestants.[40] About one-third of Americans identify as born-again Christians, and evangelical Protestants are most likely to use the term compared with members of other religious traditions. One study found that 78 percent of evangelical Protestant respondents identified as being born-again.[41] In contrast, only 21 percent of mainline Protestants identified as being born-again. Thus, this measure is a simple, yet useful, way of identifying differences between Protestant women.

Religious women favored Obama at levels that were similar to those of the general population. Obama won 53 percent of the total U.S. vote and 52 percent of the vote from religious women whereas McCain won 46 percent of the total vote and 48 percent of the vote from religious women. Religious women from different religious traditions voted quite differently, though. Obama garnered overwhelming support from black Protestant women—99 percent of whom reported voting for him—Hispanic Catholics (80 percent), and Jews (92 percent; see Table 8.1).

However, 75 percent of white Protestant women who identify as born-again reported voting for McCain. McCain also did well among white Protestant women who do not identify as being born-again (58%) and white Catholic women (52%). It is likely that these women were attracted to the ticket by the presence of Sarah Palin. The ANES includes a feeling thermometer question that asks respondents to rate their feelings for different individuals and groups on a scale of one to one hundred, with one hundred being the most positive. The mean rating for Sarah Palin was forty-nine, but among white, born-again Protestant women, the mean rating was sixty-four. The mean rating for John McCain among members of this subgroup was sixty-two (fifty-three, among all respondents), which suggests that this particular

TABLE 8.1 Vote choice of religious women by religious tradition and religion practice

(Percent of religious women falling in each category noted in parentheses)	*Obama (%)*	*McCain (%)*
All religious women	52	48
Religious tradition		
All Protestant (51%)	46	53
White Protestant (not born-again) (11%)	40	58
White Protestant (born-again) (27%)	25	75
Black Protestant (10%)	99	1
All Catholic (22%)	60	40
White Catholic (12%)	48	52
Hispanic Catholic (4%)	80	21
Jewish (1%)	92	8
Religion provides guidance in day-to-day living		
Some (18%)	60	40
A great deal (82%)	49	49
Frequency of prayer		
Never (2%)	81	19
Weekly (23%)	58	40
Daily (75%)	48	51
Frequency of attendance		
Never (1%)	100	0
Monthly/yearly (35%)	65	34
Weekly (64%)	42	57

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 percent because of rounding and votes for third-party candidates; data comes from the 2008 American National Election Study Time Series Study.

group of religious women was motivated more by Palin's presence on the ticket than by McCain.[42]

Another way to gauge the impact of Palin on born-again women is to examine data from the Republican primary election. Though in the general election, 58 percent of born-again women (all races and religious traditions) supported McCain over Obama, in the primary election, only 13 percent of born-again women reported supporting McCain (51 percent of born-again women reported not voting in the primary).[43] Another 10 percent of born-again women reported supporting another Republican candidate, with former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee garnering 5 percent of that support. Clearly, McCain made great headway in appealing to born-again women between the primaries and the general election. As nothing in

McCain's personal life or religious rhetoric changed much between the primary and general elections, this finding suggests that Palin did in fact help win votes of evangelical women and other evangelical voters (Table 8.1).

Religious practice also plays a role in vote choice. In particular, those who reported frequent prayer and church attendance were more supportive of McCain than Obama. Among those religious women who reported attending church weekly or more than weekly, 57 percent voted for McCain. Conversely, those religious women who did not report frequent religious activity were much more likely to support Obama. Research suggests that more frequent religious behavior correlates with more conservative voting decisions, so this trend is not surprising.[44] However, this also fits with the overarching narrative of the campaign in which the selection of Palin allowed the McCain campaign to gain the higher ground on the question of religious commitment. Though there is no reason to suspect that Palin's faith was any more sincere than Obama's (or McCain or Clinton's, for that matter), the fact that Palin could communicate in the language of the evangelical community meant that she was perceived by members of this community to have a religious faith to which they could relate.

Religious women are like other voters in that demographic factors also play a role in voting (see Table 8.2). Obama drew great support from young voters (he won 66 percent of voters younger than 30), including young religious women. Obama also won a majority of support from those with a high school diploma or an advanced degree. More than 60 percent of religious women with household income of less than $49,999 supported Obama, whereas nearly the same percent of those with household incomes above $50,000 supported McCain. Nationally, 63 percent of those with a household income below $49,999 supported Obama, but the vote from those with a household income above $50,000 was almost evenly split between Obama and McCain. According to exit poll data, McCain did not win a majority of votes in any income category.[45] Thus, religious women with household incomes above $50,000 were more likely to support McCain than the average voter at that income level.

Racial patterns among religious women were quite different from national patterns. Nationally, McCain won the support of 55 percent of white voters but, among religious women, he won 62 percent. Obama won 75 percent of Hispanic religious women but only 67 percent of the Hispanic vote nationally. In part, this was due to a combination of the inroads made in the Hispanic community by George W. Bush in the 2004 election coupled with McCain's moderate stance on immigration reform. Obama won 86 percent of Asian religious women but only 62 percent of Asians nationally. These figures again point to the critical importance of considering religion and gender when analyzing voting behavior. Both candidates did better among religious women within the larger demographic group than among the group as a whole. Finally, studies find that married people tend to support Republican candidates whereas unmarried people tend to support Democratic

TABLE 8.2 Vote choice of religious women by demographic information

(Percent of religious women falling in each category noted in parentheses)	*Obama (%)*	*McCain (%)*
Age		
Under 30 (17%)	63	37
30-59 (55%)	49	50
Over 60 (28%)	50	48
Education		
High school diploma or less (58%)	58	41
Associates or bachelor's degree (33%)	39	59
Advanced degree (9%)	55	49
Income (household)		
Less than $49,999 (42%)	62	37
More than $50,000 (58%)	38	61
Race		
White (73%)	37	62
African American (15%)	98	2
Hispanic (8%)	75	25
Asian (1%)	86	14
Marital Status		
Married (54%)	42	57
Not married (46%)	62	37

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 percent because of rounding and votes for third-party candidates; data comes from the 2008 American National Election Study Time Series Study; according to census data, the median household income in 2007 was $50,233.

candidates.[46] These trends are visible in this election, with 57 percent of married religious women supporting McCain and 62 percent of unmarried religious women supporting Obama.

Issue Preferences of Religious Women in the 2008 Election

The policy preferences of religious women also likely impacted candidate choice. Table 8.3 presents a variety of domestic and foreign policies discussed during the 2008 campaign. The responses for each issue are ordered from more conservative to more liberal. As Obama was the more liberal of the two candidates, the percentage of the vote for each issue should increase for Obama as the responses become more liberal whereas the percentage of the vote share for McCain should start high and

TABLE 8.3 Issue positions of religious women

(Percent of religious women falling in each category noted in parentheses)	*Obama (%)*	*McCain (%)*
Domestic Policy		
Abortion		
Never legal (18%)	30	70
Some exceptions (rape, incest, etc.) (45%)	44	55
Always legal (37%)	69	30
Same-sex marriage		
Not legal (41%)	36	63
No marriage, but allow civil unions (28%)	45	55
Legal (31%)	78	21
Spending on public schools		
Decrease or cut entirely (11%)	53	47
Keep the same (34%)	42	56
Increase (51%)	56	43
Spending on the poor		
Decrease or cut entirely (11%)	41	54
Keep the same (38%)	44	56
Increase (51%)	59	40
Spending on the environment		
Decrease or cut entirely (10%)	47	50
Keep the same (36%)	39	59
Increase (55%)	60	40
Universal health care		
Oppose (38%)	24	75
No opinion (12%)	36	56
Favor (51%)	76	24
Foreign Policy		
Government efforts to reduce terrorism		
Approve (73%)	35	64
Disapprove (27%)	84	15
Handling of the Iraq War		
Approve (33%)	9	89
Disapprove (68%)	75	25
Spending on foreign aid		
Decrease or cut entirely (15%)	44	54
Keep the same (35%)	41	57
Increase (50%)	62	38
Spending on border security		
Increase (51%)	62	37
Keep the same (38%)	41	58
Decrease or cut entirely (11%)	44	56

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 percent because of rounding and votes for third-party candidates; data comes from the 2008 American National Election Study Time Series Study.

then decrease within each given issue. This pattern holds true for all but three issues: spending on public schools, the environment, and border security. For those three issues, religious women who preferred the status quo supported McCain, whereas religious women who wanted change—either an increase or decrease in funding—supported Obama. This is an interesting finding because it suggests that Obama's campaign theme of "change" resonated with many religious women, that Obama and McCain's positions on these issues might have been unclear, or that these issues were not highly salient for this group of voters.

Other issues result in expected patterns. Religious women opposed to abortion and same-sex marriage supported McCain by wide margins, whereas those supporting legal access to abortion and legalizing same-sex marriage supported Obama. Interestingly, a large majority of religious women support at least some access to legal abortion, and almost 60 percent support some sort of legal recognition for same-sex couples. Those wanting to increase spending on the poor and those favoring universal health care supported Obama. In the realm of foreign policy, religious women who disapproved of the government's efforts to reduce terrorism and the handling of the Iraq War supported Obama by overwhelming margins. In summary, religious women who held more liberal opinions on these domestic and foreign policy issues tended to support Obama, whereas religious women with more conservative opinions supported McCain.

Conclusion

These connections between religious belief, gender, and politics are both interesting and important. As Bendroth and Brereton note,

> Many women's historians have assumed that feminism and religion were mutually exclusive, although some have claimed a heroic role for religion in conferring a gospel freedom upon women. More and more, however, scholars have come to recognize a complex and often fraught relationship between the two…[47]

The 2008 campaign highlighted the importance of both gender and religion both among the candidates and in the minds of voters. In the primary elections, Clinton worked to cast herself as a woman of faith to appeal to religious voters. She won the support of many older women and the support of many Catholic and Jewish women but narrowly lost the nomination.

In the general election, Obama won strong support from all voters but also managed to maintain support from religious women voters that has been growing since the early 1990s. Obama's margin of support from religious women, however, was significantly smaller than what Bill Clinton received in 1992 and 1996. Though Obama received strong levels of support from black Protestant, Hispanic Catholic,

and Jewish women, only 45 percent of Protestant women expressed support for him. More important, Obama failed to appeal to the significant numbers of born-again Protestant women, who flocked to McCain particularly after his selection of Palin. In 2008, as in past elections, religious women are not a monolithic bloc. Significant differences are apparent between women from different religious traditions, levels of religious behavior, and demographic backgrounds. Policy preferences also shape voting decisions among religious women.

As we move further into the twenty-first century, candidates and campaigns will continue to challenge conventional assumptions of the intersection of gender, religion, and politics. Presidents and presidential candidates will need to garner support from religious women if they hope to be successful in campaigning, agenda setting, or policymaking. Though no women of faith have ever served as president, religious women across the political and theological spectrum clearly played a vibrant role in the 2008 presidential campaign and will continue to do so in the future.

Notes

1 I use the term *sex*, which describes biological differences, rather than *gender*, which describes culturally constructed differences because I am particularly focused on the differences between male and female candidates and voters in this chapter.
2 See, for example, Sandra Baxter and Marjorie Lansing, *Women and Politics: The Visible Majority*, *Women and Culture Series* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1983); Carole Kennedy Chaney, R. Michael Alvarez, and Jonathan Nagler, "Explaining the Gender Gap in U.S. Presidential Elections, 1980–1992," *Political Research Quarterly* 51, 2 (1998); and Jeff Manza and Clem Brooks, "The Gender Gap in U.S. Presidential Elections: When? Why? Implications?" *The American Journal of Sociology* 103, 5 (1998).
3 See, for example, Allen Hertzke, *Representing God in Washington: The Role of Religious Lobbies in the American Polity* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1988); David Leege and Lyman Kellstedt, *Rediscovering the Religious Factor in American Politics* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993); and *The Role of Religion in the Making of Public Policy*, eds. (Waco, TX: J.M. Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies, 1991).
4 A full transcript of this forum is available at http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0706/04/sitroom.03.html
5 Michael Luo, "For Clinton, Faith Intertwines With Political Life," *The New York Times*, July 2, 2007, 1.
6 *Ibid.*
7 Judith Timson, "From the Mouths of Critics: A Glaring Double Standard, "The *Globe and Mail*, February 26, 2008.
8 Farida Jalalzai, "*Close But Not Close Enough—Hillary Clinton—As An Almost Executive*." Paper Presented at the Midwest Political Science Association Conference, April 3, 2009); Joseph Uscinski and Lilly Goren, "*What's in a Name? Televised Coverage of Hillary Clinton during the Democratic Primary*." Presented at the Midwest Political Science Association Conference, April 2, 2009).
9 Howard Kurtz, "For Clinton, A Matter of Fair Media," *The Washington Post*, Wednesday, December 19, 2007, C01.
10 Media Matters for America, "'It Has Come to This': In Two Separate Segments, MSNBC Highlights Hillary Clinton's New Hairdo," http://mediamatters.org/items/200807160005 (Retrieved February 20, 2009).

11 Jill Lawrence, "Clinton focuses on female bonding; House parties planned for tonight's debate," *USA TODAY*, July 23, 2007, 1A.
12 The name EMILY's List stands for "Early Money is Like Yeast." The group supports female, pro-choice candidates and believes that providing candidates with funding early will allow them to overcome historical barriers facing female candidates.
13 EMILY's List. 2008. "EMILY's List WOMEN VOTE! Releases New Study on Women and the Democratic Presidential Primary." http://emilyslist.org. (Accessed November 11, 2008).
14 *Ibid.*
15 Patrick Fisher, "The Gapology of the Obama Vote in the 2008 Democratic Presidential Primaries." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, Vancouver, BC, March 19–21, 2009.
16 This poll was conducted by Republican pollster Kellyanne Conway and Democratic pollster Celinda Lake, and results were reported in an article titled "New Poll Reveals Where Women Voters Stand Post-Hillary" posted on the web site www.mylifetime.com.
17 Pentecostals take their beliefs from the Feast of Pentecost described in the New Testament book of Acts. At the Feast of Pentecost, the disciples of Jesus were filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in tongues. Modern Pentecostals believe in the manifestation of modern-day spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues. James A. Beverley, *Religions A to Z: A Guide to 100 Influential Religious Movements* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005).
18 Concerned Women for America, "Crouse Says Media Risks Backlash as it Pounds Palin on Family Matters," http://www.cwalac.org/article_757.shtml, press release issued September 3, 2008.
19 Sara Diamond, *Not by Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1998).
20 Kyle Hopkins, "Same-sex Unions, Drugs Get Little Play," *Anchorage Daily News*, August 6, 2006.
21 "Young Evangelicals and the Candidates," *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*, October 3, 2008.
22 Center for the American Woman and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, The Gender Gap: Voting Choices in Presidential Elections, 2005.
23 Richard A. Seltzer, Jody Newman, and Melissa Voorhees Leighton, *Sex as a Political Variable: Women as Candidates and Voters in U.S. Elections* (Boulder,CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997).
24 Baxter and Lansing, *Women and Politics*.
25 Chaney et al., "Explaining the Gender Gap in U.S. Presidential Elections, 1980–1992"; Kristin Kanthak and Barbara Norrander, "The Enduring Gender Gap," in *Models of Voting in Presidential Elections: The 2000 U.S. Election*, eds. Herbert F. Weisberg and Clyde Wilcox (Stanford, CA: Stanford, 2004); Georgie Ann Weatherby, "Gender, Religion, and Politics: An Empirical Study" (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 1990).
26 Crawford, "Women Voters Key in 2004 Presidential Election."
27 Manza and Brooks, "The Gender Gap in U.S. Presidential Elections"; Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).
28 Delli Carpini and Fuchs, "The Year of the Woman?"
29 Karen M. Kaufmann and John R. Petrocik, "The Changing Politics of American Men: Understanding the Sources of the Gender Gap," *American Journal of Political Science* 43, 3 (1999); Seltzer et al., *Sex as a Political Variable*.
30 Delli Carpini and Fuchs, "The Year of the Woman? Candidate, Voters, and the 1992 Election," in Seltzer et al., *Sex as a Political Variable*.
31 Alan Crawford, *Thunder on the Right: The "New Right" and the Politics of Resentment* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980); Diamond, *Not by Politics Alone*; Clyde Wilcox, *Onward Christian Soldiers? The Religious Right in American Politics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996).
32 Diamond, *Not by Politics Alone*.
33 Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson, *Blinded by Might: Can the Religious Right Save America?* (Grand Rapids,, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999); Wilcox, *Onward Christian Soldiers?*

34 Seltzer et al., *Sex as a Political Variable*.
35 Domke, *God Willing?*
36 These questions only begin to scratch the surface of this fascinating aspect of voting behavior and leave many interesting, yet unanswered, questions. For example, are religious women more or less interested in politics than these other groups? What political issues concern religious women compared to these other groups? The ANES is especially useful in addressing these questions because it provides comparable questions that address both political and religious characteristics of voters. Though changes to the religion questions in 1989 have greatly improved our ability to "measure" religion, even the earlier versions of these questions allow for a comparison across time.
37 The NES question reads, "Do you consider religion to be an important part of your life, or not?" Responses include "yes, important," "no, not important," "don't know," and "not applicable."
38 Leege and Kellstedt, *Rediscovering the Religious Factor in American Politics*.
39 James L. Guth, John Green, Corwin E. Smidt, Lyman Kellstedt, and Margaret Poloma, *The Bully Pulpit: The Politics of Protestant Clergy* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1997).
40 The question asked is, "Would you call yourself a born-again Christian, that is, have you personally had a conversion experience related to Jesus Christ?"
41 Andrew Kohut, John C. Green, Scott Keeter, and Robert C. Toth. *The Diminishing Divide: Religion's Changing Role in American Politics* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000).
42 Historically, the split between born-again women and other religious women developed in the early 1990s. In the elections in the 1980s, there was little difference between the candidate preferences of born-again and other religious women. For example, in 1980, about 48 percent of born-again women supported Reagan, whereas about 49 percent of women who did not identify as being born-again did. Beginning in the 1990s, however, a greater split began to develop. In 1992, a majority of born-again women supported Clinton as did other religious women, but the margin of difference between the two groups was larger than it had been in past years. This pattern continued in subsequent elections culminating in the 2008 campaign when there was more than a twenty-point difference in support for Obama between born-again women and other religious women. In effect, the importance of identifying as born-again has grown considerably in the last twenty years.
43 Interestingly, 10 percent of born-again women reported supporting Clinton in the primary, and 11 percent reported supporting Obama.
44 Lyman A. Kellstedt, John C. Green, James L. Guth, and Corwin E. Smidt, "Religious Voting Blocs in the 1992 Election: The Year of the Evangelical? in *Religion and the Culture Wars*, eds. John C. Green, James L. Guth, Corwin E. Smidt, and Lyman Kellstedt (Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield, 1996).
45 2008 exit poll data are available through the *New York Times* web site at: http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/national-exit-polls.html
46 Herbert F. Weisberg, "The Demographics of a New Voting Gap," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 51, 3 (1987): 335–343; Eric Plutzer and Michael McBurnett, "Family Life and American Politics: The 'Marriage Gap' Reconsidered," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 55, 1 (1991): 113–127.
47 Margaret Lamberts Bendroth and Virginia Lieson Brereton, eds., *Women and Twentieth-Century Protestantism* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2002), xiii.

9

AFRICAN AMERICANS, RELIGION, AND THE 2008 ELECTION

Valerie C. Cooper and Corwin E. Smidt

In retrospect, it hardly seems surprising that Barack Obama overwhelmingly won the votes of African Americans on Election Day in 2008. After all, Obama was the first black candidate chosen to be the nominee of one of the two major political parties in the United States. And Obama campaigned as the standard-bearer of the Democratic Party, the party that has long held the loyalty of most African Americans.

However, it was far from a foregone conclusion that Obama would be the candidate to whom African Americans would turn when he announced his candidacy in early 2007, as it was unclear to what extent Obama's multiracial message would energize black voters seeking a candidate willing to address their particular concerns. As a black candidate, Obama faced a difficult balancing act. He could be elected president only by signaling to a predominantly white electorate that he was at some level independent from black people, yet in so doing he was also likely to anger black people.[1] In other words, Obama was going "to have to figure out whether there (was) a way not to alienate and anger a black base that almost by definition (was) going to be disappointed"[2] In fact, some blacks even insisted that Obama was not really an African American and was basically unsuited to be considered an African American candidate in that he was not a direct descendant of slaves and had not had what some considered to be "an authentic African-American experience."[3] Thus, the question of race and how Obama chose to approach the topic was an important factor shaping the responses of many African Americans toward his candidacy.

In addition, religion was likely to serve as an important mediating factor in shaping the responses of black Americans toward Obama's candidacy in that religion is highly salient to many African Americans and continues to be an important part of black American life. In fact, religion serves as an important mediating factor in

FIGURE 9.1 President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in the presence of Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights leaders, Washington, D.C. Courtesy: LBJ Library photo by Cecil Stoughton.

black evaluations of presidential candidates, as religious black Americans articulate different evaluations of candidates and presidents than those blacks who are less religious.[4]

Moreover, African American Christians vote differently than those whites whose religious beliefs mirror their own. These differences may be attributed to divergent reactions to the Civil Rights Movement and to the consequent expansion of the role of the federal government, which, while acting to defend minority rights or eradicate poverty, was seen by some to be destabilizing traditional values of family, gender, and sexuality.[5] Certainly, the Civil Rights Movement and the passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 represent the point at which blacks became overwhelmingly Democratic voters[6] while also marking a time when southern whites began moving *en masse* into the Republican Party. Lyndon Johnson predicted the flight of southern whites from the Democratic Party when, after signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, he commented, "It is an important gain, but I think I just delivered the South to the Republican Party for a long time to come."[7] As a consequence, religiously affiliated blacks have remained in the Democratic Party even as religiously affiliated white voters have increasingly identified with the Republican Party.

This chapter examines the role of race and religion among African Americans in the 2008 presidential election. It seeks to examine the shifting sentiments of African Americans toward Barack Obama's candidacy, the extent to which Obama

energized African American voters, and the extent to which religion shaped support for Obama on Election Day.[8]

Race, Religion, and Politics among African Americans

Perhaps the place to begin is simply to note that "the relationship among race, religion, and politics is not fully understood."[9] On the one hand, race seems hard to disentangle from black religion, as analysts frequently have argued that "there is no disjunction between the black church and the black community."[10] This perspective notes that, because of the history of slavery, racism, and discrimination, black religion has grown basically as "a response and expression of a people oppressed on the basis of race."[11] As a result, black churches function far more than as places within which blacks may worship. Given that religion serves as a basis for cultural cohesion among blacks, churches serve as vehicles for secular and spiritual pursuits. Clearly, the Civil Rights Movement, the most important political movement of blacks since Reconstruction, was a product of black churches and capitalized upon the theology, rhetoric, and even the music of black churches to mobilize protests against segregation and discrimination. According to Lincoln and Mamiya, the black church is so deeply embedded in black culture that politics within the African American community cannot be easily separated from it.[12]

Nevertheless, as the generation of those who fought for Civil Rights in the 1950s and 1960s passes away, some commentators have begun to question the continued relevance of black churches or their ability to speak prophetically to the circumstances of contemporary African American life.[13] However, the lively defense of the black church issued in the wake of such contentions reveals the ongoing importance of black churches within the black community,[14] as many African Americans are nonetheless very concerned about the future viability of black churches and their ability to speak to the needs of black people.

It is the particular historical experiences of African American Christians that have fostered different theological emphases and different interpretations of religious texts than those found among white Christians. The theological interpretations that are tied to the black church "are rooted in specific understandings of biblical texts that grow out of black experiences of bondage and oppression."[15] As a result, there is a far greater emphasis upon liberation, justice, and equality within black churches than in white churches holding similar doctrinal beliefs about the divinity of Christ, the working of the Holy Spirit, or the authority of Scripture. Consequently, though many African Americans may share many doctrinal beliefs with white Americans, the political attitudes and behaviors of those blacks holding such beliefs are far different from the political attitudes and behaviors of whites who hold those very same religious beliefs. [16] Moreover, even African Americans who attend congregations affiliated with denominations that are historically white

are far more likely to resemble other blacks politically than they are to resemble other whites in the denominations with which they are affiliated.[17] Thus, it is more the distinctiveness of race than religion that seems to shape the political attitudes and behaviors of those sharing nearly identical religious doctrinal understandings. This is not surprising, given that American churches remain largely racially segregated. Even as they are doctrinally similar, they generally remain racially divided.[18]

Nevertheless, there remain some important religious differences among blacks that serve somewhat to differentiate voters within their ranks. For example, those blacks who regularly attend African American churches are more likely to go to the polls on Election Day than those blacks who do not so attend. This relationship holds even when taking into account differences in education, income, and other related factors.[19] Likewise, African Americans who attend black churches exhibit stronger group identification, and "this sense of group solidarity, in turn, encourages blacks to pursue collective political remedies for the challenges they face."[20] Finally, blacks who indicate that religion provides a great deal of daily guidance are more strongly attached to the Democratic Party than those who claim that religion plays less of a role in their daily life and, as a result, more religious black Americans tend to "rate Democratic presidential candidates and presidents more favorably and Republican presidential candidates and presidents more harshly" than less religious black Americans.[21] The tendency for the more religiously active blacks to identify with the Democratic Party is the exact reverse of the practice of more religiously active whites, who more often vote Republican. Indeed, religious affiliation is one of the leading predictors of a Republican-leaning voter—except in the case of African Americans.

Yet, though churches remain relatively strong institutions within the black community, there are growing numbers of blacks who do not choose to attend church or to look to the church for leadership.[22] These unchurched blacks are drawn disproportionately from the ranks of the young, males and the economic underclass, whereas religious involvement is linked to being a female and older.[23] These changing levels of religious involvement within the African American community may well have important political consequences in that religious blacks are more closely aligned with the Democratic Party than less religious blacks. Thus, religion serves as a mediating factor in black opinions toward presidential candidates and toward presidents during their time in office.[24]

Given the importance of race and religion among African Americans, we would expect the following with regard to the political behavior of blacks during the course of the 2008 presidential election: (1) that African Americans would exhibit higher levels of voting cohesion than that found among other major ethnic groups, (2) that religious blacks would vote more Democratic than nonreligious blacks, and (3) that black women, given their greater religiosity, would vote more Democratic than black men.

Race and Religion among African Americans during the Presidential Primaries

Before Obama could galvanize black support behind his candidacy, he had to answer three questions: whether he was black enough,[25] whether his candidacy would negatively affect the political chances of other Democratic candidates down the ticket, and whether he could win. The first question was a racial issue, the latter two political issues.

In terms of the first question, Obama was the child of a white mother who raised him and of an African father he barely knew. He was born in Hawaii, spent part of his childhood in Indonesia, spent another part of his childhood being cared for by his white grandparents, and was educated in the Ivy League at Columbia and Harvard. So, there naturally might be questions as to whether he had shared enough of the black experience to be able to relate to the needs of the average African American.

Actually, African American candidates often have to answer the question of whether or not they are black enough.[26] Black voters ask is the candidate committed to the broader concerns of the black community or will he sell out other blacks to maintain non-black support? This question often turns on many smaller questions. Is the candidate comfortable with his blackness or does he seem ashamed of it? Is he conversant with black popular culture? Does he support black institutions and attend black events? Wary of disappointments with candidates and elected officials who shared black skin but not blacks' concerns, black voters' interest in a politician's "blackness" is really an evaluation of the candidate's commitment to the black community's interests and needs.[27]

On the one hand, Barack Obama was not running to be president of black America only. He attended some black events while eschewing others. When Jimmy Carter brought Baptists together in Atlanta, Georgia, in late January 2008, it was only the second time that the two largest historically black Baptists' denominational boards had even met together.[28] Hillary Clinton met with these black Baptists, whereas Obama sent only a videotaped message; some black attendees, as a result, grumbled because Obama did not attend the event in person.[29] Likewise, Obama's decision not to attend Tavis Smiley's State of the Black Union conference was also noted in some quarters.[30] Certainly, Obama's absence at these events raised some questions within the black community about just how "black" he was.

Nevertheless, the fact that Obama had publically wrestled with his identity as an African American in his autobiography, *Dreams from My Father*, helped establish him as someone who took his racial identity seriously. Pictures of his wife and children as an intact and caring black nuclear family and stories of his wife's working-class Chicago upbringing helped ground that identity in his specific choices. Despite the exotic nature of his own upbringing, as an adult Obama had chosen to move to a city, Chicago, within a well-established black community, to work as a community organizer among Chicago's poor and disadvantaged, and to marry a black woman

FIGURE 9.2 President Barack Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama with Oprah Winfrey met in the blue room of the White House during the taping of a special, "Christmas at the White House," aired Sunday, December 13, 2011. Winfrey was a very strong supporter during the 2008 Election. Courtesy: Official White House photo by Pete Souza.

who was raised in a black Chicago neighborhood. Obama's twenty-year membership in the predominantly black Trinity United Church of Christ (UCC) in Chicago also helped initially, although his relationship with Trinity's pastor-emeritus, Jeremiah Wright, would prove problematic later in the campaign. Obama's ability to reference pop-cultural icons such as Jay-Z, as he did when he repeated a gesture from one of the rapper's videos,[31] and his endorsement by black media stars such as Oprah Winfrey, Steve Harvey, and Tom Joyner also helped persuade black voters of Obama's authenticity and credibility in the black community (Figure 9.2).

Still, there were difficult political questions that needed to be confronted by African American voters before they might choose to support Obama. The first such question was whether the American people were ready for a black to be the presidential nominee of a major political party and just what effects having such a person head the ticket would have on candidates lower down on the ticket. In particular, African Americans wondered whether a black candidate would be able to garner enough support from other ethnic or racial groups to be viable. For example, during the presidential primary process, Democratic State Senator Robert Ford, a politically prominent African American leader in South Carolina, endorsed Sen. Hillary Clinton in the South Carolina Democratic Primary. He stated, when announcing his endorsement, that "Obama as the Democratic nominee would 'doom' every other Democrat on the ticket because America would never vote

TABLE 9.1 Initial views of the Obama Campaign for the presidency by race (asked of Democrats and those who leaned Democratic in partisan identifications) "Do you think blacks would be better off if Hillary Clinton were elected President or if Barack Obama were elected President?"

	African Americans (%)	*Non-Blacks (%)*
Clinton	37	38
Obama	44	42
About the same	19	20
	101	100
	(n =124)	(n =538)

Source: CNN/ORC Poll of January 14–17, 2008.

for a black presidential candidate," and indicated that "We'd lose the House and the Senate and the governors and everything."[32] Thus, as loyal Democrats, African Americans had to weigh the likely effects of Obama's candidacy on other Democratic candidates down the ticket in relationship to any desire they might have to see an African American elected president.

When he announced his candidacy in February 2007 for the presidential nomination of the Democratic Party, Obama was not the preferred candidate of black Democrats. In fact, black Democrats favored Hillary Clinton over Barack Obama by a three-to-one margin.[33] Moreover, though four of five black Democrats viewed Hillary Clinton favorably, only 54 percent of black Democrats held a favorable view of Obama.[34] Further complicating matters for Obama was the fact that Hillary Clinton not only enjoyed close ties to many top black elected officials but that her husband, former president Bill Clinton, continued to be very popular among most African Americans. Next to Bill and Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama was a relative unknown.

Likewise, early in the campaign, African Americans were somewhat divided in terms of whether blacks would be better off if Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama were elected president. This is evident from data presented in Table 9.1. Though blacks did give a slight advantage to Obama as likely helping blacks be better off (44 percent for Obama to 37 percent to Clinton), the margin of differences was far from substantial. Moreover, in this regard, blacks were hardly different in their assessment than non-blacks as to which candidate would help African Americans more if elected, as non-blacks also thought by a slim margin that blacks would be better off if Obama, rather than Clinton, were elected President (42 percent for Obama to 38 percent to Clinton).

However, when Obama won the caucuses in predominantly white Iowa on January 3, 2008, large numbers of African Americans began to transfer their allegiance from Hillary Clinton to Barack Obama. Support for Obama among African Americans jumped between the middle of January 2008 and April 2008 as

his caucus and primary victories showed that whites would support him. This shift in African American preferences can be seen from the data presented in Table 9.2, which examines a series of public opinion surveys conducted between the middle of January 2008 (following the Iowa caucuses) and late summer of 2008.

A number of important patterns are evident in Table 9.2. First, in the days immediately after the Iowa caucuses, those blacks who self-identified as Democrats were initially somewhat more supportive of Obama and less supportive of Clinton to be the nominee of the party than were non-black self-identified Democrats. Nevertheless, the data are clear: during the early months of the 2008 presidential campaign, African Americans were hardly overwhelming in their support of Obama's candidacy. In fact, less than one year prior to the election, fewer than three of every five black Democrats indicated that they supported Obama as a presidential candidate.

Second, it is evident that support for Obama among African Americans jumped between the middle of January 2008 and April 2008. By the middle of April, more than two-thirds of African Americans preferred/supported Obama in the Democratic primaries—and this gain occurred at the expense of support for Hillary Clinton among blacks. [35] As the campaign for the Democratic nomination unfolded, the perception among many blacks was that Hillary Clinton's campaign was manipulating issues of race and playing upon whites' racial animus, and this cost her support in the black community.[36] This issue emerged in the weeks surrounding the South Carolina Democratic Primary in late January 2008, which was the first of the season to take place in a state with a significant proportion of black voters. "Seemingly out of nowhere, the race had suddenly turned racial, with both Bill and Hillary being accused of insensitivity at best and perniciousness at worst."[37] Although the Clinton campaign did what it could to respond to this controversy, many black voters' positive attitudes toward the Clintons changed radically because of the perception that the two had played the race card for Hillary Clinton's political advantage.

There is, however, another way in which to assess the relative level of support among African Americans for the candidacy of Barack Obama versus Hillary Clinton: assessing for whom African Americans would vote when different potential nominees of the Democratic Party were pitted against the same Republican candidate for president. This analysis is shown in Table 9.3. In this case, respondents to a major national survey were asked in mid-to-late April for whom they would likely vote when both major Democratic candidates were pitted separately against John McCain. By this time in the campaign, John McCain was clearly the winner of the Republican nomination, but the outcome of the Democratic race was still in doubt.

Several important patterns emerge from the data presented in Table 9.3. First, among those respondents who were not African Americans, preferences were divided roughly equally in support for McCain and the Democratic candidate—regardless of whether the Democratic challenger was Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama. Second, African Americans were, conversely, overwhelmingly supportive

TABLE 9.2 Support for Obama versus Clinton among African Americans over time (asked of Democrats and those leaning Democratic in their partisan identifications)

	African Americans (%)	*Non-blacks(%)*
CNN/ORC Poll of January 14–17		
Hillary Clinton	32	47
Barack Obama	58	26
Other/Don't Know	10	28
	100	101
ABC–Washington Post Poll of April 10–13		
Hillary Clinton	23	41
Barack Obama	69	45
Other/Don't Know	8	14
	100	100
Time Religion Survey of June 19–25		
Hillary Clinton	15	38
Barack Obama	71	34
Other/Don't Know	14	28
	100	100
Newsweek Obama and God Survey of July 9–10		
Hillary Clinton	21	49
Barack Obama	72	43
Other/Don't Know	7	8
	100	100
Pew Forum 2008 Survey on Religion and Public Life of July 31–August 10		
Hillary Clinton	18	42
Barack Obama	68	36
Other/Don't Know	14	22
	100	100

Survey question wording for Table 9.2

1 CNN/ORC Poll of January 14-17: "Please tell me which of the following people you would most likely support for the Democratic nomination for President?"
2. ABC-Washington Post Survey of April 10-13: "Who would you like to see win the Democratic nomination for president this year?"
3. Time Religion Survey of June 19-25: "Do you recall which Democratic party candidate you supported in your state's primary election or caucus?"
4. Newsweek Obama and God Survey of July 9-10: "Before the primaries ended, who did you personally favor for the Democratic presidential nomination?"
5. Pew Forum 2008 Survey on Religion and Public Life: "Thinking back to the Democratic nomination contest, who did you prefer more?"

TABLE 9.3 Support for Obama versus Clinton among African Americans

	African Americans (%)	*Non-blacks (%)*
McCain-Obama pairing		
McCain	2	35
Obama	83	33
Someone else	8	10
Sit out	4	13
Undecided	3	10
	100	101
	(n =152)	(n =1389)
McCain-Clinton pairing		
McCain	5	37
Clinton	34	36
Someone else	39	11
Sit out	13	10
Undecided	9	6
	100	100
	(n =134)	(n =1358)

Source: Henry Institute National Survey on Religion and Public Life, April 8–May 10.

of the Obama candidacy by mid-to-late April—as only 2 percent reported that they were likely to vote for McCain, whereas 83 percent reported that they would likely vote for Obama. Third, by this time in the campaign, African Americans were apparently so tied to Obama's candidacy that when blacks respondents were offered a McCain-Clinton pairing, many blacks (39 percent) indicated that they would vote for someone other than either Clinton or McCain (with this someone else likely being Obama) or that they would simply sit out the election (13 percent). In contrast, when offered a McCain-Obama pairing, only 8 percent of blacks indicated that they would vote for someone other than McCain or Obama, with only 4 percent indicating that they would likely sit out the election.

Nevertheless, though African Americans had by late April 2008 largely moved solidly behind the candidacy of Barack Obama, there still remained some differences among blacks in their level of support for his candidacy. As can be seen in Table 9.4, some of this variation in support was tied to differences within the African American community with regard to religious affiliation. In particular, black Protestants were more committed to the Obama candidacy than those African Americans who were not Protestants. This finding is evident in several ways. First, with a McCain-Obama pairing in mid-to-late April, Protestant African Americans

TABLE 9.4 Support for Obama versus Clinton among African Americans by religious affiliation

	Non-Protestants (%)	*Protestants (%)*
McCain-Obama pairing		
McCain	0	3
Obama	74	86
Someone else	7	8
Sit out	9	2
Undecided	9	1
	99	100
	(n =43)	(n =110)
McCain-Clinton pairing		
McCain	3	5
Clinton	42	32
Someone else	29	43
Sit out	5	17
Undecided	22	3
	101	100
	(n =41)	(n =95)

Source: Henry Institute National Survey on Religion and Public Life, April 8 –May 10.

were more supportive of Obama than non-Protestant African Americans. Second, in the McCain-Clinton pairing, Protestant African Americans were far more likely than non-Protestant African Americans to report that they would vote for someone other than McCain or Clinton, and they were also far more likely to indicate that, given these two particular ultimate nominees of the parties, they would more likely sit out the campaign. Finally, non-Protestant African Americans were far more likely than Protestant African Americans to indicate that they were undecided in any comparison between a Democratic candidate and McCain.

Race and Religion among African Americans during the Post-Primary Campaign

During the 2008 election cycle, Barack Obama emerged as a new kind of Democratic Party candidate. If anything, his campaign was a case study in how to handle religion during a political race. From the start of his campaign, Obama had a religious affairs team as part of his campaign organization,[38] and it conducted weekly conference calls with Catholic religious leaders, evangelical and values voters activists, prominent African American religious leaders, and Jewish religious and civic leaders.[39]

In addition, in early June, Obama invited a group of influential Christian leaders to meet with him at his headquarters in Chicago. The group was not gathered with an eye toward possible endorsement but rather was geared to helping shape the kind of conversation Obama wished to have with voters during the general election campaign.[40] The meeting was off the record at the request of some who did not want to be seen meeting with Obama, but the news media nevertheless got wind of the event. Among those present at the closed-door meeting were a number of prominent white evangelicals pastors and a number of prominent African American pastors—including megachurch pastor T. D. Jakes; the Rev. Stephen Thurston, president of the National Baptist Convention of America; the Rev. T. Dewitt Smith, president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc.; and Bishop Phillip Robert Cousin Sr. of the AME church.[41] Those in attendance, from both races, reflected a spectrum of Christian viewpoints ranging from conservative to progressive.

Steve Strang, a white evangelical Christian and founder of Strang Publications, was among those invited to attend this meeting with religious leaders. Although Strang later endorsed John McCain, he first noted that McCain had not made similar overtures to Christian voters. In addition, Strang noted that "Obama seemed to have the support of at least half of the 43 leaders who attended the Chicago meeting. And in my opinion, he 'made points' with the rest."[42]

Obama was also comfortable discussing issues of faith, as when he participated in a forum at an evangelical megachurch, Saddleback Church, to discuss campaign issues from a faith perspective.[43] His comfort with worship in the style of black churches was evident when Obama addressed 40,000 members of the oldest independent African American Christian denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal (or AME) Church, in St. Louis on July 5, 2008, giving what the press later dubbed a "Values Speech."[44] At times, Obama's remarks sounded more like a sermon than a speech. Having begun with a traditional salutation of the type often heard in black churches, "Giving all praise and honor to God," Obama ended with a description of his own salvation experience.[45] Indeed, although it did not receive much coverage in the media, Obama had delivered the same salutation and testimony many times previously.[46]

The contest in 2008 pitted an unusual Democrat, Obama, who was very comfortable discussing issues of faith, against a Republican, John McCain, who was held in suspicion by some because of his messy divorce and rapid remarriage, his legendary temper and tendency to swear in public, and his general inability or unwillingness to discuss his faith publicly.[47] Moreover, relations between McCain and the Religious Right had cooled significantly when, during his 2000 presidential primary bid against George W. Bush, McCain had called some of the Religious Right's leaders "agents of intolerance."[48] Although he later backtracked on this point,[49] McCain continued to be held in suspicion by influential figures in the Religious Right[50] until his selection of Sarah Palin—a pro-life conservative with

FIGURE 9.3 Joshua DuBois, Director of the White House Office for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships in Oval Office, July 20, 2009. Courtesy: Official White House photo by Pete Souza.

strong religious credentials—as his vice-presidential running mate prompted some to revise their previous opinion of McCain.[51]

Eventually, Obama and his campaign made inroads into many black organizations and denominations by appearances and outreach (some of which were public and some of which were not). Obama chose the venues wisely, as when he preached from the pulpit of Martin Luther King Jr.'s Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta.[52] He also met privately with the bishops of the AME church (including the denomination's two female bishops) for prayer in what would become a widely circulated photo of the bishops laying hands on Obama.[53] Two black Pentecostal[54] pastors, Joshua DuBois (Figure 9.3),[55] Director of Religious Outreach for the campaign, and Leah Daughtry,[56] who directed the Democratic Convention in Denver in 2008, facilitated Obama's interactions with various religious denominations and churches. DuBois oversaw the campaign's weekly conference calls to religious leaders to persuade and to energize voters, and Daughtry organized an interfaith gathering to kick off the Democratic Convention.[57]

Moreover, Obama was able to signal to African American voters his investment in black life in ways that would not alarm non-blacks. For example, although he often quoted or otherwise alluded to Martin Luther King, Jr., he rarely credited those quotations so that those who were familiar with King would recognize the words, whereas those unfamiliar with King's words would remain untroubled by the allusion. For example, Obama quoted with some regularity King's statement

that "I am convinced that we shall overcome because the arc of the universe is long but it bends toward justice," a statement not generally recognized as being tied to King.[58]

Finally, Barack Obama's campaign also benefitted from savvy use of the Internet and black popular culture to signal to black voters Obama's commitment to the black community and its concerns. Also, the viability of his candidacy spurred a burst of creative energy as artists such as Will.i.am of the Black-Eyed Peas produced an independent campaign video that was distributed virally on the Internet. In the video, "Yes We Can," celebrities literally sang along with excerpts from Obama's speeches.[59]

By late summer, African Americans as a whole had largely come to perceive the Obama campaign as holding great hope for the nation. This is seen from the data presented in Table 9.5. First, when asked whether Obama was "pretty much just another politician," African Americans strongly rejected such an assessment. In fact, a majority of blacks contended that Obama was not at all like other politicians by responding "not at all" (the most emphatic rejection of the statement possible) to the statement that he was "pretty much just another politician." Moreover, the overwhelming majority of blacks (more than four-fifths) thought that Obama's campaign for the presidency might "very well" help restore "a sense of hope and inspiration to America" (far more than double what non-blacks responded). And, in the same way, African Americans by this time had overwhelmingly come to the conclusion that Obama had "the capacity to unite a divide nation," as more than four-fifths of blacks responded that he "very well" might do so—compared to less than one-third of non-whites who did so.

Thus, by the end of the summer, Obama had so solidified the support of African Americans behind his campaign that they had begun to see him not as a liability for other Democratic candidates down the ticket but as a transformational political figure whose rise could reshape the racial landscape in the United States for the better. He was able to do so, at least in part, because of his campaign's savvy use of existing networks within the black community (particularly networks within black churches and black denominations), his outreach to other religious communities, and his clever use of religious and pop-cultural metaphors.

Controversy surrounding Rev. Jeremiah Wright

Barack Obama had described his coming-to-faith at Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago in his autobiography, *Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*. During a sermon that Trinity's pastor, Jeremiah Wright, preached, entitled "The Audacity of Hope," Obama found himself moved to tears by Wright's evocative description of the power of hope in the midst of a broken and despairing world.[60] Obama was so inspired by the sermon that he used its title for the title of his second book.[61] Elaborating on his coming-to-faith, Obama described it in terms

TABLE 9.5 Views of the Obama campaign for the presidency by race

How well does each of the following statements describe Barack Obama and his campaign for the presidency?	*African Americans (%)*	*Non-blacks (%)*
Obama is pretty much just another politician.		
Very well	21	36
Some	17	23
Not much	10	13
Not at all	53	29
	101	101
	(n =91)	(n =1174)
Barack Obama's election will restore a sense of hope and inspiration to America.		
Very well	84	34
Some	14	25
Not much	0	14
Not at all	1	27
	99	100
	(n =90)	(n =1163)
Barack Obama has the capacity to unite a divided nation.		
Very well	81	31
Some	14	30
Not much	1	12
Not at all	4	28
	100	101
	(n =89)	(n =1174)

Source: *Time* Magazine poll religion and the presidential election, July 31–August 4, 2008

that would resonate with many Christians: "But kneeling beneath that cross on the South Side of Chicago, I felt God's spirit beckoning me. I submitted myself to His will and dedicated myself to discovering His truth."[62]

Barack Obama admitted that Trinity's progressive politics also appealed to him. Trinity's progressive politics were not unusual for a black church—and particularly not so for one being led by a pastor who had been significantly shaped by the Civil Rights Movement, as have the pastors of many black churches today. In churches under such pastors, the political and religious are deeply intertwined, and the politics is frankly liberal. "For one thing," Obama wrote, "I was drawn to the power of the African American religious tradition to spur social change."[63] Trinity had an unusual pastor in Jeremiah Wright,[64] who had been educated at the predominantly black Howard University and also at the predominantly white University of Chicago.

FIGURE 9.4 Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright meets with President Bill Clinton at the White House Prayer Breakfast, September 11, 1998, Washington, D.C. Courtesy: Official White House photo by unnamed White House photographer.

Erudite, yet with deep roots in the black community joined to a community activist's sense of the need for social change at the grassroots, Wright was the perfect pastor to appeal to a young Barack Obama. He was also a strong supporter of the Democratic Party, and President Bill Clinton had even invited him to attend the White House Prayer Breakfast in 1998 (Figure 9.4).

Trinity is a black megachurch that is part of a predominantly white denomination, the United Church of Christ (UCC). In fact, Trinity is one of the largest congregations in the denomination and had experienced that growth under Jeremiah Wright's pastoral leadership. The UCC as a denomination is one of the oldest in the United States and descended from Congregationalist roots in Puritan New England. In that sense, Wright's sermons bore significant similarities to the jeremiads of Puritan preachers who denounced declension in their midst.[65]

Although characterized by the media as a black extremist, Wright's membership in a predominantly white denomination argued otherwise. Certainly, the UCC today is one of America's most liberal Protestant denominations. In that sense, Wright resembles the profile of many UCC pastors in terms of his theological liberalism. Like Obama, Trinity UCC stood astride various worlds: black and white, educated but also concerned about the disinherited, Christian, but liberal. At Trinity UCC, Obama found that "religious commitment did not require me to suspend critical thinking, disengage from the battle for economic and social justice, or otherwise retreat from the world that I knew and loved."[66]

When some of Jeremiah Wright's sermons came to the attention of national media in February and March of 2008, many were shocked by his words. In a distorted introduction to black theology certain to offend, Wright's most incendiary comments were replayed endlessly as sound bytes divorced from any context. In one much-quoted sermon, Wright proclaimed that the United States

> government gives them [blacks] the drugs, builds bigger prisons, passes a three-strike law and then wants us to sing "God Bless America." No, no, no, not God Bless America, God damn America, that's in the Bible for killing innocent people, God damn America for treating our [black] citizens as less than human.[67]

For those unfamiliar with black churches or black life, the comments were disturbing. However, Wright's black theology and black nationalist rhetoric would have been familiar even to those blacks who did not agree with it in that

> Jeremiah Wright inherited black Christian nationalism, Black Theology of Liberation, and the black church's social activism from a long lineage of African American ministers who believed that white interpretations of Christianity had failed the people they represented.[68]

Though many whites found Wright's comments offensive, such statements did not shake the support of most African Americans for Barack Obama. Interestingly, one of Jeremiah Wright's most surprising apologists was one-time Republican presidential candidate and former pastor Mike Huckabee. Like others who saw Wright's preaching style as part of a broader continuum of black prophetic preaching deeply influenced by experiences of racially-motivated oppression, Huckabee argued that it was inappropriate to pick sound bytes out of an extemporaneous sermon.[69]

By the time that Jeremiah Wright's words had created the greatest controversy in the 2008 election cycle, Wright himself had already stepped down as Trinity's pastor in a move that had been planned for some time. Obama confronted the controversy in one of his most quoted speeches on the campaign trail, "A More Perfect Union," in March 2008.

> I have already condemned, in unequivocal terms, the statements of Reverend Wright that have caused such controversy and, in some cases, pain. For some, nagging questions remain. Did I know him to be an occasionally fierce critic of American domestic and foreign policy? Of course. Did I ever hear him make remarks that could be considered controversial while I sat in the church? Yes. Did I strongly disagree with many of his political views? Absolutely—just as I'm sure many of you have heard remarks from your pastors, priests, or rabbis with which you strongly disagreed.[70]

In the speech, Obama acknowledged the minefield that race had become in the campaign, even as he again stressed his ability to see the truth of blacks' and whites' racial perceptions and attitudes. Even as he repudiated Wright's comments as having a "a profoundly distorted view of this country—a view that sees white racism as endemic"—Obama nonetheless acknowledged him as a friend and mentor who "helped introduce me to my Christian faith."[71] In the speech, Barack Obama described Jeremiah Wright in terms that likened him to a family member with whom one sometimes disagrees but for whom one has a deep fondness born of many years' acquaintance.

During much of the controversy, Wright had been unavailable for comment because of a previously scheduled vacation. Although he had long been scheduled to receive an award at Brite Divinity School, the event attracted such negative publicity that Wright eventually withdrew.[72] In one of his first public events after Obama's "More Perfect Union," speech, Jeremiah Wright came out swinging at Obama, unapologetically, at a National Press Club event. As a consequence, Obama distanced himself from Wright and withdrew his membership in Trinity.[73]

Race and Religion among African Americans on Election Day

Of course, winning the nomination of one's party is only half the battle; one must also capture a majority of Electoral College votes if one wishes to be elected president of the United States. In their efforts to capture the presidency, political parties and candidates often seek to win elections, in part, through efforts to shape the actual composition of the voting public. And, in this regard, it has been long recognized that elections "are fundamentally a group activity."[74] As a result, campaign strategists and candidates frequently employ messages in which aspects of group conflict (e.g. in terms of group perceptions, prejudices, and fears) are put into play and which are designed to enhance voter turnout among such targeted groups.[75]

Given the candidacy of Barack Obama, the first minority nominee of a major political party, one might anticipate that members of minority groups in the electorate, and particularly African Americans, would be likely to flood to the polls on Election Day.

Historically, African Americans (and other minority groups) exhibit lower levels of voter turnout that do whites. The election of 2008, however, was not one in which such historic patterns among African Americans would prevail. Table 9.6 examines the level of voter turnout among African Americans in 2004 and 2008 and compares their turnout levels to non-black members of the electorate. As can be seen from the table, fewer than half (47 percent) of African Americans voted in the 2004 presidential election—substantially below the level evident for non-blacks (63 percent). However, in 2008, blacks flocked to the polls in 2008, as three-fourths of blacks (76 percent) cast ballots on Election Day. Moreover, this level of voting turnout for African Americans in 2008 far exceeded the level of turnout found among non-blacks (68 percent).

TABLE 9.6 Voting turnout in 2008 by race

Year	*African Americans (%)*	*Non-blacks (%)*
2004 turnout		
Voted	47	63
Did not vote	53	37
	100	100
	(n =338)	(n =2392)
2008 turnout		
Voted	76	68
Did not vote	24	32
	100	100
	(n =210)	(n =1459)

Sources: 2004, Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics, University of Akron, 2008, Henry Institute National Survey on Religion and Public Life, post-election survey

TABLE 9.7 Racial composition of electorate by year

Race	*2004 (%)*	*2008 (%)*
Voting electorate		
African-American	10	14
Non-African American	90	86
	100	100
	(n =1659)	(n =1170)
Non-voting electorate		
African American	17	10
Non-African American	83	90
	100	100
	(n =1071)	(n =499)

Sources: 2004, Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics, University of Akron; 2008:, Henry Institute National Survey on Religion and Public Life, post-election survey

This heightened level of voter turnout among African Americans can also be seen from a somewhat different vantage point—by examining the proportion of African Americans among all those who reported voting in the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections. These data are reported in Table 9.7, which examines the changing social composition of voters in the 2004 and 2008 (and the changing social composition of those surveyed in each election who reported that they did not vote).

These data shed further light on the extent to which African Americans went to the polls on Election Day in 2008. Whereas African Americans comprised 10

TABLE 9.8 Voting for president in 2008 by race

Year	*African Americans (%)*	*Non-Blacks (%)*
2004 vote choice		
Kerry	84	45
Bush	16	55
	100	100
	(n =160)	(n =1485)
2008 Vote choice		
Obama	95	49
McCain	5	51
	100	100
	(n =142)	(n =1039)

Sources: 2004, Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics, University of Akron: 2008:, Henry Institute National Survey on Religion and Public Life, post-election survey.

percent of all voters in the 2004 presidential election, they comprised 14 percent of all voters in the 2008 presidential election.[76] Conversely, among those who reported not voting in the past two presidential elections, blacks dropped from representing 17 percent of all non-voters in 2004 to only 10 percent of all non-voters in the 2008 election. Clearly, with one of their own as the candidate at the top of the Democratic ticket, African Americans turned out in much higher numbers than in previous elections—contributing to a voting base more highly disposed to cast ballots for the Obama candidacy.

Of course, these data do not reveal just for whom African Americans actually cast their ballots. Ever since the Civil Rights Act was enacted, African Americans have voted overwhelmingly Democratic in presidential elections. Given their already high level of support for the Democratic Party, did they actually become even more Democratic in their voting choices in the 2008 presidential election?

Table 9.8 compares the level of voting for the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates among blacks and non-blacks in the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections. Clearly, the data reveal that African Americans have been highly supportive of Democratic candidates—across both presidential elections. In this regard, the election of 2004 was no exception, as 84 percent of African Americans cast their ballots for John Kerry and only 16 percent did so for George Bush. However, African Americans, even with their already strong Democratic proclivities, voted even more heavily Democratic in the 2008 than they did in 2004—as 95 percent of all African Americans who came to the polls on Election Day cast their ballots for Barack Obama.

Another way to assess the role African Americans played in helping Barack Obama win the 2008 presidential election is to examine the total votes cast for Kerry

TABLE 9.9 Racial composition of presidential coalition by year

Race	*Democratic Coalition (%)*	*Republican Coalition (%)*
2004		
African American voters	17	3
Non-African American voters	83	97
	100	100
	(n =804)	(n =841)
2008		
African American voters	21	2
Non-African American voters	79	98
	100	100
	(n =645)	(n =536)

Sources: 2004, Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics, University of Akron; 2008:, Henry Institute National Survey on Religion and Public Life, post-election survey.

and for Obama and assess the proportion of votes African Americans contributed to the vote totals for each candidate. Of course, as Obama captured more votes overall than Kerry, this is a somewhat more stringent test for the role African Americans played in enabling Obama to win the election, as there simply were more voters overall casting ballots for Obama than for Kerry. Table 9.9 analyzes the election results in this fashion.

African Americans constitute a key electoral voting bloc in support of Democratic candidates, and their votes comprise a substantial proportion of the total votes that Democratic candidates received in recent presidential elections. This is clearly seen in the data presented in Table 9.9, as African Americans contributed 17 percent of the total votes cast for Sen. John Kerry in the 2004 presidential election. However, even with more votes being cast for Sen. Barack Obama overall, African American votes comprised more than one-fifth (21 percent) of the total votes cast for Obama in the 2008 presidential election. Clearly, it was the combination of higher turnout rates among African Americans coupled with their increased levels of Democratic voting between 2004 and 2008 that helped insure victory for Obama in the 2008 presidential election.

Conclusion

Religion was a central element in Barack Obama's success among African American voters. Although they have been strong Democratic supporters over the past half century, religiously inclined African Americans overwhelming supported Obama and flocked to the polls on Election Day 2008. Barack Obama's campaign used black religious metaphors and networks of support to galvanize black voters during the

course of the campaign. From his well-articulated testimony of salvation at Trinity UCC to his speeches that were so reminiscent of black preaching in their rhythms and delivery, Barack Obama expressed and embodied elements of black church life and worship that resonated with black religious voters. Even the controversy surrounding Obama's former pastor Jeremiah Wright failed to dent Obama's support among religiously inclined African Americans, at least in part because Obama was able to situate his relationship with Wright in the context of black church life and relationships.

When controversy erupted over Obama's relationship with fiery pastor Jeremiah Wright and non-blacks heard what they regarded as racially divisive rhetoric, blacks heard Obama speak convincingly of his faith and of a black pastor with whom he did not always agree but whom he credited as his mentor in the faith. It is a continuing irony that even as Barack Obama sought to be understood as someone who could bridge differences in the United States, those differences strongly shaped how he was perceived. Among religious African American voters, Barack Obama's comfort in black churches and his ability to communicate that comfort helped solidify his black support, even as his message as a candidate for all Americans helped propel him to the presidency.

This has consistently been Obama's message, from the moment he burst upon the national stage when he delivered the keynote address at the 2004 Democratic Convention and stated:

> It's that fundamental belief—I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper—that makes this country work. It's what allows us to pursue our individual dreams, yet still come together as a single American family. "E pluribus unum." Out of many, one.
>
> Yet even as we speak, there are those who are preparing to divide us, the spin masters and negative ad peddlers who embrace the politics of anything goes. Well, I say to them tonight, there's not a liberal America and a conservative America—there's the United States of America. There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America…We are one people, all of us pledging allegiance to the stars and stripes, all of us defending the United States of America.
>
> In the end, that's what this election is about. Do we participate in a politics of cynicism or a politics of hope?... [77]

As it had in 2004, Obama's message in 2008 mingled the religious and the political in a way that encouraged hope in America's future and held out the possibility of unity despite continuing divisions and a long history of racial animus. Even as he spoke out of the particularity of his own history and heritage, Barack Obama held out the hope that no particularity—of race or of religion, for example—could keep the nation divided forever. Obama's belief in the ability of the nation to "still come

together as a single American family" resonated with many Americans. African Americans saw in Barack Obama someone who could bring Americans together across racial, ethnic, and religious differences as they never had before and in a way that would transform the nature of race relations in the United States. In the end, African American voters responded overwhelmingly to the audacity of hope in that message.

Notes

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10

LATINOS, RELIGION, AND THE 2008 ELECTION

Gastón Espinosa

> If we can't keep the Latino Republican vote below 40 percent, we won't win a presidential election in the future.
>
> Former Director of John Kerry's 2004 Latino Outreach

Obama knew that unless he kept McCain's Republican share of the Latino vote below 40 percent, he would not win the 2008 Election.[1] He had good reason to worry. As a pro-life political moderate, border senator, Vietnam vet, and the most outspoken Republican supporter of Latinos on Capitol Hill, McCain was poised to match or surpass Bush's 40 to 45 percent Latino support in 2004.[2] The signature mark of his loyalty was his 2005 McCain-Kennedy S.1033 Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act, which provided a pathway to citizenship for millions of undocumented immigrants. These advantages along with Latinos trending Republican from 1996 to 2004 made McCain a formidable candidate (Figure 10.1).

Obama was also aware of his disadvantages. He was a black Ivy League–trained liberal Protestant lawyer and novice politician from Illinois. He attended a black cultural nationalist church led by Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright and was accused of promoting black over Latino interests in the Illinois State Senate. His political dissonance with Latinos was pounded home on Super Tuesday when Hillary Clinton took 63 percent of Latinos nationwide and 67 percent in California. Would Obama's attacks on Clinton prompt her supporters (especially women) to jump ship for McCain? Moreover, people accused Obama of being everything from a Muslim to a leftist politician with ties to terrorist and extremist organizations (Weatherman Underground and ACORN) and, therefore, unfit to lead the nation.[3]

FIGURE 10.1 Senator John McCain meets with Latino Evangelical and African American leaders in Washington, D.C., to push for comprehensive immigration reform, in 2006. Pictured Rev. Mark González, Rev. Samuel Rodríguez, Senator John McCain, Rev. Marcos Witt, Noel Castellanos, Dr. Juan Hernández, and McCain staff assistants. During the 2008 Election, Hernández and González ran McCain's outreach to Latino Protestants and after the election President Obama appointed Castellanos to the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and Rodríguez to the White House Task Force on Fatherhood. Courtesy: National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference.

Obama quickly transformed his liabilities into assets by beating Clinton in the primaries, taking advantage of McCain's decision to play the moderate and Republican maverick, someone not beholden to religious conservatives, and by outflanking McCain on race and religion.

This chapter examines how Obama overcame these disadvantages to win the Latino Catholic and Protestant votes, including a plurality of those that vote pro-life and oppose same-sex marriage. He won because he ran a faith-based centrist campaign that promoted a new kind of Democratic religious and racial-ethnic pluralism that reached out to Latinos on both sides of the religious, ideological, and political divides. He and his advisors appointed Latino Catholic and Protestant Evangelical advisors, promoted faith-friendly public policies, and crafted an Evangelical-sounding conversion narrative that blended the themes of righteousness and justice. Obama not only won Catholics by a wide margin, but also—contrary to the literature—Latino Protestants, thus reversing the "God Gap" among Latino Protestants.

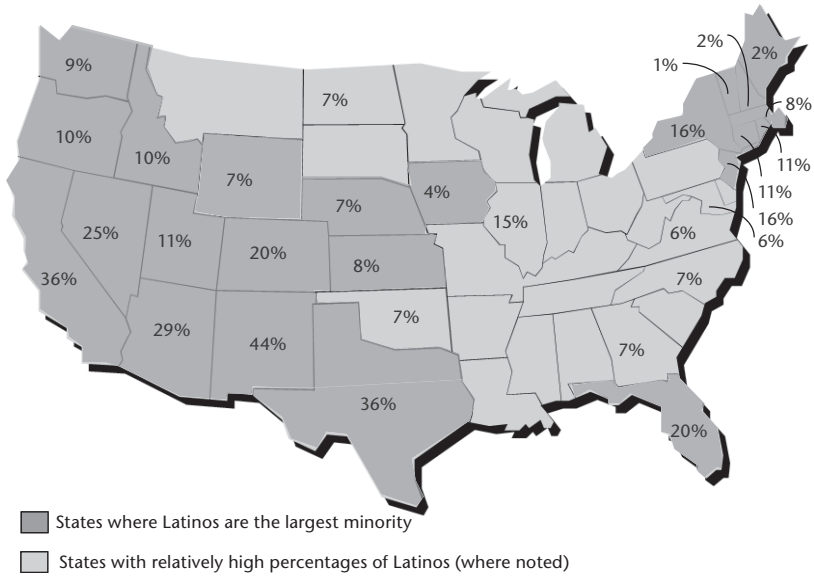

FIGURE 10.2 U.S. Latino Diaspora 2006: 23 states where Latinos are the largest minority.

The findings in this chapter are based on the National Election Pool exit poll, the U.S. Census Bureau, the Pew Hispanic Center, the Hispanic Churches in American Public Life national survey (n = 2,060), and primarily the Latino Religions and Politics (LRAP) national survey, which profiled the attitudes of 1,104 Latinos (700 registered voters) across the United States from October 1 to 7, 2008. Rick Hunter and SDR Consulting fielded the 39-question bilingual LRAP survey.[4]

Growing Importance of the Latino Electorate in Presidential Politics

Obama knew from his Democratic primary battle against Clinton that he could take nothing for granted against McCain. He also knew that Latinos were the key to winning the 2008 election: their population soared from 22.5 million in 1990 to 48 million in 2008. They made up one-fourth of all Democratic voters. Though the number of Euro-American eligible voters *decreased* by 2 percent (75 to 73 percent) from 2004 to 2008, the number of Latino eligible voters skyrocketed by 21 percent, from 16 million to 19.5 million. By 2008, the Latino vote (9.5 percent) was almost twice the size of the Jewish (2 percent), Muslim (1 percent), and Asian American (2 percent) votes *combined*. Latinos constituted a disproportionate share of the electorates in key states that Obama had to win such as New Mexico, Nevada, Florida, and Colorado, all of which Bush had won in 2000 and/or 2004. They also made up a sizeable percentage of other key states such as Texas, California, Arizona, and New Jersey. Many of these bordered McCain's home

state and were places where Obama was largely unknown. More troubling, the Republican Latino vote had *increased* dramatically from 19 percent to 40/45 percent from 1996 to 2004 while the Democratic Latino vote slid from 76 percent to 57/52 percent.[5]

Religious Demography

Obama realized that one of the keys to Bush's success against Gore and Kerry was winning over Latinos through the largely untapped faith community.[6] He knew that Latinos are more Christian (93 percent) than the general U.S. population (77 to 82 percent) and that Catholics and Protestants/Other Christians together make up 95 percent of the U.S. Latino electorate.[7] Although he targeted Latino Catholics because they have always voted Democrat, he focused more on Latino Protestants, the vast majority of whom are Evangelical. Why?

Because there were 9.2 million Latino Protestants/Other Christians in 2008. Evangelical and/or born-again Christians made up 44 percent of all Latino Christians, 37 percent of the Latino Christian electorate, and 84 percent of all Latino Protestants/Other Christians, 43 percent of all Latino mainline Protestants, and 32 percent of all Latino Catholics.[8] Andrew Greeley of the University of Chicago also estimates that 600,000 Latinos may be "defecting" every year from Catholicism to Protestant Evangelical Christianity.[9] The Hispanic Churches in American Public Life and the LRAP national surveys confirmed that for every one Latino that "recently returned" to Catholicism, four recently left it.[10] Furthermore, Latino Protestants made up 2 percent of the U.S. electorate in 2008, making them as large or larger than the Jewish, Asian American, or Muslim electorates. Latino Evangelicals are also heavily concentrated in key swing and electoral-rich states.[11] More significantly, although Latino Protestants and Evangelicals have historically voted Democrat, they voted for Bush in 2004, a swing Obama hoped to reverse. Finally, Obama hoped to use both Protestants and Catholics to offset losing the white Catholic and Protestant votes (Table 10.1).[12]

Religious Guidance, Practices, Social Views

Obama targeted Latino Catholics and Protestants because he knew that 77 percent of Latino registered voters said that religion provides a great deal of guidance in their day-to-day living, including very high percentages of Protestants and Catholics. Another 65 percent said that a candidate's personal faith and morals were relevant in their decision to vote for him or her, though Protestants much more so than Catholics. Obama also knew that the vast majority of Latino Protestants and Catholics are pro-life, support traditional marriage, and say religion is important in guiding their lives in their day-to-day living. In light of this, he crafted a strategy to win over the Latino faith community and outflank McCain on religion and race (Table 10.2).

TABLE 10.1 U.S. Latino religious identity (percent)

	All Latinos in U.S.	*U.S. Latino Registered Voter*
U.S. Latino religious identity	94	
Christian	93	95
Catholic & Protestant	91	93
Catholic	66	
Protestant/Other Christian	25	
Jehovah's Witness and Mormon	2	
World Religions	1	
No Religion/Other	5	
Atheist/Agnostic	1	
Percent Latino Born-Again Christians	*All U.S. Latino Christians*	*Latino Christian Registered Voter*
All Protestants and Catholics	44	37
Catholics	32	24
Protestants		67
U.S.-Born	39	35
Latin American–Born	48	41
Male	43	36
Female	45	39
Democrat	40	37
Republican	62	50
Independent	42	30
Voted for Obama	36	32
Voted for McCain	55	48
Latinos in October 2008	52	46
Mexican Origin	42	34
Puerto Rican Origin	47	59
Cuban Origin	72	76
Dominican Origin	64	50
Central American Origin	45	46
South American Origin	44	35
Latino Pentecostal/Charismatic		
Protestant Pentecostal/Charismatic and Born-Again	65	60
Catholic Pentecostal/Charismatic and Born-Again	26	

Source: LRAP Survey, 2008

TABLE 10.2 U.S. Latino registered voters by religious guidance and practice

	Catholic (%)	*Protestant (%)*
Religion provides quite a bit of guidance in daily living	76	80
Relevancy of a politician's personal faith and morals	58	79
Pray weekly or more	78	90
Attend church weekly or more	54	70
Read the bible weekly or more	32	62
Support public school prayer/moment of silence	77	81
Favor "under God" in pledge and "In God We Trust" on coins	81	85
Oppose abortion	67	73
Oppose gay marriage	57	74

Source: LRAP Survey, 2008

Catholic and Protestant Party Identity

Despite McCain's natural advantages and the Latino Republican voting trend, Democrats' share of the Latino party affiliation had increased by almost 10 percent from 2000 to 2008, whereas Republican growth was modest. Latino Protestant Party identification increased by a modest 6 percent from 2004 to 2008.

Yet many Democrats worried about the large share of thirty-five- to forty-nine-year-old Latinos who self-identified as independent. The LRAP survey found this independent streak was true for Catholics and Protestants.[13] The Obama camp also worried that the Democratic upsurge in party identification was probably due more to the 2006 midterm elections, Bush's two wars, a faltering economy, and Hillary Clinton's mobilization efforts than to Obama himself. Latino Democratic identification remained stagnant from 2007 to 2008.[14] By 2008, he had not made any major gains in the Latino vote (Table 10.3).

Latinos' support for Obama languished because they were not sure where he stood on a number of issues, including immigration reform. This led to frustration and soft support for the Democratic Party and Obama. Forty-six percent of Latino registered voters said they would be willing to leave their party if it did not find a more positive way to address immigration issues, including almost half of all Latino Catholics (46 percent) and Protestants (46 percent). The most alarming fact was that by October 2008, the LRAP survey found that Latino *Democrats* (48 percent) were much more willing than Republicans (30 percent) to leave their party over immigration reform—although Latinos trusted Democrats (50 percent) more than Republicans (18 percent) to pass an immigration bill that reflected their own point of view. Latinos also said they trusted the Democratic Party (50 percent) more than Obama (41 percent)—a fact that made Obama vulnerable to McCain.[15]

TABLE 10.3 U.S. Latino party identification and presidential vote, 1996–2008

	Party			*Vote – 3-way race*	
Election Year	*Democratic*	*Republican*	*Independent*	*Democratic*	*Republican*
1996	41	19	40	76	16
2000	47	15	38	62	35
2004	45	20	35	57/52	40/45
2007	57				
2008 *(pre-election)*	56	17	27	59	27
Catholic	59.5	15	26	63	24
Protestant	50	23	27	50	34
18-34	62	9	29	68	21
35-49	44	18	38	53	27
50-64	61	18	21	54	31
65+	63	22	15	60	30
2008 *(post-election)*				67	31
Catholic (2-way)	63	27		73	27
Protestant (2-way)				58	42

Notes: The 1996 and 2000 findings are from the HCAPL Pre-Election National Survey (n = 2,060).
The 1996 party identification figures are taken from the 2003 Pew Charitable Trusts Values Survey.
The 2000 NEP and *LA Times* exit polls reported 44 and 45 percent for Bush. However, Roberto Suro and others put the 2004 results at 40% Bush, 57% Kerry, and 3% other.
The 2004 and 2008 post-election findings are based on the NEP exit poll.
The 2008 pre-election findings are from LRAP's 700 Latino registered voters.
The 2008 post-election two-way findings are based on the ANES and LRAP statistical projections.
The three-way race findings do not include those who voted "other" (making totals less than 100 percent).

Faith-Friendly Democrats: Obama's Religious Campaign Team

Most Democrats assumed that Latino Evangelicals would vote Republican—like their white counterparts.[16] Obama would not make the same mistake. He aggressively courted Latinos in general and Catholics and Protestants (including Evangelicals) in particular because of their numbers, strategic location, voting volatility, and growing share of the electorate, which he hoped to use to offset his losses among Euro-American Catholics and Protestants in key states.

To win, Obama took the risky move of appointing campaign advisors who were pro-life and who in some cases had voted for Bush in 2000 and/or 2004. He appointed a twenty-six-year-old African American named Joshua DuBois to direct his 2008 Campaign outreach to the faith community. He was an unlikely choice because he was a Pentecostal minister who attended National Community Church in Washington, DC, a congregation associated with the Assemblies of God and the

Willow Creek Association, both heavily Republican.[17] DuBois and others persuaded Obama to invite another young progressive Evangelical named Dr. Shaun Casey to direct outreach to the Evangelical community.[18]

These decisions took place at the same time he invited Catholics onto Obama's campaign team such as former pro-life Republican and Ronald Reagan legal counsel Prof. Doug Kmiec. Given their modest gains in the Latino community, they also reached out to the Latino community by inviting Dr. Miguel Díaz to serve as Obama's Latino Catholic advisor and Rev. Wilfredo de Jesús as his Latino Protestant advisor. Although all five had been and/or currently were pro-life and/or supported traditional marriage, they also held socially progressive views on racial integration, civil rights, social and economic justice, and immigrant reform.[19]

Obama and his advisors adopted a "Sí, se puede" ("Yes, we can") message, that not only echoed the famous rallying cry of César Chávez's migrant farm workers' struggle of the 1960s and 1970s, but also Chávez's decision to mobilize the faith community to bring about progressive social change. A new generation of religious leaders such as Rev. Samuel Rodríguez and de Jesús promoted the twin themes of "righteousness and justice," which they defined as the "reconciling message" of Billy Graham and the faith-based "activism" of Martin Luther King, Jr.[20] This strategy helped Obama win over even a plurality of pro-life voters.

Catholic and Protestant Advisors

Obama targeted Latino Catholics and Evangelicals early in his campaign but even more so after his shellacking in the primaries against Clinton and after his polls among Latinos remained stagnant in the spring of 2008. Obama expected he would take the Latino Catholic vote as they had overwhelmingly voted for Clinton (83 percent), Gore (63 percent), and Kerry (69 percent), but left nothing to chance because Latino Catholic Democratic support had already slipped 14 percent over three elections.[21]

He invited Dr. Miguel Díaz to serve as a Latino Catholic campaign advisor. Díaz was a surprising choice. He was born in Cuba and had a pro-life background. He immigrated to the United States when he was eleven years old. His father, a waiter, and his mother, a data-entry operator, settled in Miami-Dade County. Miguel took his PhD degree in theology from the University of Notre Dame, where he studied liberation theology, a theology that placed a premium on faith and social transformation. Díaz taught at various universities before being named professor at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University (MN). He also served as a board member of the Catholic Theological Society of America and as president of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States (Figure 10.3).[22]

Díaz stated in an interview with the author that he was invited by Obama (through his Catholic outreach coordinator Mark Linton) to serve as a Catholic advisor to help mobilize Latino and Catholic voters. His national offices positioned him well to bridge the Catholic and racial lines and provide Obama high visibility in the Latino

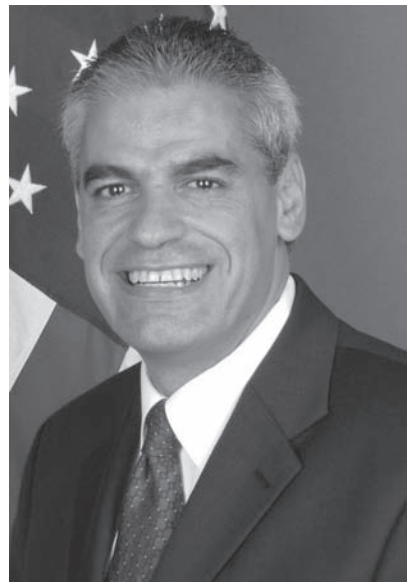

FIGURE 10.3 Dr. Miguel H. Díaz campaigned for Obama for more than a year and after the 2008 Election was appointed U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See, August 5, 2009. Source: Official White House photo by the U.S. Government.

Catholic academic and seminary communities and the parishes they served. Díaz reportedly gave expert advice on Catholic issues, promoted "just and comprehensive immigration reform, education of our children, [and] universal health care," and helped promote Obama through national conferences, calls, and events.[23]

Díaz also brought Obama his pro-life credentials. Obama knew that the vast majority of Latino Catholics are pro-life and oppose abortion, especially in Florida, which is heavily Cuban and Republican. Díaz enabled Obama to reach out to Latinos, Cubans, pro-life Catholics, social conservatives, Latino religious leaders, and moderate Latino Republicans. Díaz also brought practical insight into how to win the key state of Florida, where Latinos made up 20 percent of the state and 14 percent of the electorate. Díaz stated to the author that he worked at the local and state levels to "promote grassroots efforts in support of Latinos for Obama."[24] He did his job well and exemplified Obama's new Democratic pluralism.

Equally strategic was Obama's out-of-the box decision to invite a born-again pro-life Evangelical Puerto Rican Assemblies of God megachurch pastor Wilfredo de Jesús to serve as his Latino Protestant advisor. De Jesús campaigned hard for Obama among Latino Evangelicals for fifteen months. Obama financed his airfare, room, and board, provided a driver,[25] and benefitted from de Jesús in a number of ways. First, he served as a powerful and eloquent Obama "surrogate" in meetings, interviews, and phone calls. Second, he canvassed Latino megachurches and pastors effectively as he himself was a pastor of the 4,000-member New Life Covenant

FIGURE 10.4 Rev. Wilfredo de Jesús is Vice-President for Social Justice of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC) and pastor of the 4,000-member New Covenant Worship Center in South Chicago. He campaigned for Obama for fifteen months across the U.S. and helped him win a majority of Latino Protestants on Election Day 2008, thus reversing the trend in Latino Evangelicals voting Republican. Courtesy: Wilfredo de Jesús.

Church in South Chicago. Many pastors looked up to him for growing his church from 100 people to 4,000 in ten years and because his church sponsored a homeless shelter for women and children, "Gangs to Grace" programs for at-risk youth, a ministry for homeless men, and a rehabilitation farm for women struggling with drug addiction and seeking to leave prostitution.[26] Third, his pro-life and traditional marriage credentials helped him persuade Latino clergy and laity who voted for Bush in 2000 and 2004 to vote for Obama. Fourth, he was Vice President of Social Justice for the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC), the largest Latino Evangelical civil rights and grassroots renewal movement in the nation. The NHCLC worked closely with Sen. Ted Kennedy and Sen. John McCain to craft and propose the McCain-Kennedy immigration reform bill. This gave Obama national visibility and an "inside man" in key segments of the Latino Evangelical community and access to its 18,000 churches.[27]

De Jesús hit the campaign trail and airwaves for fifteen months, working particularly hard in the summer and early fall of 2008. He promised Latinos that Obama would fix immigration reform in his first year in office, reduce abortions, and support traditional marriage, and that he would better understand Latino issues as he himself was a person of color. De Jesús was a smart if counter-intuitive choice (Figure 10.4).[28]

Transforming Liabilities into Assets: Faith-Based Initiatives, Immigration Reform, Gay Marriage

With his Latino leadership team and advisors now in place, Obama set out to transform three potential political liabilities into assets: faith-based initiatives, comprehensive immigration reform, and gay marriage. During the 2008 primaries, many on the hard Left asked Obama to dismantle Bush's White House Office of Faith-Based Initiatives, claiming it violated the separation of church and state. Instead, Obama broke ranks with the Left and promised not only to keep the Office but even expand it, which helped him win over many Latino Catholics and Evangelicals, who worried that he might cut their Bush-funded programs.[29]

Under the Bush Administration, that Office had provided millions of dollars in government funding to inner-city black, Latino Catholic and Evangelical, Asian, Jewish, and Muslim faith-based organizations and groups to address a wide range of social problems from gang violence to teenage pregnancy to alcohol and drug abuse. In fact, more than 80 percent of Latinos support faith-based initiatives. Although most people think Obama supported the faith-based initiatives to placate white Evangelicals, one could just as well argue that he did so to win over Latinos and other racial-ethnic minorities who voted Republican in 2000 and/or 2004.[30]

Obama's second issue to win over Latino Catholics and Protestants was comprehensive immigration reform. He had very little choice: almost half of all Latino Democrats were willing to leave the Party if he didn't support it. Obama promised to pass immigration reform in his first year in office.

His most Machiavellian ploy was how he framed his views of gay marriage. He threaded the moral needle of American politics by stating that he supported abortion *and* traditional marriage. He knew that he could not support abortion and gay marriage and expect to win religious moderates and conservatives as Latinos opposed both by wide margins: with two-thirds of Latino Democrats (65 percent) and four-fifths of Latino Republicans (80 percent) opposing abortion. More important, Latino independents also clearly opposed (70 percent) abortion.[31]

Unintended Consequences?

The strongest evidence that Latinos (and African Americans) genuinely believed Obama opposed gay marriage is their key support of state constitutional bans on gay marriage in Florida, Arizona, and California. Without their support, the ballots would not have passed.[32] Thus, in an ironic twist of fate, Obama's public support for traditional marriage helped mobilize Latinos and African Americans who in turn helped push through bans on gay marriage. Though the consequence may have been unintended, it is hard to imagine it was completely unforeseen. In many ways, Obama's pro-gay posture since 2008 is his way of trying to make up for this outcome—not unlike Bill Clinton's Defense of Marriage Act in 1996 and

FIGURE 10.5 Defense of marriage amendment flyer for CA, FL, and AZ on Nov. 4, 2008. Latino Religion Voting Guide. Courtesy: Gastón Espinosa Collection.

subsequent pro-gay support.[33] The strategy worked: Obama split the Latino moral vote by agreeing with them on at least one of their key moral issues. It also enabled him to offset his pro-choice liability among Latino Catholics and Evangelicals and steal the thunder from those on the right who might otherwise more vigorously have opposed his candidacy on moral and religious grounds (Figure 10.5).

Catholic and Evangelical-Sounding Social Justice and Conversion Narratives

Obama's third strategy was to disseminate Catholic and Evangelical-sounding social justice and conversion narratives. He came out early on the religion question by publicly declaring his Christian faith and the beauty of American "democratic pluralism" and religious freedom, and he strategically linked his Christian faith to biblical and social justice, something that resonated with a growing number of Latino Catholics and Evangelicals seeking to promote righteousness and justice. Although neither Obama nor McCain claimed to be Catholic, Evangelical, or born-again, at least Obama's spiritual journey and African American–influenced expressions enabled him to speak with the cadence, heart, and power of traditional Catholicism and Evangelicalism without having to affirm all of their politics, morality, and theology.

Obama saw the link between faith, justice, and progressive social change. He wrote in *La Audacia de la Esperanza (The Audacity of Hope)*, which was published in Spanish almost 18 months before Election Day:

> The church… understood in an intimate way the biblical call to feed the hungry and clothe the naked and challenge the powers and principalities… I was able to see faith as more than just a comfort to the weary or a hedge against death; rather, it was an active, palpable agent in the world.[34]

Indeed, this resonated with Latino Catholic encyclicals on social justice and liberation theology and with Latino Evangelicalism's emphasis on righteousness and justice. De Jesús consequently praised Obama for speaking out against the "mistreatment of illegal immigrants" and for understanding "the importance of justice issues such as Health Care, Education, and Immigration within the faith community."[35]

In a move that further attracted Catholics and Evangelicals (and as noted in the opening quote in Chapter 1 in this book), Obama chided secularists for asking people to leave their faith and morality at the door of American public life, stating that it was a practical absurdity and that religion and faith-based morality drove progressive social reform.[36] Instead, he argued the U.S. government needed to partner with faith-based programs to "feed the hungry, reform the prisoner, rehabilitate the drug addict, and keep the veteran employed."[37]

He then publicly discussed his spiritual journey and Christian conversion. Although some have accused him of speaking about it only to counter charges he was a Muslim and to distance himself from Rev. Jeremiah Wright, he actually began speaking about it long before the campaign formally began. He drove home his personal commitment in his autobiography but also in a widely distributed interview with *Christianity Today* in January 2008. In response to a question about whether he considered himself born-again, he stated: "I am a Christian, and I am a devout Christian. I believe in the redemptive death and resurrection of Jesus Christ."[38] Although the quote hardly convinced skeptics, it did convince a small but important number of those looking for a reason to give him the benefit of the doubt and switch over and vote for him.

Several months later at the University of Texas at Brownsville, he publicly declared to the 150 to 200 Latino Evangelical and Catholic leaders: "I let Jesus Christ into my life because I learned that my sins could be redeemed and if I placed my trust in Jesus, that he could set me on a path to eternal salvation."[39] Then, in an act that seemed to seal his conversion narrative among many Latino Evangelicals, Obama allowed NHCLC and other Latino Evangelical leaders to lay hands on him and pray for him and his campaign—something broadcast over Spanish radio.[40]

Obama continued to weave this conversion narrative at a "closed door" meeting on June 10, 2008 with the nation's top Catholic, Evangelical, and megachurch

pastors. In response to Franklin Graham's question about whether Jesus was the only way to heaven, Obama quipped: "Jesus is the only way for me."[41] Indeed, Obama was sounding more like an Evangelical every day.

Pushing Progressive Boundaries: Obama's New Democratic Religious Pluralism

In a strategic effort to reach socially progressive but morally conservative Latino, Euro-American, and black Evangelicals, Obama argued that Democrats in general and he in particular were not inherently anti-faith *or* anti-Evangelical. Obama vowed to correct this misperception:

> Evangelicals have come to believe often times that Democrats are anti-faith…. Part of my job in this campaign, something that I started doing well *before* this campaign, was to make sure I was showing up and reaching out and sharing my faith experience with people who share that faith. Hopefully we can build some bridges that can allow us to move the country forward.[42]

To underscore his openness to Evangelicals, he attended not one but two different events at Rick Warren's Saddleback Community Church, including the Civic Forum on the Presidency where he spoke openly about his Christian faith. The strategy paid off in the Latino community (Figure 10.6).

Samuel Rodríguez stated in a follow-up interview in July 2008: "It's good to see a nominee engage Evangelical leaders. For too long the Democratic party seemed hostile to Evangelicals."[43] Reflecting on Obama's success in the faith community, De Jesús similarly stated Obama won because he "resonated with our people, the Hispanic community and *especially the Evangelical community*" (italics in original).[44] He also told reporters that he and many others represent "a new generation of younger Hispanic evangelical Christians… [who are] no longer content to remain on the sidelines."[45] Indeed, Latino Evangelicals were coming of age, and they liked what they were hearing from Obama. His new Democratic pluralism strategy worked. Though some argue this was just a sham for the (reportedly former) cigarette-smoking liberal Protestant (Obama's favorite cigarette brand was Marlboro Reds), this seems too cynical to explain his otherwise seemingly genuine faith statements.

The timing could not have been better. De Jesús, Rodríguez, Miranda, and others were promoting the twin themes of righteousness and justice and, as a result, began discussing Obama's message in conferences, conference calls, revivals, pastoral training events, rallies, voter mobilization events, online newsletters, and on Spanish-language radio. This enabled Obama to spread his message to some of the 18,000 Latino Evangelical churches throughout the United States. De Jesús used his nationwide networks to introduce Obama to Latino megachurch pastors

FIGURE 10.6 John McCain, Rick Warren, and Barack Obama at the Saddleback Community Church Civil Forum on the Presidency, Lake Forest, CA, August 16, 2006. Courtesy: Saddleback Community Church.

and their congregants. In fact, de Jesús helped facilitate Obama's outreach to Latino Evangelicals through six telephone conference calls with the NHCLC. Obama directly participated in four of these calls with NHCLC President Rodríguez and other faith leaders. Rodríguez stated that Obama's campaign team contacted him, the NHCLC office, or his regional leaders in swing states almost thirty times during the campaign.[46]

McCain's Outreach: Turning Advantages into Liabilities

Latinos and "The Machine"

While Obama was making historic inroads into the Latino Catholic and Protestant Evangelical faith communities, strangely John McCain was not capitalizing on his natural advantages and good will. Obama's support was as much a result of McCain's lack of outreach as of Obama's strategies.

McCain's Euro-American handlers thwarted almost all public one-to-one interaction with Latino Catholic and Evangelical clergy and churches. He held only three conference calls with the NHCLC and met with Rodríguez only twice in person despite their close work on Comprehensive Immigration Reform in DC and despite giving Rodríguez his personal cell phone number. Although there are many reasons why McCain did not aggressively reach out to Latinos, the primary

one was the Republican backlash against Comprehensive Immigration Reform. McCain's senior advisors felt this was a losing issue and would suppress Republican enthusiasm and turnout. They made the ill-fated decision not to reach out to Latino Catholics and Protestants in a major way because they feared it would be a net advantage for Obama. He instead tried to play the moderate and not strongly reach out to Latinos or champion Republican opposition to abortion and gay marriage.[47]

This does not mean that he did not recognize the importance of Latinos. In fact, McCain brought Dr. Juan Hernández onto his campaign team's group of core advisors and asked him to serve as his National Hispanic Outreach Director. Hernández was well positioned to help McCain; he was not only a politically savvy pro-life Evangelical Republican from Texas who had brokered several meetings between Mexican President Vicente Fox and Bush, Jr., but had served on Fox's presidential campaign team.[48]

Hernández sought to aggressively promote McCain to the Latino community via Spanish radio, television, and other church and town hall forums. However, he stated in an interview with the author that he encountered a brick wall of competing interests and indifference. He noted that McCain actually shot a number of Spanish commercials but that afterward they would not be aired. "The Machine," Hernández lamented, "constantly squeezed out Hispanics… McCain would say I want Hispanics at all of the meetings." When they were not there, "McCain would throw fits. 'Where are they?' 'Why aren't they here?'" McCain demanded to know. "Hispanics and their issues were simply lost in a sea of competing concerns," Hernández stated. This was because the campaign grew from fifteen to twenty-five people to "a camp of 400-500 people, all pulling for what they thought was important."[49]

Back-Pedaling on Immigration Reform: Latino Defections to Obama

In addition, McCain was forced to back-pedal on his earlier support for comprehensive immigration reform. Latinos who supported Bush in 2000 and 2004 and the McCain-Kennedy immigration reform bill felt betrayed. Latino faith leaders consequently began to publicly criticize Republicans and even McCain. Luís Cortés stated: "McCain's problem is the problem of his party demonizing Hispanic people… You can't switch off the immigration rhetoric and think it will work."[50] In a *Washington Post* editorial, Samuel Rodríguez warned, "Hispanic evangelicals won't be squeezed into a Republican barrio… Is the Republican Party the party of xenophobia, nativism and anti-Latino demagoguery, or is it the party of faith and family values, regardless of skin color or language proficiency?"[51] The answer was clear.

Rodríguez also noted that McCain's failure to attract support was due to basic problems such as not allocating enough time, personnel, and money to Latino outreach. He should have created buy-in through more face-to-face meetings, conversations, and public policy partnerships with Latino faith leaders on a number

FIGURE 10.7 Senator Barack Obama speaks at the League of Latin American Citizens 79th Annual Convention, Washington, D.C., July 8, 2008. Courtesy: U.S. Air Force Photo by Tech. Sgt. Dawn M. Price.

of issues. Finally, despite the well-established network of Latino Republican support in the wake of the Bush years, McCain's campaign did not capitalize on Spanish Christian radio or television. At the same time that Latinos felt increasingly abandoned by McCain, Díaz, de Jesús, and others were flying across the nation to promote Obama to the community, who was all too happy to share his faith journey and step into the void. All of this took place at precisely the same time that Obama went on the offensive. At the League of Latin American Citizens annual convention in Washington, DC, he accused McCain of having "abandoned his courageous stance" on comprehensive immigration reform (Figure 10.7).[52]

"My Business Card is made out of Printer Paper": Investing in Dollars and Symbols

McCain's lack of support stood in sharp contrast to Obama's announced pledge to invest $20 million into Latino outreach, including to the faith community.[53] This contrast of priorities and funding was clear at a nationally televised Latino Evangelical conference sponsored by the NHCLC at Vanguard University, an Assemblies of God-affiliated institution in Costa Mesa, CA. At the event, de Jesús and Hernández debated which of the two candidates cared most about Latinos and their issues. When de Jesús pointed out that Obama had just announced plans to invest $20 million for Latino outreach and asked how much McCain planned to

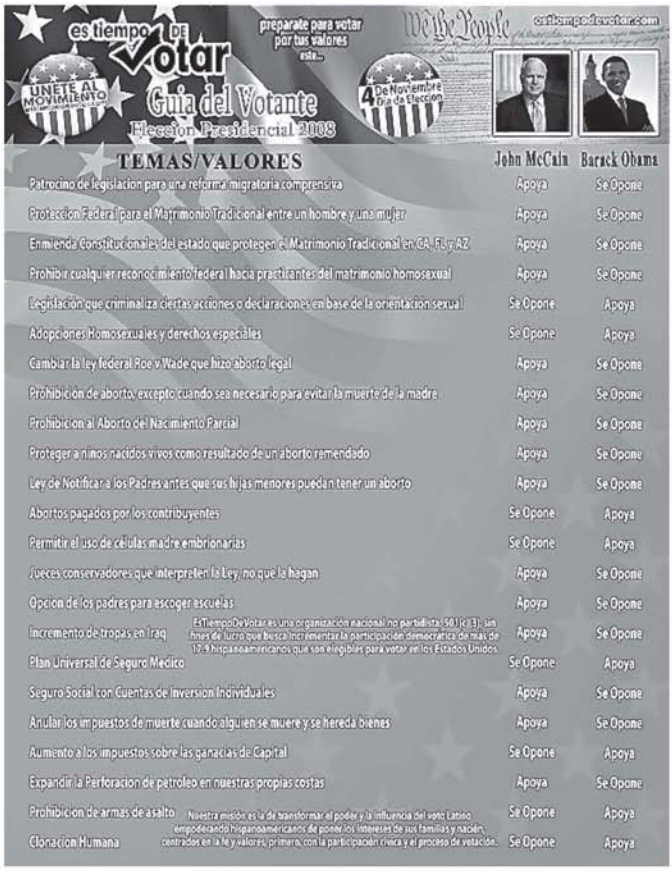

FIGURE 10.8 Latino Religion Voting Guide. Courtesy: Gastón Espinosa Collection.

invest, Hernández was awkwardly silent. McCain had decided (off the record) not to invest any direct major funds into Latino Catholic or Evangelical outreach because his advisors told him that it would be a "net gain" for Obama.[54]

When Rodríguez later privately asked Hernández how much the McCain camp had given him to reach the Latino Catholic and Protestant communities, he replied: "My business card is made out of printer paper… I don't get paid." Hernández had no budget, staff, or even business cards. In fact, he and a Latino associated with the NHCLC, Rev. Mark González, ran their entire outreach efforts "out of the trunks of their cars."[55] Notwithstanding these setbacks, they managed to send out thousands of Latino Evangelical voting guides and Defense of Marriage flyers (Figure 10.8).

Though Hernández admitted that ad hoc funding was available for certain events, McCain's senior campaign advisors almost always shot down their requests or made

sure most were never aired. Though Hernández had to pay his own way to and from events, Obama used his campaign funds to fly de Jesús around the nation and even provided him with a personal driver.

If this was not bad enough, to appease some, McCain was forced to distance himself from Hernández because he promoted comprehensive immigration reform in his new book entitled *The New Americans*, something McCain had once championed himself. Hernández offered his resignation not once but twice. In both cases, McCain pleaded with him to remain on his campaign team. Because of McCain's heartfelt request and the principles he knew McCain really stood for, Hernández remained. "The Republicans were good people. However, there just wasn't any camaraderie." Hernández concluded: "There was no burning desire to win… they were just doing their job… They paid too much attention to the [Republican] base, and not enough to Latinos."[56]

Obama's Counter-Offensive: Transforming Disadvantages into Opportunities

By contrast, Obama never missed an opportunity to make an opportunity. He sent out not only de Jesús to participate in the Vanguard Conference but Shaun Casey, his Evangelical outreach coordinator, and even DuBois—by teleconference. Together, the three stressed Democratic openness to Latinos, Evangelicals, and immigration reform. This stood in sharp contrast to McCain's shoestring and muzzled efforts. This translated on the street into the sense that Obama cared more about Latinos than McCain, despite his previous track record. Rodríguez stated in an interview with the author that Obama won in 2008 because he worked harder than McCain by "a margin of 10 to 1" and went out of his way to make a direct, personal connection with Latino leaders, not just through his surrogates. This was evident when Obama walked through a bustling crowd at the Compassion Forum at Messiah College to meet Rodríguez and Jesse Miranda and also by the Obama camp's calling "us monthly and [later] almost weekly to talk about their [Latino and faith-friendly] policies and ideas," Rodríguez said.[57] The conference at Vanguard and news about Obama's outreach to Latino Evangelical leaders spread like wildfire throughout the faith community as the first event was covered by more than half a dozen Spanish and English radio, television, and print media.

In addition to direct outreach to Latinos through Catholic and Evangelical advisors, Obama, DuBois, Díaz, de Jesús, Casey, and others also reached out to their sister Euro-American and African American leaders, underscoring the genuineness of Obama's outreach and Democratic pluralism message. Those leaders included Jim Wallis, the founder of *Sojourners* magazine,[58] and socially progressive but theologically and morally conservative Evangelicals such as Rich Cizik of the National Association of American Evangelicals (NAE), the sister organization of the NHCLC and someone who had personally worked very closely with Rodríguez

to promote immigration reform. Cizik lamented that although they had "been receiving weekly communication from the Obama camp" on their Evangelical-friendly policy issues, they received "nothing from McCain." He stated that Obama was the first Democratic presidential candidate to request a meeting with an NAE official in twenty-eight years. He sought to build bridges with the NAE and its leaders on faith-based initiatives, the environment, social justice, and traditional marriage.[59] McCain's outreach to Evangelicals was limited in scope, vision, and creativity and was not covered well in the media.[60]

McCain's silence prompted some Latinos, Evangelicals, Catholics, and other racial-ethnic minorities to take a second look at Obama. Bishop Harry Jackson, Jr., pastor of the multi-ethnic and influential Hope Christian Church in Washington, DC, summed up the attitude of many Evangelicals and Latinos when he stated that McCain's "relative silence on conservative social issues has motivated evangelicals to take a second look at Obama." The result of McCain's "relative silence," he lamented, was "tremendous apathy" because Evangelicals felt "betrayed" and "left out." All of which "worked to Obama's advantage," Jackson argued.[61] McCain had played the secular moderate and lost.

This astounded Obama's advisors. Dr. Shaun Casey summed up the attitude of many when he stated to the author, "the McCain campaign… threw the Bush playbook in the trash. They banked on [white] social [rather than religious or moral] conservatives to help them win… The Bush Evangelical outreach was at a high point. It's a mystery to me why McCain did not capitalize on it."[62] Others believe the problem was deeper. De Jesús stated that to win Latinos McCain needed to say, "This is what I believe in…" but instead showed "no sense of conviction" about Latinos or faith issues.[63] In many ways, McCain conceded Latino Catholic and Evangelical voters without firing a shot.

Faith-Based Strategy Results

Obama's ability to transform his potential liabilities into assets along with McCain's lack of sustained outreach enabled him to win the U.S. Latino vote by a staggering 67-percent to 31-percent margin. Obama swept a majority of Hispanic women and men across all four age groups and took 73 percent of Latino Catholics and at least 58 percent of Latino Protestants, most of them Evangelical. Although some scholars argue that McCain won the Latino Protestant vote, they are mistaken. Obama won Latinos and stopped the trend of Latinos' voting Republican for reasons noted shortly.

Although Obama won a decisive majority of Latino Catholics and Protestants, a good number were still undecided in October 2008. By that time, Obama clearly led McCain among Latino Catholics, Protestants, and even born-again Protestants. By mid-October, his outreach had finally arrested the trend of Latino Protestants' and, to a lesser extent, Catholics' voting Republican across gender lines.[64] By October 7,

Obama was leading among female Latino Catholics (63 percent) and female Latino Protestants (53 percent), whereas McCain was polling almost a third of male voters (31 percent) and a fourth of female Catholic voters (24 percent).

Yet, Obama did not win big among all segments of the Latino electorate. The LRAP survey still found that nationwide the thirty-five to forty-nine and fifty to sixty-four-year-old age groups gave Obama 10 percent less support than the nineteen- to thirty-four and sixty-four+ age groups, although the youngest cohort almost always votes Democrat. This was possibly because these two middle generations were mobilized into national politics during the Reagan and Bush years and were thus a little more loyal to the Reagan–Bush Jr. legacy. Their loyalty was in part due to Reagan's Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, which led to the naturalization of an estimated 2.7 million Latin American undocumented immigrants. Latinos also began to vote Republican because of Bush's Latino outreach from 2000 to 2004, regular meetings with Mexican President Vicente Fox, speeches on Spanish radio, his Latino sister-in-law and nephew, his developed relationships with Latino faith leaders, and because he pushed for faith-based initiatives and immigration reform and opposed gay marriage. Bush also tried to push through his own immigration reform bill, which—if passed—could have led to small but strategic hemorraging of Latino independents and religiously-oriented Reagan Democrats into the Republican fold (Table 10.4).[65]

Sarah Palin's Appeal among Latino Catholics and Protestants

McCain hoped that Sarah Palin would help jumpstart his campaign. Contrary to all of the pundits, she did. In an internal poll within the NHCLC leadership, more than 80 percent had a favorable view of Palin.[66] Although Palin is Evangelical, the LRAP survey found that she appealed to both Latino Protestants *and* Catholics—precisely what made her so dangerous to Obama. Even a third of Latino Democrats liked her (33 percent versus 45 percent). She appealed to a plurality of independents (47 percent versus 31 percent)—both men (45 percent to 32 percent) and women (43 percent versus 37 percent). She also won a more favorable than unfavorable rating among Latinos of Mexican (39 percent versus 37 percent), Puerto Rican (47 percent versus 34 percent), Cuban (84 percent versus 16 percent), Central American (50 percent versus 21 percent), South American (47 percent versus 33 percent), and Dominican (50 percent versus 31 percent) ancestry.

Palin's Latino support was probably due to her traditional views on abortion and gay marriage, her large family, faith, special-needs child, strong feminine outlook, working-class husband, teenage daughters, and general "hockey mom" persona. Latino Evangelicals were also elated because she is born-again and Pentecostal.[67] Despite her favorability among Latino Catholics and Protestants, not even she could save McCain, who seemed to be deaf to Latinos, Catholics, and Evangelicals. If he chose her to placate his base, it was too little, too late.

TABLE 10.4 U.S. Latino registered voters socio-demographics and moral issues

	Obama	*McCain*	*Other/ Undecided*
All Latinos (post-election)	67	31	2
Women	68	30	2
Men	64	33	3
18-29 year-olds	76	19	5
30-44 year-olds	63	36	1
45-64 year-olds	58	40	2
65+ year-olds	68	30	2
Latino swing state vote and % age of electorate			
New Mexico (41%)	69	30	1
Colorado (13%)	61	38	1
Nevada (15%)	76	22	2
Florida (14%)	57	42	1
Latino vote by religion (post-election)			
Catholics	73	27	2-way race
Protestants	58	42	2-way race
Latino vote by religion (pre-election)			
Catholics	63	24	13
Protestants	50	34	16
Born-again across traditions	50	35	15
Born-again Protestants	46	38	16
Attend church weekly or more	57	30	13
Pray weekly or more	58	29	13
Read Bible weekly or more	51	35	14
Religion provides guidance in daily living	56	30	14
Latino vote by country of origin (pre-election)			
Mexico	63	22	15
Puerto Rico	55	26	19
Cuba	20	75	5
Dominican Republic	75	19	6
Central America	50	29	21
South America	46	42	12
Latino vote by moral issues (pre-election)			
Oppose abortion	54	31	14
Support abortion	64	18	21
Oppose gay marriage	47	38	15
Support gay marriage	79	12	9
"Favor ban on gay marriage"			
Florida Latinos = 14% FL Electorate	64	36	2-way
Arizona Latinos = 16% AZ Electorate	55	45	2-way
California Latinos = 19% CA Electorate	53	47	2-way

Source: LRAP Survey, 2008.

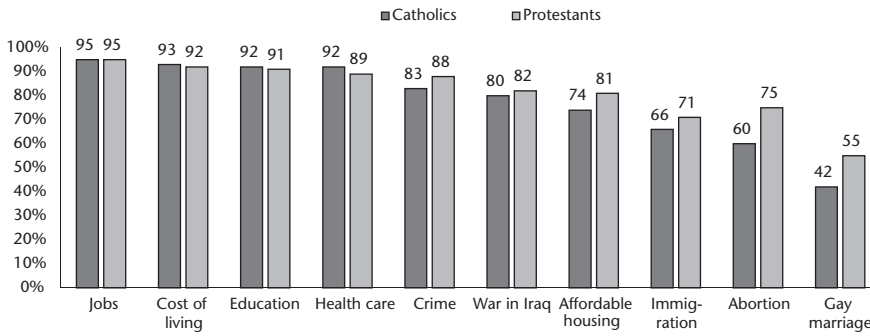

FIGURE 10.9 Most important election issues by Catholic and Protestant Religious affiliation. Question: In helping you decide who to vote for in the 2008 election, how important is this issue to you? Source: LRAP Survey, 2008.

Jobs, Cost of Living, and Health Care

These factors combined with the deepening economic crisis made McCain's chances of beating Obama very difficult. The stock market crash and McCain's tepid response wiped away his 2.5-percent lead in the polls the week after the Republican Convention, and Obama surged ahead to victory. Though Obama's victory should not be credited solely to the stock market crash and the economy, the timing clearly contributed to it. The top four campaign concerns for Latino voters—Catholics and Protestants—were jobs, the cost of living, education, and health care.[68] McCain's inability to satisfactorily address these concerns along with his inability to transform his natural assets into political assets among religious and racial-ethnic minorities made it virtually impossible for him to rally his base and win over the Latino independents and Democrats who had voted for Bush. When combined with his tone-deafness to religion and racial-ethnic minority group concerns, it was clear that nothing short of a miracle would save McCain.

On Election Day, there were no miracles for McCain and his advisors, who seemingly turned their backs on God, moral issues, and racial-ethnic minorities. Obama took 67 percent of Latinos nationwide, 73 percent of Latino Catholics, and 58 percent of Latino Protestants. Latino Catholics and Protestants helped Obama win key swing states for three reasons. First, they are heavily concentrated in these states. Second, the Latino electorate in these states was larger than Obama's margin of victory. And third, Latinos who voted for Obama did so at much higher rates than they did for Kerry in 2004. Obama won a majority of Latino voters in Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico, and even Florida, which Bush carried by a wide margin in 2004 (56 versus 44 percent). Latino support offset McCain's white support in New Mexico (56 percent versus 42 percent), Colorado (50 percent versus 48 percent), and Florida (56 percent versus 42 percent). Latinos also proved decisive because they made up a larger share of Obama's vote in these states than his margin of victory

in Colorado (Obama 12.4 versus 9 percent margin of victory), Florida (7.9 versus 2 percent), and New Mexico (28.3 versus 15 percent).[69]

The biggest surprise and greatest reward for all of Obama's efforts to reach the faith community was his ability to win over even a plurality of Latino voters that opposed abortion and gay marriage (47 versus 38 percent). In contrast to Kerry, the LRAP survey found that Obama also beat McCain among the most religious Latinos—those who attended church, prayed, and read the Bible once a week or more. He also led among Latinos who said religion provided a great deal or quite a bit of guidance in their daily living—including Evangelicals and born-agains—thus reversing the God Gap and defying the stereotype that they vote like their Euro-American counterparts (Table 10.4). Almost across the board, Obama won the religiously committed voters. It was a clean sweep. At least so I argue.

Latino Protestants—McCain or Obama?

However, some scholars argue that McCain won the Latino Protestant vote. Although we know that 67 percent of Latinos in general and at least 73 percent of Latino Catholics (ANES) in particular voted for Obama, exactly what percentage of Latino Protestants voted for Obama is contested. The 2008 National Survey on Religion and Public Life (NSRPL) post-election survey reported that 57 percent of Latino Protestants voted for McCain and only 43 percent for Obama.[70]

This is incorrect. Obama won approximately 58 percent of Latino Protestants for at least five reasons—in addition to the ones already cited.[71] First, the 57 percent figure for McCain is based on the NSRPL post-election survey. However, the NSRPL pre-election survey in April–May 2008 reported that only 34 percent of Latino Protestants planned to vote for John McCain, 46 percent planned to vote for Obama, and 20 percent were still undecided. For McCain to increase his vote from 34 to 57 percent, he would have had to increase his support by 23 points in less than six months, winning 100 percent of all of the independents and 3 percent of those planning to vote for Obama. This would have been unlikely given that Obama took 67 percent of the Latino vote according to the National Election Pool exit poll. In short, the math and probability do not add up, and all other surveys show the momentum going in Obama's direction in the last six months of the campaign.

Second, the LRAP national survey was completed on October 7, which was less than four weeks before Election Day. It showed that Obama had increased his lead among Latino Protestants from 46 to 50 percent, thus trending upward. These LRAP findings are based on 500 Latino registered (not likely) voters. The NSRPL post-election survey, by contrast, is based on 151 likely voters, with an 8-percent margin of error that is more than twice the margin of the LRAP survey. Moreover, the real margin of error for Latino Protestants in the NSRPL post-election survey is much higher because this sample included only 21 Latino Protestants out of

the 151 Latino respondents (89 Catholic, 21 Protestant, the remainder other/something else, etc.). The margin of error on 21 Latino Protestant respondents (not registered voters) is considerable and less reliable than the 500 Latino Protestant registered voters in the LRAP survey fielded less than four weeks prior to the election.

Third, the LRAP survey found that Obama was winning a majority of even the most religious Latinos by October 2008, including Latino Protestants who said they were born-again and went to church, read their Bible, and prayed once a week or more. It is highly unlikely that this same group of people would have switched their vote by such a wide margin in less than four weeks, especially in light of McCain's lack of outreach and back-pedaling on immigration and Obama's aggressive outreach to them.

Fourth, the LRAP survey found that 50 percent of Latino Protestants planned to vote for Obama. Even if the Latino Protestant independent voters in the LRAP survey (16 percent) split their vote on Election Day rather than giving two-thirds of their vote to Democrats as they normally do, Obama still would have won 58 percent of the Latino Protestant vote. Even if Obama won only half of these independent voters (16 percent), which is highly unlikely given that he won 67 percent of the aggregate, he still would have won 58 percent of the Latino Protestant vote. It is also highly unlikely that Obama would have suddenly witnessed a seven-point drop from 50 percent in October to 43 percent on Election Day. It is equally unlikely that McCain would have simultaneously increased his Latino Protestant support by 26 points in less than four weeks.

Finally, even if Obama did not win *any* of the 16 percent of independent Protestant voters, he still at least would have tied McCain at 50 to 50 percent. For all of these reasons, I believe that Obama rather than McCain won the Latino Protestant vote and probably—in a two-way race—by a margin of 58 percent to 42 percent.

Conclusion

Obama won the Latino Catholic and Protestant votes by decisive margins, including a majority of those who vote pro-life and oppose same-sex marriage. His faith-based centrist campaign promoted a new kind of Democratic religious and racial-ethnic pluralism that enabled him to reach out to Latinos on both sides of the religious, ideological, and political divides by appointing Latino Catholic and Protestant Evangelical advisors, promoting faith-friendly public policies, crafting Catholic and Evangelical-sounding social justice and conversion narratives, and because McCain failed to capitalize on his advantages and the inroads Bush had made. Finally, Obama and his Latino advisors worked to transform his liabilities into assets.

As a result, Obama won not only Catholics by a wide margin but Latino Protestants. This platform enabled him to attract voters from virtually all of the

major racial-ethnic and religious segments of the electorate. Together, they allowed Obama to offset his losses among Euro-American Catholic and Evangelical voters and win the 2008 Election. Obama ran a brilliant campaign and one that not only kept McCain's Latino Republican vote well below the 40 percent threshold laid out by Democratic advisors but enabled him to recover the ground Democrats had lost to Bush. All of this helped Obama reverse the God Gap among Latino Protestant Evangelicals and increase his Catholic shares over Kerry's margins in 2004.

How will Latino Catholics and Protestants vote in 2012 given Obama's struggling poll numbers in the community after the 2010 mid-term elections? Obama has recognized this slippage and has made concrete efforts to reach out to Latino Catholics and Evangelical Protestants by appointing Dr. Miguel Díaz as U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See and Dr. Arturo Chávez of the Catholic Mexican American Cultural Center and Rev. Noel Castanellos of the Evangelical-influenced Christian Community Development Association to the Advisory Board of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. He has also nominated Rev. Jesse Miranda, chief executive director of the NHCLC, to sit on this advisory board. In addition, Obama invited Rev. Rodríguez of the NHCLC to offer a prayer at the historic Presidential Inauguration and since that time to serve on the Obama White House Fatherhood and Healthy Families task force. He has also sought his advice in face-to-face meetings about public policy issues on immigration reform, homeland security, and Latino deportations and civil rights, some of which Obama has used in his public policy legislation and speeches on immigration reform, Rodríguez stated.[72]

Whether Obama will be able to use these appointments to maintain his 2008 Latino Catholic and Protestant support is unclear as he also has not kept his pledges to fix the economy, pass comprehensive immigration reform, stop deportations, and support traditional marriage. This, combined with his decision to require Catholic insurers to provide contraceptive coverage along with his public endorsement of gay marriage, seriously undermines his 2008 campaign platform and makes it seem like a crass series of political ploys. However, at this point, it is hard to imagine that Obama won't find a creative way to thread the needle of American politics by promoting a religious and racial-ethnic pluralism platform that claims to advocate for righteousness and justice.

Notes

1 Gastón Espinosa, *Religion, Race, and the American Presidency,* 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 330, note 1. Hereafter, Espinosa, 2011.

2 Most scholars correctly believe Bush took 39–40 rather than 44–45 percent of the Latino vote. The National Election Pool (NEP, 44 percent) and *Los Angeles Times* (45 percent) stand by their findings. Others challenge them: David Leal, Matt Barreto, Jongho Lee, Rodolfo O. de la Garza, "The Latino Vote in the 2004 Election," *PSOnline* (2005):41–49; Louis DeSipio, "Power in the Pews: Religious Diversity and Latino Political Attitudes and

Behaviors," in J. Matthew Wilson, ed. *From Pews to Polling Places: Faith and Politics in the American Religious Mosaic* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2007), 181; Espinosa, 2011, 262–263.

3 "Will Latinos Shun Obama because he's Black?" *Associated Press*, February 10, 2008; Matt Barreto and Ricardo Ramirez, "The Latino vote is pro-Clinton, not anti-Obama," *Los Angeles Times,* Opinion, February 7, 2008; Michael Dobbs, "Was Obama ever a Muslim*," The Washington Post*, June 13, 2008; Aaron Klein, "Obama worked with terrorists," *WorldNetDaily*, February 24, 2008: http://www.wnd.com/?pageId=57231; John Kennedy, "Preach and Reach: Despite his liberal record, Barack Obama is making a lot of evangelicals think twice," *Christianity Today*, October 5, 2008:http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/october/18.26.html

4 Hunter and SDR Consulting have surveyed 200,000 people and spent 22 years directing Latino public opinion research for The Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, The Pew Forum, CNN, Univision, and Telemundo. It is also based on interviews with Obama and McCain's 2008 campaign advisors.

5 Espinosa, 2011, 261–274. For the National Election Pool (NEP): http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/results/polls/#val=USP00p2

6 Espinosa, 2011, 261–274. I call this the "back-door" strategy into the Latino community.

7 Confirmed in the 2008 LRAP survey. See Espinosa, 2011, 239–242.

8 Espinosa, 2011, 239–242.

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10 Espinosa, 2011, 243.

11 See the NEP 2008 election results. Texas and California have the largest number of Latino Assemblies of God, the International Church of the Foursquare, the Latin American Council of Christian Churches, and Southern Baptist headquarters and churches. New York, Texas, Chicago, and Miami are major centers of Latino Catholic and Evangelical church growth and expansion.

12 Espinosa, 2011, 255–267. Arian Campo-Flores and Jessica Ramirez with Jim Moscou, "Power in The Pews: Latino Evangelicals are an in-demand group this Fall," *Newsweek*, October 7, 2008.

13 Espinosa, 2011, 249–250.

14 See the LRAP survey results. Paul Taylor and Richard Fry, *Hispanics and the 2008 Election* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2007), iii, 8.

15 See LRAP survey results. Taylor and Fry, iii, 8.

16 Espinosa, 2011, 330.

17 Alex Altman, "Joshua DuBois: Obama's Pastor-in-Chief, *TIME*, February 6, 2009.

18 Gastón Espinosa, Interview with Shaun Casey, Telephone, Claremont, CA, August 17, 2010.

19 Barack Obama, *The Audacity of Hope* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2006), 209–212.

20 PBS, God in America: Frontline, "Interview: Samuel Rodríguez," January 13, 2010:http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/interviews/samuel-rodriguez.html

21 Espinosa, 2011, 244–268.

22 Michael Sean Winters, "US Ambassador to Vatican named," *National Catholic Reporter*, May 27, 2009. Dan Gilgoff, "Obama's New Vatican Ambassador," *U.S. News & World Report*, May 28, 2009.

23 Gastón Espinosa, Interview with Miguel Díaz, E-mail, Claremont, CA, March 3, 2009.

24 Espinosa, Interview with Díaz.

25 Gastón Espinosa, Interview with Wilfredo de Jesús, Telephone, August 31, 2010.

26 Espinosa, Interview with de Jesús.

27 Gastón Espinosa, Interview with Samuel Rodríguez, E-mail, Claremont, CA, June 24, 2010.

28 Espinosa, Interview with de Jesús.

29 Barack Obama, *The Audacity of Hope* (New York: Random House, 2006), 199–202, 213–221.
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31 See LRAP survey results. Gastón Espinosa, "Interview with Samuel Rodríguez," Telephone, Claremont, CA, August 12, 2010; Espinosa, Interview with Shaun Casey.
32 Joe Von Kanel and Hal Quinley, "Exit Polls: Latino Voters Tip Balance," CNNPolitics.com, November, 5,2008:http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2008/11/05/exit-polls-where-latino-voters-tipped-the-balance/?eref=ib_politicalticker.
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35 Kennedy, "Preach and Reach."
36 Obama, 218.
37 Kennedy, "Preach and Reach."
38 Obama, 207–208; Sarah Pullman and Ted Olson, "Q&A: Barack Obama," *Christianity Today*, January 23, 2008:http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/januaryweb-only/104-32.0.html
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42 Italics in original quote. Obama, 198–224; Sarah Pullman and Ted Olsen, "Q&A: Barack Obama," *Christianity Today*, January 23, 2008:http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/januaryweb-only/104-32.0.html
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66 See the LRAP survey. Espinosa, Interview with Rodríguez, August 12, 2010.
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69 Kanel and Quinley, "Exit Polls: Latino Voters Tip Balance."

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11

ASIAN AMERICANS, RELIGION, AND THE 2008 ELECTION

So Young Kim and Russell Jeung

> On a personal note, when I talk about America's AAPI[1] communities, I'm talking about my own family: my sister, Maya; my brother-in-law, Konrad; my beautiful nieces, Suhaila and Savita; and the folks I grew up with in Indonesia, and in Honolulu, as part of the Hawaiian Ohana, or family.
>
> President Obama,
> Statement while lighting a diya for the Festival of Lights, October 2009

President Obama's acknowledgement of his Asian American family supports a facetious argument that he is our nation's first Asian American president. Chris Lu, White House Legislative Director and Harvard classmate of Obama, observes,

> A lot of aspects of [Obama's] story will be recognizable to many Asian Americans. He talks about feeling like somewhat of an outsider; about coming to terms with his self-identity; about figuring out how to reconcile the values from his unique heritage with those of larger U.S. society.[2]

In addition to sharing feelings as outsiders, Asian Americans[3] can see themselves reflected in the president's own upbringing in Hawaii. Columnist Jeff Yang points out how Obama's parents were like Asian immigrants, citing his father's "outsized academic expectations and his overprotective mother's use of guilt" for control.

His parents inculcated "Asian" values that the president espouses regularly when making speeches. "The senator often talks about the importance of education, the value of hard work, and the need for a sense of personal responsibility," Lu continues, "That resonates with a lot of Asian Americans, who feel they've pulled themselves up by their bootstraps." Indeed, just as President Obama is a role

model whose achievements authenticate America as the land of opportunity, Asian Americans as a group are seen as a model minority. They have done so well in terms of educational attainment and economic self-sufficiency in the United States that they have obtained the title of "honorary whites."[4]

These two prevailing stereotypes of Asian Americans, as perpetual foreigners and as the model minority, profoundly affect their political participation in the United States.

On the one hand, as perpetual foreigners, Asian Americans have faced historical disenfranchisement and racialization as outsiders.[5] In the past, they have not been able to become naturalized citizens or give testimony in courts. Even recently, Asian American political donors have received greater scrutiny and investigation as bearing too much potential foreign influence.[6]

On the other hand, by adopting honorary white status, model minority Asian Americans have often failed to find common ground and to mobilize politically as a community of interest.[7] Others who perceive them as a monolithic model minority neglect the multiple social needs and concerns of this racial group.[8]

Complicating the integration of Asian Americans into mainstream society is the diversity of religions in the Asian American community. Contrary to some common perceptions, most Asian Americans do not hold to non-Christian, "Eastern" religious traditions. In fact, unlike other minority racial groups, Asian Americans lack a common religion. This religious pluralism makes it more difficult to build collective identity and make collective action for the advancement of their political interests.

However, individual Asian American ethnic groups do have common beliefs and faith-based institutions that promote intraethnic solidarity. These ethnic communities vote as a bloc and engage in other political activities through their religious congregations. Furthermore, Asian Americans are the most secular group of the American population, whose rates of nonbelievers double or triple those of other racial groups. These nonreligious Asian Americans also have voting trends and attitudinal patterns distinct from religious Asian Americans.

Given the racial context of Asian American political activism and their religious diversity, this chapter examines the 2008 presidential election. The first two sections describe some enduring features of religions and politics of the Asian American community, followed by an exploration of the interplay of religious identity and political behavior both in general and in the context of the 2008 presidential election.

The Religious Diversity of Asian Americans

Religions play pivotal roles and functions in immigrant communities. They help preserving the ethnic and/or transnational identity of immigrants in a new land. In addition, religious institutions provide many "bridging" functions between immigrant communities and the mainstream society, helping immigrants adjust to new environments.

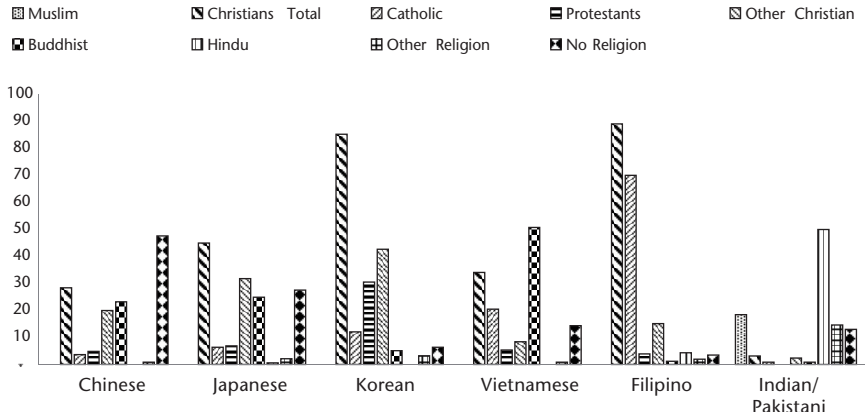


FIGURE 11.1 Religious preferences by Asian ethnic group

Figure 11.1 describes three notable features and trends of the religious diversity of Asian Americans, some of which belie common stereotypes of Asian American religions.

First of all, no single religion dominates the religious preferences of Asian Americans. In the 1990 National Religious Identification Survey, one of the earliest national surveys of religious affiliations, Asian Americans showed more variations in their religious affiliations than any other racial or ethnic groups. The number of their religious affiliations continued to expand in the next two decades. According to the 2008 American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS 2008), Asian Americans show no dominant religious affiliations, in contrast to Hispanics (59 percent Catholics) and African Americans (45 percent Baptists). The largest religious affiliations of Asian Americans recorded in this survey are Eastern Protestants (21 percent) followed by Catholics (17 percent).[9]

Second, despite such diversity of religious affiliations within the Asian American community as a whole, some individual ethnic groups hold rather monolithic religious preferences. Two outstanding examples are Korean Americans and Filipino Americans. According to the Pilot National Asian American Political Survey 2000–2001,[10] an overwhelming majority of Korean immigrants are Protestants (73 percent), and an equally large share of Filipinos are Catholics (70 percent).

Likewise, large proportions of South and Southeast Asians share common religions with their co-ethnics. Roughly half of Vietnamese Americans and Indian Americans are Buddhists and Hindus, respectively.

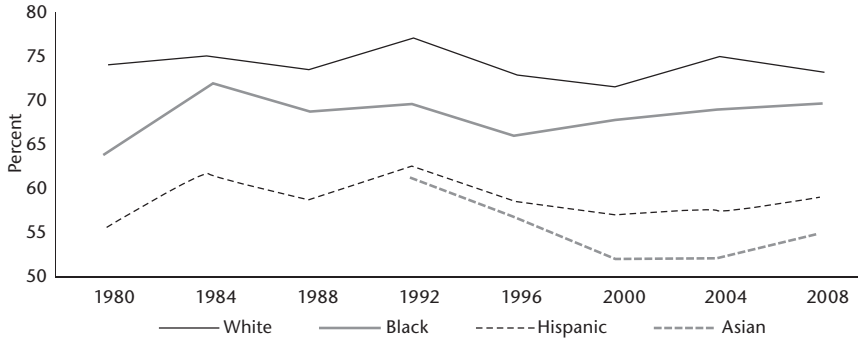
Understandably, the religious distributions of individual ethnic groups of Asian Americans are closely intertwined with the historical and social circumstances of their homelands. For example, the dominance of Protestantism among Korean Americans can be explained by its impact on the modernization and nation-building processes of Korea in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Later, selective

FIGURE 11.2 President Obama meeting with Eboo Patel. Courtesy: Official White House photo by Pete Souza

immigration of more Korean American Christians than Buddhists accounts for the higher proportion of Protestants in this nation. For another example, the strong influence of the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines originates from the long Spanish rule that spanned three centuries in the early modern period. Eighty percent of the Philippine population is Catholic, which results in the high proportion of Filipino American Catholics.

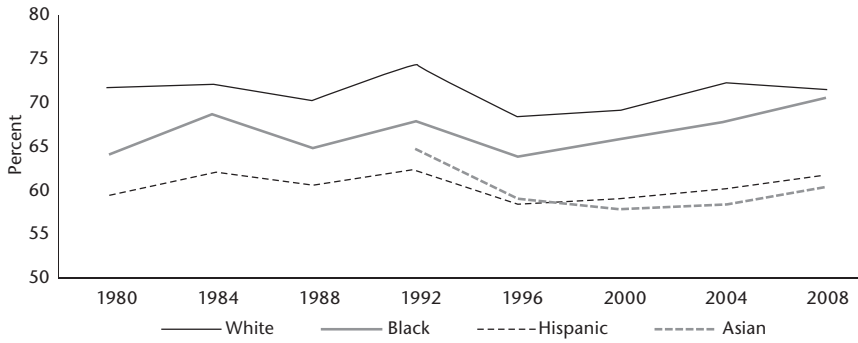
Third, Asian Americans are the most secularized segment of the American population. According to the same ARIS 2008, the share of those professing no religion is 16 percent for non-Hispanic Whites, 11 percent for non-Hispanic Blacks, and 12 percent for Hispanics. In contrast, 27 percent of Asian Americans confess no religion. Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans affiliate with no religion at even higher rates. In addition, the proportion of nonreligious Asian Americans has been on the consistent rise in the last two decades.[11]

These three features impact whether Asian Americans identify themselves as a panethnic, racialized community, which in turn affects their voting patterns.[12] The lack of a common Asian American religion and the ethnoreligious heterogeneity pose hurdles to building a cohesive racial identity among Asian Americans. Just as church involvement, especially within Asian American mainline congregations, promotes political participation,[13] the high rates of Asian American secularism also discourage this type of civic engagement.



Source: US Census Bureau, Historical Time Series Tables.

FIGURE 11.3a Participation of Asian Americans in the presidential elections (1980–2008)



Source: US Census Bureau, Historical Time Series Tables.

FIGURE 11.3b Registration rate of Asian Americans in the presidential elections (1980–2008)

Political Participation and Preferences of Asian Americans

One of the noted aspects of Asian Americans' political behavior is their relatively low level of political participation. As Figure 11.3 illustrates, Asian Americans show the lowest levels of registration and voting in the past presidential elections.

The relatively low level of Asian Americans' political participation poses an anomaly to theories of political science, which generally posit a positive relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and political participation.[14] Individuals with higher SES tend to be more active participants in politics because they possess greater material and cognitive resources to digest political information, articulate political opinion, and act upon such knowledge.

According to those conventional theories of political behavior, Asian Americans should show the highest rates of political participation as they are the racial group

of the highest SES on average.[15] Furthermore, according to the 2000 U.S. Census, Asian Americans have the highest educational attainment rates and are more likely than the general population to work in more professional fields such as management and medicine.[16]

All these socio-demographic statistics have reinforced the stereotyped image of Asian Americans as a model minority. However, scholars of Asian American studies point out four key factors constraining active participation of Asian Americans in political life, which cast doubt on the assumptions of the foregoing political theories.

First, racism against Asians led to the political and legal disenfranchisement of Asians in the United States and deterred their political participation. This racism that denied civic integration manifested itself in various forms. Facing anti-black racism, Chinese were classified as black and prohibited from giving testimony in the courts in the 1854 case, *People v. Hall*. Racialized as outsiders, Asians were the one racial group ineligible to become naturalized, as ruled by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Ozawa v. United States* (1922) and *Thind v. United States* (1923).

Patriotic racism is another specific form of discrimination that Asian Americans have faced. The World War II internment of Japanese Americans and the Cold War investigations by the FBI of Chinese American leftists exemplify the hostility confronting Asian Americans, who were seen as enemies. More recently, orientalist notions that Asians are disloyal to the United States led to the unjust imprisonment of Wen Ho Lee, a suspected spy, and the use of double standards against Asian American political donors. Each of these forms of institutionalized racism hindered the integration of Asian Americans into the political mainstream.

Second, the majority of Asian Americans are relatively recent immigrants, even though the history of Asian immigration goes back to the mid-nineteenth century. The first wave of Asians arrived primarily as laborers employed to build the transcontinental railroad or to farm sugar plantations in the nineteenth century. Yet, laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Asian of 1924 strictly limited the entry of the "undesirable." Not until the 1965 Immigration Act was the American border opened to a new wave of immigrants from Asian countries.

Currently, a significantly higher rate of Asian Americans (70 percent) compared to other racial groups are foreign born and many remain linguistically isolated.[17] About 40 percent of this community does not speak English very well, which hampers their ability to become naturalized or understand election issues. To vote, they must first become naturalized as citizens, and then they must also register to vote before they can cast their ballots. In the 2000 U.S. Census, about half of these immigrants had become naturalized and half remained noncitizens.

Third, despite overall high levels of median income and educational attainment, individual ethnic groups of the Asian American community have very different socioeconomic and migration characteristics. They occupy different entrepreneurial and occupational groups such as concentrations of Koreans in the laundry business

or Cambodians in doughnut shops, which has generated a distinct pattern of ethnic "niche" markets in the American economy.

Furthermore, one in five Asian Americans came as refugees from war. These involuntary migrants, who often suffer from posttraumatic stress and acculturation stress, must cope with even greater obstacles to enter the economic mainstream, let alone the political arena. Consequently, organizing Asian Americans along common class or political interests is difficult, and gaining political strength as a coherent voting bloc is a challenge for the community.

Religious Affiliation and Politics

Though Asian Americans have low rates of participation in electoral politics for the aforementioned reasons, they have sought to empower themselves through other means, such as lawsuits, labor and community organizing, and mobilizing at a transnational level.[18] The religions of Asian American have played a significant role in shaping this activism and other political attitudes and behaviors of this population.

Religious affiliation affects the ideological orientations of each ethnic group. Overall, Asian Americans are politically more liberal than conservative. According to the Pilot National Asian American Political Survey data, 36 percent of Asian Americans lean Left, compared to 22 percent leaning Right. Yet what is notable in the ideological orientations of Asian Americans is that those taking the middle ideological position (32 percent), together with people having no clear political preferences (10 percent), take the largest share of their ideological distribution.

Interestingly, none of the individual religious groups within the Asian American community resemble one another in their distribution of political ideology, as illustrated by Table 11.1. Hindus and Muslims turn out to be the most liberal ethnic groups; 61 percent of the former and 58 percent of the latter lean toward Left. Conversely, Protestants and Catholics are more politically conservative than any other religious groups.

TABLE 11.1 Ideological Orientations of Asian Americans by Religious Affiliation

Religious affiliation	*Leaning left*	*Middle of the road*	*Leaning right*
Protestant	31	33	29
Catholic	40	24	28
Buddhist	27	41	18
Hindu	61	17	14
Muslim	58	12	25
Non believers	32	35	18
All	36	32	22

Source: Pilot National Asian American Political Survey 2000-2001.

Nonreligious Asian Americans are most likely to be politically independent or to have no party affiliation. As shown in Table 11.1, together with Buddhists, Asian American nonbelievers form the largest group of "middle of the road" political ideology. Also, the share of those unsure about their political ideology is the highest among these two groups (14 percent for Buddhists and 13 percent for nonbelievers).

Besides promoting certain ideologies, religious affiliation shapes Asian Americans' participation in other areas of public life. Those who are Christians tend to be more energetic participants in civic activities than believers of the other religions. More specifically, a recent study examining the influence of religious affiliations on community volunteerism finds that 69 percent of Protestants and 54 percent of Catholics are affiliated with more than one nonreligious organization, as compared to 40 percent of Hindus and 26 percent of Buddhists who are so.[19]

Asian American religiosity, as measured by church attendance, also correlates strongly with greater political engagement.[20] More religious Asian Americans often are more conservative than Asian Americans in general, have greater political interest, and possess more perceived influence over local government decisions.

Finally, the religious institutions of Asian Americans also offer resources for leadership development, social networking, and fundraising capacity for political action. Historically, many Asian nationalist movements utilized Asian American congregations as bases for their organizing, as exemplified by the early twentieth-century Korean Americans' effort to mobilize their co-ethnics for political independence of their homeland from Japanese colonial rule. Such roles of religious institutions for political socialization and mobilization of Asian Americans have continuously been reinforced.[21]

2008 Presidential Election

The 2008 presidential election was notable in many aspects for the political mobilization and participation of Asian Americans. In both the primaries and the general election, Asian Americans forged discernible ethnic and panethnic voting blocs.

Both Democratic primary candidates Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton courted the Asian American vote, yet notable Asian American politicians such as former Washington State Governor Gary Locke and Hawaii Senator Daniel Inouye endorsed Clinton. Major exit polls revealed overwhelming support of Asian Americans for Clinton. For example, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) exit poll in New York found that almost nine of ten Asian American Democrats favored her.[22] Such overwhelming endorsement for Clinton led Lisa Cullen of *Time* magazine to wonder whether Obama had an "Asian problem."[23] She cited a CNN report and other comments that Asian Americans voted against Obama because he was black. In response to this criticism, Asian American political groups defended this electorate's preference for Clinton because of her name recognition and experience with the Asian American communities.

TABLE 11.2 2008 presidential choices of Asian Americans by ethnicity

	NAAS Pre-Election Poll (Aug-Oct 2008)		*AALDEF Exit Poll (Nov 2008)*	
	McCain	*Obama*	*McCain*	*Obama*
Chinese	25% (15)	75% (44)	26%	73%
Japanese	21% (15)	79% (57)		
Korean	40% (28)	60% (42)	35%	64%
Asian Indian	22% (14)	78% (50)	8%	91%
Bangladeshi			2%	97%
Cambodian			20%	77%
Filipino	44% (25)	56% (32)	39%	59%
Pakistani			5%	94%
Vietnamese	78% (51)	22% (14)	67%	30%

The figures in parentheses are the rate of support taking "undecided voters."
Source: National Asian American Survey 2008 & Asian American Legal Defense Fund Exit Poll 2008.

The charges of Asian American racism proved to be unfounded, however, as Obama started to gain more support from Asian Americans over the course of the primary. By May in 2008, he was leading Clinton in Californian exit polls by 56 percent to 33 percent. Part of this shift of support among Asian Americans was due to the realization among Asian Americans of Obama's multiple ties to Asian communities. Yet close to a fourth of Clinton's supporters in the primary and about a third of all Asian Americans remained undecided by October.

Eventually, in the November election, every Asian ethnic group save the Vietnamese voted for Obama over John McCain. As a panethnic group, Asian Americans preferred President Barack Obama by a 62-percent to 35-percent margin, according to national exit polls.[24] Similarly, according to the multilingual exit poll of voters conducted by the AALDEF, Asian Americans voted for Barack Obama over John McCain by more than three to one.[25]

The individual ethnic groups of the Asian American community behaved even more as single voting blocs for Obama. As shown in Table 11.2, the highest rate of bloc voting is found among South Asian Americans, as Bangladeshi, Indian, and Pakistanis gave Obama more than 90 percent of their votes. The high concentrations of Chinese, Japanese, and Cambodians supporting Obama also provide evidence of these groups acting in concert as ethnic interest groups.

Because of their location in key states, Asian Americans were one of the deciding factors in the 2008 presidential election. Asian Americans comprise only 5 percent of the total population, and represent only 2 percent of the American electorate. Yet, Asian Americans tend to live in highly urbanized areas and are concentrated in

major states such as California and New York. In particular, the Asian American vote was critical for the election outcomes in swing states such as Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Nevada.[26]

Religious Affiliations and Presidential Choices

Just as the individual Asian American ethnic groups voted similarly, Asian religious groups tended to cluster in their presidential preferences. As Table 11.3 shows,[27] although Obama received majority support from most religion groups of Asian Americans, the degree of support varied significantly.

Asian Americans who consider themselves agnostics or atheists and tend to be more liberal favored Obama most strongly (Obama, 62 percent; McCain, 4 percent). Another more liberal religious group, Methodists, also heavily supported the democratic candidate (Obama, 60 percent; McCain, 21 percent). Reflecting the South Asian American voting patterns, Muslims (Obama, 57 percent; McCain, 1 percent), and Hindus (Obama, 53 percent; McCain, 10 percent) also indicated similar voting preferences.

Asian American Christians supported Obama to a lesser degree, perhaps because they tend to be ideologically more conservative. Even so, Asian American Catholics and Protestants were more likely to vote for Obama than their other co-religionists, especially their white ones. Though opinion polls indicated a 10-percent preference for Obama over McCain, white Catholics and white Protestants both voted for McCain.[28]

TABLE 11.3 2008 presidential choices of Asian Americans by religious affiliation

Religious affiliation	*McCain*	*Obama*	*Undecided*
No Religion	12	45	42
Christian	27	38	34
Catholic	29	32	38
Hindu	10	53	35
Buddhist	26	42	30
Agnostic/atheist	4	62	26
Other non-Christian	4	51	23
Protestant	23	34	29
Methodist	21	60	19
Muslim	1	42	57
Presbyterian	42	40	18

The above religious affiliations include religious groups comprising more than 0.1% of the total distribution and represent 96.6% of the survey participants (4643 out of 4808). Note that these classifications are not exhaustive, nor mutually exclusive.

Source: National Asian American Survey 2008.

FIGURE 11.4 President Barack Obama holds a briefing with Tina Tchen, Director of the Office of Public Engagement, right, and staff in the Oval Office, prior to the Asian American and Pacific Islander Initiative Executive Order signing and Diwali festival of lights ceremony at the White House, October 14, 2009. Courtesy: Official White House photo by Pete Souza

Conclusion

Though Obama may not actually be the first Asian American president, Asian Americans of most religious affiliations did support him. This chapter explains how specific features of Asian Americans' immigration demographics and their racial dynamics shape their political identity and behavior. Because of the ethnic and religious diversity of this population, developing a united, Asian American racial voting bloc is difficult. Furthermore, because of the structural barriers imposed upon Asian Americans and their political socialization in their homelands, their electoral participation is limited. Consequently, they have sought other means and arenas to empower themselves.

Nonetheless, Asian Americans were much more likely to support Obama than whites of similar incomes or religious affiliations. When analyzed as ethnoreligious groups, individual subpopulations of Asian Americans mobilized and voted as blocs. Hindus and Muslims, who are primarily of South Asian background, are more likely to be educated, to have liberal political ideologies, and to have voted for Obama. Secular and agnostic Asian Americans were similar in orientation. Chinese and Japanese Americans had the highest percentages of those who claimed no religion.

Asian Americans who professed Protestant Christianity or Catholicism also generally voted for Obama but at lower percentages than the non-Christians. Asian

American Methodists, belonging to a more liberal denomination, were much more likely to support Obama than Presbyterians. Korean American Presbyterians, who make up the large share of Asian American Presbyterians, also tend to be more conservative than American Presbyterians as a whole. Asian American Catholics had more McCain followers than other ethnoreligious groups, perhaps because of the high numbers of Vietnamese American Catholics. Vietnamese Americans were the only Asian ethnic group that indicated a preference for McCain.

Indeed, the cross-cutting affiliations of Asian Americans—as members of both ethnic groups and religious groups—markedly shapes their political preference and vote. Future research should further explore how the religious networks and values of individual groups work to socialize specific political attitudes and behaviors.

Since his election, President Obama's administration has appointed more Asian Americans than ever in American history. His cabinet includes Chinese Americans Gary Locke as Secretary of Commerce and Steven Chu as Energy Secretary and Japanese American Eric Shinseki as Veteran Affairs Secretary. His legislative director, Christopher Lu, and his senior advisor, Peter Rouse, are both Asian Americans. Though President Obama is not an Asian American himself, his family and inner circle are.

They assembled recently to celebrate Diwali, a Hindu, Sikh, and Jain festival of lights. President Obama lit a diya, a clay lamp, to signify the victory of light over darkness. At the same time, he signed an executive order that established a government commission to examine how government could assist Asian Americans. At this intersection of faith and politics, President Obama did represent the first Asian American president.

Notes

1 AAPI is the Census term denoting the Asian American Pacific Islander.
2 Jeff Yang, "Could Obama be the first Asian American President?" *San Francisco Chronicle*, 30 July 2008.
3 The 2000 U.S. Census defines Asian Americans as individuals with family origins from the Far East, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent including Bangladesh, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. One of the difficulties in studying the religion and politics of Asian Americans lies in fluctuations of the statistical definition and data collection regarding the Asian American population. Due to different categorizations of races, Census data on the Asian American population for 1980, 1990, and 2000 are not directly comparable. The 2000 Census separated Asians from the Pacific Islanders.
4 Paul Wong, et al., "Asian Americans as a Model Minority: Self-Perceptions and Perceptions by Other Racial Groups," *Sociological Perspectives* 41 (1998): 95–118; Mia Tuan, *Forever Foreigners or Honorary Whites? The Asian Ethnic Experience Today* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998).
5 See Angelo Ancheta, *Race, Rights and the Asian American Experience* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006).
6 Michael Chang, *Racial Politics in an Era of Transnational Citizenship: The 1996 "Asian Donorgate" Controversy in Perspective* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004).

7 The National Asian American Survey 2008 finds that 54 percent of Asian Americans think they have more in common with whites. In contrast, 46 percent and 42 percent of Asian Americans view themselves as having more commonality with Latinos and blacks, respectively.
8 Frank Wu, *Yellow: Race in American Beyond Black and White* (New York: Basic Books, 2003).
9 According to the same survey, Asian Americans professing Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism have almost tripled since 1990, which also contributed to increasing diversity of religious affiliations in the Asian American community.
10 This multilingual survey of Asian Americans' political attitudes and behavior drew on household samples of six cities of sizeable Asian American populations (Chicago, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco). *The Pilot National Asian American Political Survey 2000–2001* (Principal Investigator: Pei-te Lien).
11 Nonbelievers accounted for 16 percent of the religious distribution of Asian Americans in 1990 and 22 percent in 2001.
12 Janelle S. Wong, Pei-Te Lien, Margaret Conway, "Group-Based Resources and Political Participation among Asian Americans" *American Politics Research*, 33, 4 (2005): 545–576.
13 Russell Jeung, *Faithful Generations: Race and New Asian American Churches.* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004).
14 Margaret Conway, *Political Participation in the United States*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2000); W. Flanigan and N. Zingale, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, 11th ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2005).
15 U.S. Census Bureau, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2007*, available at http://www.census.gov/prod/2008pubs/p60-235.pdf.
16 U.S. Census Bureau, We the People: Asians in the United States: Census 2000 Special Reports, available at http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/censr-17.pdf.
17 According to the Asian American Legal Defense Fund exit poll of 2008, 35 percent of Asian Americans considered themselves having limited English proficiency. Korean and Chinese Americans are the two groups with the largest (self-perceived) limited English proficiency (66 percent and 53 percent, respectively).
18 Russell Jeung and Helen Kim, "Asian American Religions and Politics," in Fumitaka Matsuoka and Jane Iwamura, eds., *Encyclopedia of Asian American Religions*, forthcoming.
19 Elaine Howard Ecklund, and Jerry Park, "Religious Diversity and Community Volunteerism Among Asian Americans," *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion* 46, 2 (2007): 233–244. Religiosity also seems to matter for civic engagement. In the NAAS survey, Korean Americans showing the highest level of religiosity (measured by the frequency of church service attendance) are the group that also shows the highest percentage of participation in activities other than service or prayers.
20 Those who attend church more regularly are more likely to become citizens and to vote. Pei-te Lien, Margaret Conway, and Janelle Wong, 2004
21 Joaquin Jay Gonzalez III, *Filipino American Faith in Action: Immigration, Religion and Civic Engagement.* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Brian Hayashi, *For the Sake of Our Japanese Brethren: Assimilation, Nationalism and Protestantism Among the Japanese of Los Angeles.* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995); Timothy Tseng. "Chinese Protestant Nationalism in the United States, 1880–1927"; *New Spiritual Homes: Religion and Asian Americans*, ed. David Yoo (University of Hawaii Press, 1999) 19–51.
22 A CNN exit poll in California showed Asian Americans voted for Hillary Clinton over Barack Obama by a three-to-one margin, which is a notably higher rate of endorsement compared to other racial groups' support (69 percent of Latino voters, for instance).
23 Lisa Takeuchi Cullen, "Does Obama Have an Asian Problem?" *Time* (February 19, 2008).
24 See http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/results/polls/#USP00p1. However, Asian Americans were the racial group with the lowest voter turn-out in this election. Whereas 58 percent of all Americans voted, only 32.1 percent of Asian Americans voted. U.S. Census Bureau. 2009 "Voter Turnout Increases by 5 Million in 2008 Presidential Election, U.S. Census Bureau Reports." Press Release, July 20, 2009.

25 The AALDEF has conducted exit polls of Asian American voters in major elections. Its 2008 presidential election exit poll was the largest in magnitude, surveying 16,665 Asian American voters at 113 poll sites in 39 cities of 11 states with the largest concentrations of the Asian American populations. The survey questionnaires were written in English and in 12 Asian languages. The pollsters recruited from Asian American students, community volunteers, and attorneys were conversant in 38 Asian languages and dialects. AALDEF, "The Asian American Vote in the 2008 Presidential Election," available at http://www.apiavote.org/documents/multimedia/04-20-05_exit_poll_report.pdf.

26 One of the best-known examples of increasing influence of Asian Americans on election outcomes is the 2006 Senate election in Virginia. Angered by incumbent Senator George Allen's offensive "macaca" remark, Asian Americans' votes tipped the control of the Senate to the Democrats where the race was decided by a narrow margin (only 9,329 votes). Exit polls of the AALDEF found that Asian Americans voted 76 percent to 21 percent for Allen's opponent.

27 We thank Professor Janelle Wong at the University of Southern California for providing this information from the NAAS survey.

28 MSNBC 2008 Exit Poll.

12

CONCLUSION

Gastón Espinosa

Pundits argued that Obama's 2008 victory signaled the end of the Religious Right,[1] the culture wars,[2] the racialization of American society,[3] the importance of religion in presidential politics, and the expansion of the "God Gap."[4] This book instead argues that religion, racial cleavages, and the culture wars espoused by religious traditionalists remain firmly in place after 2008. The only difference is that this time religion benefitted Democrats rather than Republicans and racial-ethnic minorities rather than white Americans—and herein lay the significance of this election and study. If we include the religious activity of progressives, 2008 was loaded with religion, and Obama helped close the God Gap among some mainline Protestants, women, and racial-ethnic minorities and increased his level of support over John Kerry's support in 2004 even among groups he lost such as white Catholics and Evangelicals.

The role that religion played may seem contradictory because some of the same religious people (e.g., African Americans, Latinos) who helped elect Obama also helped pass constitutional amendments to define marriage as a covenant between one man and one woman in Florida, Arizona, and California. Yet it is only paradoxical if one looks at religion through the lens of traditional white Protestants and Catholics and if one assumes that Democrats do not care about religious voters and traditional marriage and that someone who is politically progressive cannot also be morally and socially conservative. A majority of blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans are politically and socially progressive but morally and religiously moderate-conservative. The 2008 Election was not only defined by their combined electoral clout but also by their values. This conclusion summarizes the key chapter findings and reflects on their larger significance.

2008 Election Findings: Trends, Reversals, and "Staying Pat"

This book challenges a number of conventional stereotypes, myths, and inaccuracies about religious and racial-ethnic minorities. Olson, Warber, and den Dulk argue that contrary to popular opinion, religion continues to exert a critical influence in electoral politics and public policy debates. In previous elections, Democratic candidates seldom spoke about religion and were often seen as indifferent, condescending, and even hostile to religious people of all stripes. There was a growing God Gap between religious people and the Democratic Party from 2000 to 2008. The growing influence of secularism and religious pluralism in the Party along with rhetoric about traditional Americans being preoccupied by what Howard Dean described as "God, guns, and gays" and that his favorite New Testament book was the Book of Job did not help. Republicans capitalized on this anti-religion perception and wrapped themselves in the mantle of religion's defender. Obama challenged this perception and sought to close the God Gap by aggresively courting religious voters. He not only closed and in some cases reversed the God Gap with white mainline Protestants, the aggregate Catholic vote, women, and Latino Evangelicals, but he also increased his level of support over John Kerry's 2004 percentages even among groups he lost such as white Catholics and Evangelicals.

After Kerry's 2004 defeat, Democrats set out to reclaim religious turf, especially among progressive and moderate Catholics, Mainliners, and Evangelicals—many of which had once been active Democrats. After his religious misstep in 2004, National Democratic Chairman Howard Dean had something of a political conversion and led the charge in 2006 to canvass religious voters across traditions. He advised Democratic candidates to speak openly and warmly about religion in the primaries. As a result, Obama and Clinton carefully crafted and wove their own Christian journeys and conversion narratives into their autobiographies, rallies, and interviews.

Olson, Warber, and den Dulk argue that Obama recognized that he could not win the 2008 election without attracting more religious voters in general and mainline Protestants in particular because the latter were already predisposed to liberal Democratic social views. As a mainliner (UCC) himself, Obama understood their rhetoric and capitalized on that by giving a platform to their values and what some have called the Religious Left, a name that is something of a misnomer as most are centrist by hard Left standards. Many mainliners fit the mold and spirit of the Religious Left (and Obama's own outlook) and were eager for public recognition and to move out of the shadow of Christian conservatism. Obama's story and message were a godsend. He was the modern incarnation of the Social Gospel Movement and many of the principles that mainline Protestants championed and thus helped close the God Gap among some mainline Protestants, a finding that challenges the view that it remained in place in 2008.[5]

Olson, Warber, and den Dulk identify several important mainline Protestant trends. First, mainline religious affiliation is an increasingly insufficient predicator

of partisan political behavior because many Protestants vote Democrat, not Republican. Second, mainliners are increasingly voting Democrat due to the prominent role that Evangelical "morality politics" play in the Republican Party. Mainliners sought to broaden the discourse on religion and politics to include just wages, choice, the environment, health care, and immigration reform. Third, mainliners were critical in helping Obama to offset his losses among white Catholics and Evangelicals. Fourth, moderate-to-progressive mainliners were ripe for further mobilization by Democratic candidates willing to take seriously their religious and Social Gospel commitments, as Obama did. And finally, mainliners are now a swing vote constituency.

Although white mainline Protestants appear to be trending Democratic, Corwin E. Smidt found that Evangelicals voted Republican at largely the same rates they did in previous elections (77 percent in 2004 and 76 percent in 2008). Yet, Obama made major inroads into the Evangelical community because its coalition appeared to be fragmenting: The Religious Right was reportedly in disarray, the deaths of Evangelical leaders Jerry Falwell and D. James Kennedy created a "leadership vacuum," and a growing number of younger and racial-ethnic minority Evangelicals were more progressive than their older white counterparts on social issues such as immigration reform. The uneven publicity given to progressive (e.g. Jim Wallis) and racial-ethnic Evangelicals created an inaccurate perception in a hungry and scandal-driven media that the Evangelical coalition might disintegrate. Although the new generation of Evangelicals is "less reflexively Republican in their preferences," Smidt found they still voted Republican because of their biblical commitment to the sanctity of life and marriage.

Despite Obama's inability to wrest the white Evangelical coalition free from the Republican Party, he did *increase* his share over Kerry's support by five percent (26 percent versus 21 percent), a figure that proved crucial because Evangelicals are one of the largest religious voting blocs. The result was that one out of four Evangelicals voted for Obama, mainly youth, women, and racial-ethnic minorities.

Surprisingly, white Catholics largely followed the lead of white Evangelicals in casting a majority of their votes for McCain. Yet Leege and Mockabee found that as an aggregate, Catholics across all races voted for Obama because Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans make up almost one-half of American Catholics. Furthermore, whereas Obama did well among women across the electorate, he lost the white Catholic male and female vote. Catholic support for Democrats has declined from 79 percent in 1960 to 48 percent in 2008. Obama was unable to reverse the trend and thus unable to close the God Gap among white Catholics.

Leege and Mockabee argue that the main reason why McCain won white Catholics was because he could "speak Catholic" on many socially and religiously conservative issues unlike Obama who was pro-choice, though Espinosa argued that Obama also "spoke Catholic" on social justice issues and for this reason attracted social-justice leaning Catholics and racial-ethnic minorities. Leege and Mockabee

also suggest that Obama's lack of support among some white Catholics was due to the legacy of racism in the Catholic community. Their increasing upward mobility also pushed them toward McCain. Although abortion remains an important moral issue to many Catholics, it is less so among Latino, Asian, and black Catholics. More troubling is the trend of white Catholics moving into the Republican camp while racial-ethnic minority Catholics remain solidly Democrat, aside from Vietnamese Catholics, who supported McCain because of his Vietnam experience. Catholics will continue to be a key swing constituency, especially in Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Though white mainliners trended Democrat and white Evangelicals and Catholics voted Republican, Jews "stayed pat" by voting Democrat. Wald argues that Republicans tried to drive a wedge between Jews and Obama by pointing to his Muslim background, questionable support for Israel, and relationship with black cultural nationalists such as Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright. Republicans tried to connect Obama to Islam and implied that he might unfairly privilege Muslims at the expense of Jews in the United States and Israel.

Obama responded by appointing Jewish campaign staff (e.g., Axelrod), making strong statements in support of Israel on a July 2008 trip to the Western Wall, reassuring Jews of his support at AIPAC, organizing the first Jewish rabbinical political association ("Rabbis for Obama") for a presidential candidate, holding a conference call with Jewish rabbis, and pointing to his service as a law professor and community organizer, his strong commitment to social justice, and his attention to family and his elders. Wald argues that all of this made Obama "a Jewish mother's dream child." He took 78 percent of the Jewish vote and 76 percent in Florida to McCain's 21 percent, a 4-percent *increase* over Kerry's 74 percent in 2004.

Wald argues the anti-Obama campaign was not a complete failure and might have gained more traction if the economy had rebounded for McCain. Obama's support was not universal across all Jewish traditions. Polls leading up to the election found that Orthodox Jews in fact favored McCain over Obama by 50 to 18 percent. Furthermore, many Jews who believed in God (some do not) favored McCain even though a majority still voted for Obama.

Calfano, Green, and Djupe point out that American Muslims likewise voted overwhelmingly for Obama. Though on the one hand this might not be surprising since many saw him as the first presidential candidate with a Muslim heritage, on the other, it is surprising because American Muslims are among the most religious and least secular segment of the American electorate—two variables normally associated with Republican Party identification. In this respect, Obama did help close the God Gap with Muslims, though for reasons that had more to do with heritage rather than strategic outreach.

In fact, Republicans have done well with Muslims in the past. Muslims favored George W. Bush in 2000 over Al Gore by a notable margin. This was due to Bush's pro-friendly Muslim policies, views on abortion and gay marriage, and push for a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Obama won not only one of the nation's most religious communities—Muslim Americans—but one of the least—seculars. Kellstedt and Guth argue that seculars are important because they are a large and growing segment of the U.S. population. In 2008, they purportedly made up 19 percent of the U.S. population, 22 percent of Obama's vote totals, and 10 percent of the GOP's vote totals. Though they provided a key segment of Obama's vote totals, black Protestants and Latinos were even more important.

Although Republicans such as Ronald Reagan attracted a large number of secular voters, since then seculars have been trending Democrat, make up about 15 percent of the Democratic electorate, and are the "true loyalists in the Democratic world." Their vote has gone from 58 percent for Al Gore in 2000 to 72 percent for Kerry in 2004 to 75 percent for Obama in 2008. They tend to be socially, culturally, and religiously liberal, atheistic, or agnostic. Many also oppose civil religion, resent the role that religious faith and institutions play in elections, hold very liberal views on moral issues and social welfare policy, and oppose militant internationalism.

Yet, the political clout of seculars in American politics in general and the Democratic Party in particular is undermined by several factors. First, they are not a unified and coherent group of voters. Second, they are not easy to mobilize. Third, the category of secular and nonreligious is itself coming under closer scrutiny. Kellstedt, Guth, and others argue that their numbers have been unintentionally exaggerated because many of their reported respondents have been misclassified in national surveys.[6] This finding is reinforced by the fact that in 2008 only 2.5 percent of survey respondents said they were atheist (1.4 percent) and agnostic (1.1 percent)—response options also available in the same survey question. As a result, Kellstedt and Guth broke down the 20.5 percent "secular group" into five smaller and more refined categories: Religious Unaffiliated (1.5 percent), Nominal Religious (5.6 percent), Nonreligious Unaffiliated (10.9 percent), Agnostic (1.1 percent), and Atheist (1.4 percent). Agnostics and atheists normally stand to the left of the nominal religious and nonreligious unaffiliated on a range of issues. The last four groups strongly though not completely favored the Democratic Party and Obama.

Obama won the aggregate majority of religious women across many races and ethnicities (52 versus 48 percent) but lost a majority of white Evangelical and Catholic women. Knutson argues this was because many were mobilized through the candidacies of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin, both of whom hold deep religious beliefs like those women who voted for them. This was consistent with the larger U.S. population as about 80 percent of women reported that religion was an important part of their lives, approximately 10 percent higher than men. However, nonreligious women gave Obama much higher levels (70 percent) of support than white Protestant women (46 versus 53 percent).

Religious women's support of Obama varied from religion to religion. Knutson found that black Protestant (92 versus 8 percent), Jewish (92 percent), Asian

(86 versus 14 percent), and Latina Catholic (80 versus 21 percent), Latina religious across traditions (75 versus 25 percent), unmarried (62 versus 37 percent), and the aggregate of all Catholic (60 versus 40 percent) women offered Obama overwhelming support. By contrast, McCain won the vast majority of white born-again Protestant women (75 versus 25 percent) and also non-born-again white Protestant women (58 versus 40 percent), all Protestant women (53 versus 46 percent), and white Catholic women (52 versus 48 percent). Knutson argues this had more to do with Palin than McCain; whereas 58 percent of born-again women (all races and religious traditions) supported McCain in 2008, only 13 percent supported him in the Republican primary.

Though Obama won 95 percent of the black vote, Cooper and Smidt suggest that many blacks were ambivalent about Obama in the primaries against Clinton, as the Clinton name had such a strong track record in the community. Many also wondered whether Obama was really committed to the black experience given his biracial, Muslim, and secular backgrounds and because he was raised by a white woman. Some insisted that he was not really African American at all because he is not a direct descendant of slaves and because he was not raised in the black church. Obama overcame these liabilities by citing his twenty years of faithful attendance at Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright's largely African American Trinity United Church of Christ (UCC) in Chicago, his pastor's outspoken advocacy for the black community, the time Obama spent organizing black churches, and the fact that he converted to Christianity through the ministry of a black minister and church. As a civil rights lawyer, Obama made it clear that he intended to respect and embrace his black Christian experience in his campaign and presidency. His marriage to a strong black woman also helped quell rumblings in the black community.

Furthermore, Obama allowed his campaign style to reflect that of the African American Church, all of which won him followers across the nation. The fact that he was able to reach out to powerful black church leaders, make frequent allusions to Martin Luther King, Jr., and work with two black Pentecostal pastors—DuBois and Leah Daughtry—underscored his Christian credentials and commitment to the community. Finally, Obama mingled religion, race, the Social Gospel, and civil rights in a way that resonated with blacks and for these reasons and others won their vote—which amounted to 21 percent of his Election Day vote total.

Although Obama did exceptionally well among Jews and African Americans, analysts were not sure how he would do in the Latino community. Espinosa points out that McCain had a number of distinct advantages and Obama a number of distinct disadvantages. Yet, after stunning the world by beating Clinton in the primaries, Obama won Latino religious voters because he ran a faith-based centrist campaign that promoted a new kind of Democratic religious and racial-ethnic pluralism that reached out to Latinos on both sides of the religious, ideological, and political divides. He did so by appointing Latino Catholic and Evangelical advisors, promoting faith-friendly policies that Latinos overwhelmingly supported, and

crafting Catholic and Evangelical-sounding social justice and conversion narratives that blended the themes of righteousness and justice, two prominent themes in both religious communities among younger generations and racial-ethnic minorities. He also threaded the moral needle of presidential politics by supporting both abortion and traditional marriage. The strategy worked.

McCain made a number of strategic errors by deciding to play the political moderate and by not aggressively courting Latinos and Evangelicals. In the words of Dr. Shaun Casey, Obama's Evangelical outreach coordinator, McCain "threw the Bush playbook in the trash"—and with devastating results.

On Election Day 2008, Obama swept the Latino community by a margin of 67 to 31, reversing the trend of Latinos' voting Republican—from 19 percent in 1996 to 40 to 45 percent in 2004. He won 73 percent of the Catholic vote (some put the figure at 69 percent).[7] Obama helped close the God Gap among Latino Catholics by gaining a 4-percent *increase* in support over John Kerry's support. Interestingly enough, a twenty-five point gap emerged in 2008 between white and Latino Catholics (48 percent versus 73 percent). More surprising, Obama reversed Bush's victory among Latino Protestants in 2004 (57 percent versus 43 percent) by winning a majority of them in 2008 (58 percent versus 42 percent). Although some scholars argue that McCain won their vote, the LRAP national survey and other literature indicate it actually went to Obama—thus reversing the God Gap among Latino Protestants.[8]

Finally, race also proved decisive because Obama won the Asian American vote. Kim and Jeung argue that Obama did so not only because Asian Americans tend to vote Democrat but also because some considered him an "honorary Asian" because of his years spent in Hawaii and Indonesia. Asian Americans of almost all backgrounds except Vietnamese voted for him because he seemed to represent their values and model minority experience. Contrary to the popular perception that all Asians practice non-Christian religions, most Koreans and Filipinos are Christian. Obama won not only both these groups but those that practiced non-Western religions and seculars thanks to his pluralistic upbringing.

Larger Themes in 2008 and Liabilities in 2012

Barack Obama won the 2008 Election in part because he deftly harnessed the power of religion. He reached out not only to religious progressives, but also to moderates, social progressives, and even theologically conservative pro-life voters. His success was due to his ability to play both sides of American politics by supporting both abortion and traditional marriage, championing faith-based initiatives, and by crafting Catholic and Evangelical-sounding social justice and conversion narratives, which were made all the more powerful by McCain's relative silence on them.

Despite these efforts, Obama did not completely close the "God Gap" among white Evangelicals and Catholics. However, he did help close it and increase it among racial-ethnic and religious minorities. He also increased his share of the

white Evangelical vote by five percent, a statistically significant figure in an election where his victory was won across the margins and electoral spectrum. In short, race mattered because these groups made up a larger share of the electorate in 2008 than in 2004. All of this enabled him to win the Latino Catholic and Protestant votes and reverse the latter's trend in voting Republican. In many ways, Obama's victory was due as much to McCain's lack of outreach to key segments of the religious and racial-ethnic electorate as Obama's own outreach.

Claims that 2008 signaled the end of religion as a driving force in American electoral politics are simply not true, as Obama's outreach to Evangelicals and other religious groups (esp. through their racial-ethnic co-religionists) and the passage of all three state constitutional amendments to define marriage as a covenant between one man and one woman demonstrate. In short, religion mattered in 2008, but just in different ways that this time benefitted Obama and the Democratic Party, though not necessarily all of their social views.

Religion also mattered differently because of the nationally publicized influence of the Religious Left, though its influence should not be exaggerated—which in most cases is numerically small and rather modest. The Religious Left, often led by progressive Evangelicals like Jim Wallis, promoted progressive views on the environment, immigration reform, health care, and ending the war in Iraq. They provided Obama with thousands of hungry foot soldiers.

Although Obama didn't close the "God Gap" among white Protestants and Catholics, he did close and in some cases reverse it among mainline Protestants, Latino Protestants, other racial-ethnics (esp. women), and religious groups. He also increased his margin of support over Kerry's figures by 4-14 percent among white Evangelicals, Jews, African Americans, Muslims, Asian Americans, and other groups. Thus, a faltering economy, foreign policy concerns, McCain's lack-luster campaign, and Obama's strategic outreach to women and religious and racial-ethnic minorities along with closing the God Gap by attracting religious voters that tended to vote Republican in the past and especially in 2004 all helped him win the 2008 election.[9]

Whether Obama will be able to win the 2012 election by the same margins he enjoyed in 2008 is unlikely. Double-dip recession, growing unemployment, foreclosures, the rising cost of health care reform, and sharp criticisms from the hard Left and African American leaders like Professor Cornel West and BET talk show host Tavis Smiley for forgetting the poor and being "a black mascot of Wall Street oligarchs and a black puppet of corporate plutocrats,"[10] may modestly suppress Democratic turnout. This combined with criticisms by former campaign advisors like Rev. Wilfredo de Jesús[11] for not keeping his promise to pass comprehensive immigration reform in his first year in office when he controlled the House and Senate and for not supporting traditional marriage and Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) and the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), may also cost Obama small but important Latino Catholic and Evangelical defections in key

swing states like Florida, New Mexico, Colorado, and Nevada.[12] Obama's recent decisions to mandate that all Catholic institutional insurance providers must provide contraceptive coverage for all employees despite it violating their church's official teachings and recent decision to promote gay marriage and not support DADT and DOMA, has led many Republicans to argue that Obama is engaging in what amounts to a "war against religion" and traditional values. As De Jesús warned in his above-cited interview, the beautiful tapestry Obama wove together in 2008 is now in jeopardy of "coming apart at the seams."

Despite Obama's liabilities, if Mitt Romney follow's McCain's path by throwing the Bush playbook in the trash by running a largely secular campaign and not aggressively courting religious and racial-ethnic voters, then Obama may not need to win by the same margin to eke out a victory. But if the economy continues to languish, Obama missteps, and Romney surprises pundits by reaching out to religious and racial-ethnic minority voters by selecting Marco Rubio, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, Chris Christie, or some other racial-ethnic minority and/or Catholic or Evangelical to be his Vice-Presidential running mate, then he may snatch victory from the jaws of defeat—maybe.

Notes

1 Alex Spillius, "Barack Obama Targets the Religious Right," *The Telegraph*, June 11, 2008: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/2112353/Barack-Obama-targets-the-Religious-Right.html; Alex Spillius, "US Religious Right Concedes Defeat," *The Telegraph*, April 10, 2009, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/5136050/US-religious-Right-concedes-defeat.html.

2 Peter Beinart, "The End of the Culture Wars," *The Daily Beast*, January 26, 2009: http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2009/01/26/the-end-of-the-culture-wars.html?topbox=1; William Saletan, "This is the Way the Culture Wars End," *New York Times*, February 22, 2009: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/22/opinion/22saletan.html.

3 B. Deutsch, "Ampersand: The End of Racism," *Dollars & Sense: The Magazine of Economic Justice*, January/February 2009: http://dollarsandsense.org/archives/2009/0109toon.html; Courtland Milloy, "Obama's Win Wouldn't End Racism – but It Could Be the Beginning of Its End," *The Washington Post*, October 29, 2008: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/28/AR2008102803386.html.

4 Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, "Clinton and Giuliani Seen as Not Highly Religious; Romney's Religion Raises Concerns: Religion in Campaign '08," September 6, 2007, http://pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/Clinton-and-Giuliani-Seen-as-Not-Highly-Religious-Romneys-Religion-Raises-Concerns.aspx; Jon Meacham, "The End of Christian America," *Newsweek*, April 4, 2009: http://www.newsweek.com/2009/04/03/the-end-of-christian-america.html.

5 Smidt et al., *The Disappearing God Gap?* 223–224.

6 See the chapters in this book by Espinosa and Kellstedt.

7 For the 73-percent figure, see Chapter 4 and, for the 69-percent figure, see Chapter 3.

8 See Chapter 10.

9 Smidt et al., *The Disappearing God Gap*?

10 West said, "Obama [is] a black mascot of Wall Street oligarchs and… puppet of corporate plutocrats…" He explained:

> When you look at a society you look at it through the lens of the least of these, the weak and the vulnerable... I was thinking maybe he [Obama] has at least some progressive populist instincts that could become more manifest after the cautious policies of being a senator and working with [Sen. Joe] Lieberman as his mentor. But it became very clear when I looked at the neoliberal economic team. The first announcement of Summers and Geithner I went ballistic. I said, "Oh, my God, I have really been misled at a very deep level. … I have been thoroughly misled; all this populist language is just a facade. I was under the impression that...[Obama] would have voiced some concern about working people, dealing with issues of jobs and downsizing and banks, some semblance of democratic accountability for Wall Street oligarchs and corporate plutocrats who are just running amuck. I was completely wrong.

He said that when he saw Obama at the annual Urban League event, Obama laid into him stating, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, saying I'm not a progressive. Is that the best you can do? Who do you think you are?" West said, "[Obama] cussed me out [for opposing his views]." "It was so disrespectful," West said. He treated me "like a cub scout." West felt "humiliated." "Is this the kind of manipulative, Machiavellian orientation we ought to get used to?" West stated. He said Obama and the Democratic Party are "spineless" and "thoroughly complicitous with some of the worst things in the American empire." West concluded that Obama "has a certain fear of free black men" who don't toe the party line. Hedges, "The Obama Deception." For a spirited response to West's criticisms, see Melissa Harris-Perry, "Cornel West v. Barack Obama," *The Nation*, June 9, 2011: http://www.thenation.com/blog/160725/cornel-west-v-barack-obama. For views that Obama threw West under the bus, see the responses to the Harris-Perry blog.

11 Rev. Wilfredo de Jesús stated in a 2010 interview with the author:

> You can't say I will push through immigration reform in the first year in office and then make health care, gay issues, and other topics a bigger priority than millions of Latinos suffering throughout the nation. You can't say you support traditional marriage and then sign every bill possible to support in effect gay marriage. You can't contradict and double-talk. I am not a pawn. I am responsible to our people. You can't say you'll get immigration reform passed in the first year and then actually deport more Latinos than President Bush. I campaigned for Obama on a platform he promised the Latino community in good faith. What's happening now is not acceptable. That's dishonest. In all of these things, he misled the people... Latinos don't like being tricked. Our lives don't seem to mean anything to him. You threaded the moral needle in 2008, but now the tapestry you wove is coming apart at the seams.

Gastón Espinosa, Interview with Rev. Wilfredo de Jesús, Telephone, August 31, 2010.

12 On February 23, 2011, Attorney General Eric Holder released a statement in reference to two lawsuits challenging DOMA Section 3, *Pedersen v. OPM* and *Windsor v. United States*. Holder stated:

> After careful consideration, including a review of my recommendation, the President has concluded that given a number of factors, including a documented history of discrimination, classifications based on sexual orientation should be subject to a more heightened standard of scrutiny. The President has also concluded that Section 3 of DOMA, as applied to legally married same-sex couples, fails to meet that standard and is therefore unconstitutional. Given that conclusion, the President has instructed the Department not to defend the statute in such cases.

Mark Ambinder, "Obama Won't Go to Court Over Defense of Marriage Act," *National Journal*, February 23, 2011; Religious disapproval of the Obama administration's support for DADT and DOMA is reflected in Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, "Religious Groups' Official Positions on Same-Sex Marriage," July 27, 2010: http://pewforum.org/Gay-Marriage-and-Homosexuality/Religious-Groups-Official-Positions-on-Same-Sex-Marriage.aspx.

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