Labor Unions, Race and the Changing Face of the Post War Democratic Party

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Abstract

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Under the Direction of Kenneth Bickers

Over the past half century America’s two party system has undergone significant geographic, ideological and demographic shifts. The Democratic Party that once had a strong support base of working class whites and southerners, has now become a party comprised of mostly progressives and racial minorities. I expected that the decline of private sector unions over the past fifty years was contributing to a pattern of working class whites abandoning the contemporary Democratic Party. Moreover I expected the fall in labor membership numbers along with a rise in white collar unions at the expense of traditional manufacturing organizations, to affect the ability of labor leaders to politically mobilize members in the same successful manner that characterized much of the mid 20th century. In testing these expectations I gathered ANES survey data from the 1960 and 2008 election cycles and created a number of variables that would paint a picture of the electoral environment in both years. What I found was that racial polarization between the two parties had replaced the traditional class divisions that had existed for over a century. Across the country, the binding relationship that once existed between working voters and the Democratic Party had disappeared. The splintering of the working class vote has been compounded by consistently low voter turnout among poorly educated individuals relative to individuals with a college background. This paper reveals the increased political isolation of working class voters and the emergence of a highly racially polarized two party system.
**Question:** How has the decline of American labor unions influenced turnout and the racial basis of Democratic affiliation in the post war era?

**Introduction: The Factional Battles of 1968**

Throughout the past half century the Democratic Party has seen a fundamental transformation in both its geographic and demographic support bases. The gradual relinquishment of the party’s stronghold in the south along with a renewed focus on capturing emerging demographic groups, has altered both the profile of a Democratic voter as well as the candidates the party is nominating for high office. During the 1968 Democratic National Convention, a cleavage emerged between the party’s traditional working class, labor faction and the new progressive wing of the party. In a rare moment in the party’s history, the emerging factions fueled by the civil rights movement and dissenting views on the Vietnam War, confronted powerful party bosses like Mayor Richard Daley and union leaders who had held a stranglehold on the party. The chaotic and polarizing nature of the event embarrassed the party and ignited a factional battle for the ideological heart of America’s left wing. Today, evidence suggests that progressives have won this battle (Teixeira and Judis 2004: 42).

A voter coalition comprising of minority groups, young people and progressives have successfully won national elections despite seeing minimal support from white voters (39% in 2012). The once powerful and reliable Democratic base that was made up of blue-collar, ethnically diverse but racially white union members has seemingly taken a back seat to a majority coalition that has delivered consecutive presidential victories (Teixeira and Judis 2004: 27). While Democratic
leaders have been buoyed by these results, the dramatic decline in the white vote will have significant consequences. This paper explores the reason for this decline placing focus on the effects that falling union membership has had on both white general election turnout and white Democratic affiliation during these election cycles.

**Labor Unions and the Democratic Party: The New Deal Coalition**

For over a century labor unions have been extremely effective in mobilizing their members to play a significant role within the electorate. Traditionally, labor unions have been closely aligned with the Democratic Party, with labor organizations supporting a Democratic platform that protects workers rights to organize and places emphasis on a strong economic safety. During the late 1930s, unions were on the frontlines in crafting many of President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal Era policies. These policies provided long awaited social and economic safety nets for previously vulnerable workers, while also establishing a legal framework that made organizing much less difficult in highly industrialized regions of the country. The passage of National Labor Relations Act in 1935 emboldened workers by granting federal sanctions to union contracts and led to the creation of the National Labor Relations Board that enforced collective bargaining rights in the private sector (Zelizer 2004). This decade seemingly sealed the relationship between unions and their political allies within the Democratic Party. “Unions were not simply useful allies; their basic goals embodied the basic goals of the Democratic Party after FDR.” (Zelizer 2004). An era commenced in which the Democratic Party and the Labor movement became symbiotic. In exchange for rallying it’s members to show up at the polls as well as
engaging in large fundraising operations, union leaders were able to lobby left
leaning law makers to pursue a liberal policy agenda that would suit the needs of
their members (Zelizer 2004). These policies were particularly instrumental in
creating union hotbeds within urban areas of the Midwest and Northeast. While the
labor movement had carved a clear political faction within the party, union leaders
were paramount in achieving other progressive goals. Leaders like Walter Reuther
former President of the United Automobile Workers and Phillip Randolf of the AFL-
CIO were outspoken campaigners for the civil rights movement, partnering with
Martin Luther King Junior in organizing the 1963 march on Washington (AFL-CIO).
While this serves as an example of two factions within the party coming together,
conflict would soon emerge between the labor dominated wing of the party and
other progressive factions that held different political and ideological goals.

**Labor Union Voter Mobilization: The Awakening of a Political Force**

It is well documented that unions have successfully engaged in voter
mobilization efforts for decades. It was in the mid 1930s when unions began to
show their political clout by using the full force of organizations to change the
electoral landscape. This surge in political influence came on the back of a massive
movement towards organized labor in the wake of the Great Depression. Prior to the
Depression in 1930, just 10% of the non-agricultural workforce was organized
(Plotke 1996: 145). Along with little influence in the workforce labor had no
organization within the political system, as leaders were often split between the two
parties. It was reported that in the early 1930s many prominent members of AFL
leadership and rank and file members were openly Republican (Plotke 1996: 147).
With the growth of organized labor within industrial regions of the country union leaders knew that they would need consistent political representation to achieve their economic objectives in an era when the labor movement’s future remained fragile. At this stage the incentive driving union leaders into the political arena was the possibility of influencing legislation that would foster an environment where unions could survive. As David Plotke explains “The Labor movement needed a pro-union political outcome. To obtain that political outcome labor had to build a viable political force, as there was no predefined labor vote that could be signaled.” (1996: 154) Labor’s need for representation led them to contribute $750,000 to President Franklin Roosevelt’s reelection campaign in 1936. This was a significant move as it showed the union movement’s commitment to the Democratic Party in the depth of the Great of Depression when fundraising from more prominent factions within the party were difficult to come by (Plotke 1996: 156). Due to the radical elements within the union movement many party elites viewed this emerging force with suspicion. Members with labor ties were initially denied any significant role within the party and during the 1936 convention “The labor division of the party’s campaign committee was small, poorly funded and caught up in labor’s factional conflicts” (Plotke 1996: 158).

The union movement would successfully find a foothold within the party by dominating local politics in urban areas. By setting up labor led party organizing in a number of cities like Minneapolis and New York, union leaders could channel information from the party to its members and educate previously disenfranchised voting groups. This hierarchal structure also allowed members to air their grievances to union officials who would then pass the information to labor factions within the
party who had far reaching influence even at the executive level. As Plotke explains “The political power of the labor movement grew as the state expanded through the New Deal” (1996: 155). This meant that labor was able to grow with the increased role of government in the economy.

In the early stages of union involvement in the electoral arena the difficult task in mobilizing this massive voting bloc would reside in combating the collective action issues that could hamper the political influence of any interest group. It was also a difficult task to convince members who joined a union for economic reasons to become educated and participate in the political aspects of the labor movement. Herbert Asher in his book titled *American Labor Unions in the Political Arena* suggests that the solidarity developed over time amongst workers supporting each other in the fight for workplace rights was converted into political unity, held by members across the country (Asher 2001:111). A shared political identity, developed through a shared struggle helped create a faction of voters that could sway an election. In order to mobilize this large swath of voters unions developed a tradition of face to face voter contact. Asher quotes one Ohio AFL leader in saying “You don’t get participation from putting a flyer on the bulletin board. You get it from going nose to nose, toe-to toe, asking people. That’s what works” (2001:113). This kind of physical voter contact from leaders to members enabled the union movement to grow into a strong united force within American politics.
Modern Day Mobilization

While campaigns and elections have changed drastically since labor’s entrance into the political frame in the 1930s, unions still have the ability to effectively mobilize their members to turn out in big numbers on Election Day. One contemporary study notes that union members are just over twelve-percentage points more likely to vote than non-union members (Mcelwee 2015). These far reaching mobilization efforts not only target individual members but also voters who live in a community with a significant labor presence. During the 2014-midterm elections (an election cycle with incredibly low turnout) a study cited by Sean Mcelwee of the *The American Prospect* found that 39% of non-union workers turned out while 52% of union workers were present at the polls (Mcelwee 2015). According to Mcelwee labors inherent ability to turn out blue collar workers leads to a reduction in the predetermined class bias of voter turnout that exists throughout the American electorate (Mcelwee: 2015). Unions will provide resources and information that enhance the political knowledge of their members. A homogenous, educated and highly mobilized working class vote is an imporant factor in creating strong political representation for workers. In 2000 the AFL-CIO reported that they had made over 8 million phone calls and distributed roughly 14 million flyers to their members once a week from September until election day. Perhaps most importantly the AFL-CIO donated $43 million in a specific drive to increase turnout among members and their families (Freeman 2003:1). Recently, many of these mobilization efforts involve taking advantage of technology that was not previously available. Targeting voters using data driven tools has enabled unions to improve their ability to reach their members (Freeman 2003:4).
A separate 2006 study by political scientists Jonathan Nagler and Jan Leighley looked at the type of individuals that are targeted by these voter mobilization efforts. They find that “The decline in union membership since 1964 has affected the aggregate turnout of both low and middle-income individuals more than the aggregate turnout of both low and middle income of high income individual” (2006: 14). Findings such as these reinforce the notion that labor unions provide political representation to people who are among the most politically isolated members of society. The significant fall in the rate of national unionization (29% in 1964 to 13% in 2006 according to Nagler and Leighley) may have consequences regarding the participation of low-income individuals in the political process. Moreover, Nagler and Leighley explain that unions provide information to candidates of their preference on the conditions of their electorate so that campaigns can more effectively micro target voters (2006: 17). This coordination is vital as campaigns are able to craft a policy message that resonates with a particular group of voters and increase the likelihood that they will turnout.

Studies have shown that unions have also been successful in mobilizing non-members who hold pro-union sentiments (Freeman 2003: 12). This may include progressives who support a liberal agenda and live in an area of high union density. A grassroots mobilization effort would include and perhaps successfully influence these non-members to vote. Alternatively, Master and Delaney claim that turnout data measured against union concentration can paint a false picture. While this paper focuses on presidential politics, unions will spend more money and provide more resources in races that are considered to be close (Kaufman; Bennet 2011: 504). Moreover business groups like the chamber of commerce will combat these
mobilization efforts by also devoting resources to close races. This may mean that data measuring a city’s unionization level against the level of union led mobilization, may be skewed as unions are forced to spend more and increase grass roots activities in tight election contests. As will be discussed later on, the changing demography of unions, in particular the increased racial diversity may have a significant impact on the ability for that union to mobilize its members politically. As Asher explains “Mobilizing of a homogenous group of union members with similar demographics is one thing. But how do union leaders mobilize members who differ so much from one another, especially if the demographic heterogeneity is indicative to heterogeneity with regards to political attitudes, and goals” (2001: 39). This remains the primary issue that unions will have to grapple with when it comes to mobilizing in a contemporary setting.

**Private Sector Union Decline and Demographic Changes**

Over time a number of naturally occurring and policy driven factors have contributed to a sharp decline in unionization across the country. In 1947 southern Democrats feared that increasingly integrated unions would accelerate the dismantling of Jim Crow laws. What followed was the passage of the 1947 Taft Hartley Act that allowed states to pass Right to Work legislation (Zelizer 2004). This began an incrementall rise of Right To Work legislation (state law that prohibits unions from mandating compulsory employee membership) particularly in southern states. In combination with industrial relations reforms like the Landrum Griffith Act of 1957 (a law that forced unions to count non-member votes in union elections), the labor movement slowly became more legally constrained (Barbash 1958:14).
While many states particularly in the northeast and Midwest enjoyed consistently high membership rates through the 1970s, southern states, that virtually all had adopted Right To Work legislation by 1978, were able to lure industrialists away from more heavily organized states (Zelizer 2004). Economic globalization has also played a major role in the declining membership base of unions across the country. Manufacturing jobs that once were the lifeblood of the labor movement have been squeezed out of an increasingly modernized economy. The loss of these traditionally heavily unionized, blue-collar jobs at the expense of emerging high-tech service sector positions has accelerated this process.

While the rate of private sector unionization has fallen, public sector union membership has remained steady and at times grown. In 2014, 35.7% of public sector employees were members of a union while the rate of private sector membership was almost five times lower at 6.6% (Freeman 2005:15). In 1983, three in ten union members worked in manufacturing, in 2008 that number was down to one in ten (Freeman 2005: 4). This has come at the benefit of public sector organizations like police, fire and teachers unions. Demographic changes within labor unions have also fundamentally changed the way in which they operate politically. The rise of white collar unions have shifted the profile of an individual union member. An increase in high-tech jobs has largely fueled this trend where five in ten of the biggest unions are composed of “Professionals such as educators, governments or service workers” (Asher 2001:30). This has resulted in a falling number of the blue collar manufacturing members that have become such a hallmark of the labor movement throughout the 20th century. These white collar workers are generally well paid, better educated and less loyal to their union,
compared to their industrial counterparts (Asher 2001:33). They also have increasingly become dominated by women. In 1998, women represented 44% of all unionized workers. Of that 44% over three quarters worked in white collar industries (Asher 2001: 30). Women are set to become the majority of unionized workers by 2020 (Freeman 2005:7).

The other notable trend in the changing dynamics of labor unions is the increase in racial diversity amongst members. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 1952 white American’s made up close to 90% of union membership. In 2015, African American’s are now more likely to be in a union than whites (Bureau of Labor Statistics: Union Members Summary). Hispanics have also become a rapidly growing demographic group within the union movement, especially within the last two decades. Asher expects the number of minorities in unions to grow claiming “Current earnings data indicates, everything else being equal, that minorities may have a lot to gain financially by being unionized” (Asher 200: 36). The broader question relating to all these demographic changes remains what the impact will be on how unions operate politically? The intuitive answer is that if a base of an organization changes so drastically there will most likely be a shift in the values held by that organization. Having diamed this, labor has been bound by the principles of class consciousness and worker unity throughout its entire existence, perhaps these values will transcend demographic changes.

**Changing Party Dynamics**

In 1996 historian Robert Radosh predicted that “Public employee unions and the liberal Hollywood elite will likely be the main backers of the Democratic Party-
and it will be these elements that any would be candidate will have to turn to” (Dark 2001:13). Although Radosh has left out the key faction of minority voters, his assessment of the contemporary Democratic constituent base appears fairly accurate. In combination with overall falling private sector union membership and demographic changes, the base of the Democratic Party has fundamentally changed since FDR’s New Deal Coalition. This process began in the years following the tumultuous 1968 convention when conflict emerged between the anti war progressive wing of the party and pro labor factions. In 1972 AFL-CIO President George Meaney, refused to endorse Democratic nominee George McGovern because of his stance on the Vietnam War (Asher 2001:12). In 1976 unions were not satisfied with the nomination of southerner Jimmy Carter. His presidency angered labor further when in the late 1970s, he backed unpopular austerity measures in the height of a recession. Carter also refused to sign legislation that would have protected workers who organized boycotts and strikes (Zelizer 2004). These events seem to support a narrative that along with declining raw union membership, an enthusiasm gap between labor and the Democratic Party may have been progressing for a number of years.

This pattern of separation between labor and the Democratic party was only exacerbated by the politics of both Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, who were able to focus on issues that appealed to disaffected white, working class voters. In 1972 Nixon campaigned against “Acid, amnesty and abortion.” During his California gubernatorial run in 1966 Reagan spoke about the “Filthy speech movement,” a direct rebuttal to the “Free speech movement” that had spread across college campuses and into the Democratic Party in the 60s and 70s” (Teixeira and Judis
This rhetoric helped unite traditional blue-collar, (often Catholic) voters against their traditional party of choice. According to Teixeira and Judis Republicans “Exploited the generation gap between parents and children but also the gap the blue-collar and middle class taxpayers who funded universities and the long-haired upper middle class students who attended them”(2004:16). Reagan followed up his socially conservative rhetoric during his 1980 presidential campaign with concrete policy proposals that included a constitutional amendment to ban abortion. He also moved to protect prayer in schools in an effort to paint Democrats as being out of touch with America’s traditional Christian values (Judis and Teixeira:28). In keeping with the Republican’s outreach to middle America, Reagan campaigned as an ardent supporter of second amendment rights with the GOP’s 1980 party platform stating that the 1968 Gun Control Act “Did not significantly impact on crime but served rather to restrain the law-abiding citizen in his legitimate use of firearms (1980 GOP Platform).

This stance complimented Reagan’s position on crime and in particular his tough anti drug rhetoric, allowing Republicans to paint Jimmy Carter as someone weak on crime and not supportive of law enforcement. This message seemed to resonate with blue collar voters who still viewed the Democratic Party as a facilitator of the perceived chaos and lawlessness that characterized much of the 1960s and 70s. Moreover, Reagan’s strong anti communist rhetoric was successful in appealing to working class Democrats who felt alienated by their party’s support for peaceful co-existence with the Soviet Union (Tiexieira; Judis 2004:121). This strategy successfully drove a wedge between the progressive factions who were aided by the counter culture movement and the more traditional labor wing of the party who
believed in a strong foreign policy. This wedge was aided by the persistence of the Iranian Hostage Crisis and the inability of the Carter administration to effectively resolve it. More importantly Democrats were once again perceived as being weak domestically and feckless abroad, standing in stark contrast to Reagan’s Republican Party that ran a campaign based on strong American leadership.

After the Reagan era labor leaders became more disillusioned with Democrats when centrist Bill Clinton became the new face of the party. What followed was further market deregulation, welfare reform and most notably NAFTA (Zelizer 2004). While unions still overwhelmingly support Democratic candidates, their political and legislative clout has been reduced and their once inseparable bond with the party has been greatly severed. According findings in Asher’s book, between 1964 and 1996 union member’s feelings towards the Democratic Party and the union movement itself had fallen 14 percentage points, a far greater decline than member’s feelings on big business and the Republican Party (2001:43). This may indicate that union rank and file members may feel disconnected from a party that used to represent their values. It also shows a degree of dissatisfaction with labor leadership amongst members, possibly due to the continual support that union leaders gave to the Democratic Party. Although union leaders still very much favored Democrats, their base may have been moving away from the traditional partisan line followed by labor since the 1930s.

Richard Freeman from the Bureau of Economic Research provides a different hypothesis. He claims that Democrats have taken union support for granted and therefore place little emphasis on engaging in political fights over labor driven
political goals (Freeman 2005: 38). This was a key product of the Clinton administration when Democrats failed to get striker replacement laws and halt the implementation of NAFTA (Zelizer 2004). This phenomenon illustrates a different cause of the discontent, yet the negative member sentiment towards the Democratic Party remains the result. The legislative clout that labor once held has clearly diminished. Because of this, unions have recently focused more heavily on local campaigns where funds and mobilization efforts can have a more direct influence on policy shaping at a state level (Freeman 2005:28). Having said this, unions still direct the vast majority of their mobilization efforts as well as their donations towards the Democratic Party. As Asher explains “Unions gave almost all their contribution-about 95% in the 1990s- to the Democratic Party. They also increased the amount of donations compared to previous decades” (2001:12). This reinforces the suggestion that union leadership (those directing fundraising activities), may have a more positive view of the Democratic Party than their membership. If this were the case Democrat’s would still have the organizational tools of labor at their disposal but it is be possible that the floor of grass roots support could fall out from under them.

**Unions Politics and Race**

While unions will maintain that their organizations were a centerpiece of the civil rights movement, racial issues have played a role in splintering the political unity that once existed within heavily unionized regions of the country. This was particularly telling during the late 1960s and 70s in the Midwest and Northeast when racial divisions became highlighted within party politics. The emergence of race as a
key election issue was effective in changing the political landscape of working class cities and towns that were once Democratic strongholds. Many blue-collar whites that (with the assistance of union mobilization efforts) had traditionally based their support for Democrats around economic issues, were now factoring in the turbulent events of the civil rights movement into their political decision making (Teixeir and Judis 2004:22). For example in 1960, blue-collar Macomb County in northern Detroit (where racial tensions had been growing with the emergence of African American migration from the south) voted 63% for John F Kennedy. In 1968 Richard Nixon received 30% of the vote and segregationist George Wallace received a hefty 14%. By 1980 the political landscape of this predominately white county had completely transformed, when they voted 52% for Reagan. Four years later Reagan received 66% of Macomb county votes (Teixeira and Judis 2004:22).

A similar phenomenon took place in the working class white county of Lorain in Cleveland Ohio. (Teixeira and Judis 2004:26) According to Democratic pollster Stanley Greenberg voters in places like Macomb carried deep racial resentment. He made the claim that this resentment “Shapes their attitudes toward government, particularly spending and taxation and the linkage between them, there was a widespread sentiment that the Democratic Party supported giveaway programs aimed specifically at minorities.” (Teixeira and Judis 2004:24) This argument claims that racial tensions were at the heart of much of the transition that took place within party politics during this era.
**The Rise of Racial Politics**

Many scholars have argued that during the post war era there has been a movement away from political parties being divided on class and a movement towards party divisions based on racial polarization. The Democratic Party which had traditionally won elections on the backs of large coalitions of working, white voters have seen this base demographic slowly dwindle in the post industrial world. Writing in the 1980s Robert Huckfeldt addresses an argument that claims that the shrinking working class has changed the issue priorities of voters and therefore changed the electoral dynamics. “Quality of life issues have replaced quantity of life issues. Concerns over minimum wage increase, workplace safety, social security and unemployment compensation have frequently given way to a number of non-material issue concerns: energy, the environment, prolife versus prochoice and so on” (Huckfeldt 1989:4). This thesis can be anecdotally observed as it is evident that we have seen a rise of social and other non-material issues within the political discourse that have helped shape the structure of political parties in the post war era. Instead of focusing at great lengths on issues like the rights of workers to organize, the Democratic Party has broadened its appeal, focusing heavily on environmental issues, female reproductive rights and other issues that progressives hold dear. However Huckfeldt pushes back on this argument as the lone determinant of the decline of class in American politics. He views demographic changes in certain geographical areas as a key factor in creating tensions in places where the working class had been traditionally racially (not ethnically) homogenous (1989:4).
In the 1940s and 50s, African Americans migrated in large numbers from the south, in the hope to find factory jobs in cities across the north. “During this period organized labor often played a critical role in introducing blacks to the Democratic Party” (Huckfeldt 1989:6). In the early days of the New Deal Coalition both electorally and legislatively, the Democratic Party did little to appeal to blacks (Hadley and Ladd 1978:34). President Roosevelt and his party were still tightly bound to southern Democrat’s who vehemently opposed civil rights (Huckfeldt 1989:7). It would be through northern labor unions that African Americans would become recognized as a critical faction within the party. As Huckfeldt explains, “Thus they adopted the political preference and supported the political organizations that coincided with their status as members of the urban working class” (1989:5).

Critically, shrewd Democratic leaders like Lyndon B. Johnson saw immense opportunity in a potential swath of new voters. Because of this the party establishment began to become more sympathetic to the civil rights cause and other issues close to the heart of black voters in a hope to bring in an emmerging demographic (Huckfeldt 1989:6).

The same could not be said about many white blue-collar, northern voters who objected to changes in the workplace and within their political party. As Huckfeldt notes, “Their place within organized labor and the Democratic Party was never fully secure. They were frequently resented by whites who viewed them with suspicion and treated them with hostility” (1989:6). This argument seems to suggest that the party leadership was willing to change its views on race but traditional union influenced supporters were not. The tension that took place in northern cities across the country became the catalyst for race riots and racial hostilities that would
become a common feature of the 1960s (Abu Lughod 2007:12). Evidence of the effects of these racial divisions can be seen above, by the decay of white Democratic voters in working class counties like Macomb, Michigan and Lorain Ohio. These trends appear to characterize a modern party system less divided by class and more heavily divided by race.

**Hypothesis and Experimental Design**

In considering the literature above I will attempt to test the relative effectiveness of labor unions in the political arena. To achieve this I will gather data from both the 1960 and 2008 election cycles in order to draw similarities and contrasts between labor’s impacts within the electorate. More importantly this study aims to see the effects that the decline in union membership has had on different aspects of the electoral process. In particular I wanted to test labor’s influence in mobilizing voters to see if its relative decline has had any impact on turnout particularly amongst white voters. Moreover, testing labor’s influence within the Democratic Party will reveal much about how unions fit into the shifting dynamics of modern day party politics.

From much of the research above it appears that unions have historically succeeded in creating electoral unity amongst members, by bringing in workers from different backgrounds who share relatively homogenous views. Different demographic groups in different regional areas who otherwise would not be voting in unison, are brought together through organization and top down mobilization. I want to test if this bind still exists within an electorate with a lower density of union workers. In particular I want to see if union decline is affecting the departure of
white voters from the Democratic Party. This crucial demographic of working class white voters is redefining party politics and shifting the platform of appeal within both parties. Looking into the voting patterns of union members will enable future research to track where many of these voters will end up if the current trend of union decline persists.

In order to see variation within the data, I decided to focus on two election cycles with similar characteristics. The election years of 1960 and 2008 share a number of similarities. Both were won by Democratic candidates who were able to generate large turnout in relation to previous general elections cycles. Both candidates also did not receive the benefits of incumbency because the presidency was an open seat. Moreover in both contests a Republican President was presiding over an economy in recession, effectively emboldening the campaigns of the two Democratic candidates (John F. Kennedy and Barack Obama). Measuring the contrasts in terms of union influence on these cycles will illustrate the impact of declining union membership within the electorate.

My hypothesis therefore is that as union membership declines, the level of white democratic turnout as well as the overall level of white Democratic affiliation will fall. This paper will measure turnout as the percentage of eligible voters who returned a ballot in some capacity (including mail in and absentee ballots). I will measure the level of Democratic affiliation by placing those surveyed who consider themselves to be strong, weak or as independent leaning Democratic into one category. Further coding details are available below. In defining union members I will include survey respondents who answered, “Yes” to the question of “If they or
anyone else in their family belonged to a labor union?” Evidence shows that families with ties to the labor movement are likely to hold many of the same political values and follow the voting patterns of actual union members.

In justifying the turnout aspect of my hypothesis I looked to include the research mentioned above regarding how unions have been able to mobilize their members and others in the community. The loss of a strong union presence in a community would result in a loss of the type of grass roots voter outreach efforts that have characterized the electoral activity of labor for so long. Moreover as membership declines people who once based their partisanship on their ties to their union will be less inclined to vote Democratic when that tie is broken. In other words non-union white voters will be far less likely to be Democratic than their union counterparts.

In gathering data for this paper I found that it was most effective to access individual level results through the survey data provided by the American National Election Studies data center. This site has given researchers data on pre and post-election surveys since 1948. I used the time series page for both the 1960 and 2008 elections. The format of the surveys allows me to create two separate data sets within STATA software and observe both sets by contrasting the results from a number of different variables within each election cycle. Besides questions on contextually relevant issues, most of the questions remained the same in both cycles. A large number of survey questions also enables me to gather data for other variables and test them against both my turnout and part affiliation variables. In
doing this I was able to create an education variable that would assist in showing
the role that class played in both election cycles.

Both the 1960 and 2008 surveys ask respondents if anyone in their family is a
member of a union. I therefore decided to use this to determine the level of
unionization. Another question asks, “Which party you most closely identify with?”
This question gives respondents the opportunity to give the party they affiliate most
closely with or respond accordingly if they are pure independents. I therefore
categorized all those who considered themselves to be strong Democrats, weak
Democrats and independent leaning Democrat into one category and all other
respondents into the other. A further question asks respondents to name their race.
In the 1960 questionnaire the only options are, “White or Negro” whereas in the
2008 questionnaire respondents are given a range of different racial identity options.
The result of this discrepancy is that many Hispanics and Asian Americans would
have been considered white in the 1960 survey. This is an issue that is difficult to
combat, considering this question is the only way of quantifying the race of the
respondent within the survey data. In order to create a dichotomous variable to
focus on the patterns of white voters I decided to simply categorize respondents as
white or non-white for the benefit of the two data sets. For the race aspect of this
paper I hypothesize that party affiliation will become far more racially homogenous
in 2008 than it was in 1960. In other words, white voters who were affiliated with
the Democratic Party on a class basis in 1960, will be more inclined to vote along
racial lines in 2008. This process that Huckfeldt writes about, may be the first sign of
race replacing class as the main determinant for party affiliation in American politics.
When looking at many of these variables it is impossible not to acknowledge the potential regional variations that could be taking shape across the country. This is especially true with race, where the political impacts of racial politics have often differed regionally. For example, black turnout was largely suppressed during the Jim Crow era in the south. I want to see if the data is showing race driven turnout variation purely in the south or instead across the country. To illustrate this I created two region variables, one comprising of southern states and one comprising of Midwestern (or in the case of the 2008 survey these states were called “North Central states) states. I gathered state codes from both surveys and created separate dichotomous south and Midwest variables, where respondents were either categorized as residing in the south or elsewhere or in the Midwest or elsewhere. These two dichotomous variables will capture differences in regional effects for the south and Midwest relative to the rest of the country. Having access to this regional data will allow readers to gain a broader understanding of the geographic patterns related to these trends.

Finally the question of turnout is something often scrutinized within survey related data. In both of these post-election surveys the question lists a number of different reasons why people have chosen not to vote in the past. They then give respondents a range of different options with only one indicating that the respondent voted. By offering respondents options like “I thought about voting but didn’t,” surveyors are able to reduce the number of people who claim to have voted but did not. Once again I created a dichotomous variable by categorizing those who voted and those who did not into two categories. By recording each variable code and downloading the data into the Stata program, I was able to begin to process
and further analyze my results. A detailed summary of the raw ANES survey questions as well as my processed dichotomous variables created through Stata available in the Appendix.

**Formal Hypotheses**

H1: As union membership declines, the level of whites that affiliate with the Democratic Party will decline.

H2: As union membership declines and the union base changes, the ability of labor to effectively politically mobilize will deteriorate leading to a fall in union turnout.

H3: As race becomes a larger factor in partisan affiliation, the impact of class and party affiliation will decline.

**Descriptive Results**

Prior to delving into analysis of the relationships within the data it is important to understand the basic features of the political landscape in 1960 and nearby half a century later in 2008. In doing, this I ran a number of basic cross table descriptions on STATA to give readers perspective on my findings and also to illustrate contrast between my 1960 and 2008 data sets. Moreover it is important to compare the survey data for each of my variables to other sources like the census bureau in order to test the raw validity of the numbers. A description of this data gives readers a chance to understand the world in which my study is operating within.
I found that in 1960 the percentage of households with a union member was 25.4%. While there is limited data on union households, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics the unionization rate at that time was a little over 26% (Bureau of Labor Statistics: Union Membership). In 2008 the ANES data showed that 11.5% of households contained a union member. The BLS reported in 2013 that 11.3% of American workers belonged to a union (Bureau of Labor Statistics: Union Membership). While not identical, my data seems to match the numbers of other sources by illustrating a sharp decline in union membership. The survey data presented on race would prove slightly more complicated due to the structure of the ANES survey. In 1960 respondents were categorized as either “White” or “Negro” whereas in 2008, various other options for racial identity were included in the survey. Most notably in 1960 Hispanic and Asian Americans were categorized as white. However in 2008 the respondents were given the option of “non-hispanic white,” effectively narrowing the definition of a white respondent. In 1960 my results found that 91% of the population was white (as defined by the question) with 8.8% described as black. According to census data the African American population in 1960 stood at 10.5%, just above the number provided in the ANES data (US Census Bureau: Population Estimates). In 2008, after creating a dichotomous variable between white and other, the survey data showed that 51% of respondents identified as white while 49% identified as another race. According to 2010 census data this figure is considered high, with their numbers indicating that 36.2% of the population is nonwhite and 63.7% white (US Census Bureau: Population Estimates). For my party affiliation variable, the ANES data indicates that in 1960 52% of respondents identified as Democrats or independents
that leaned Democratic and 48% of respondents made up the rest of the electorate. According to Pew Research figures from the same year, 46% of people identified as Democrats (or Democratic leaners) and 52% of people were either independents or Republicans (Pew Research: Party Affiliation). This disparity may be due to the fact that in the Pew data, 2% of people identified with other, meaning a third party. I grouped all other party’s within the survey into the “not Democratic” category. Moreover the ANES data was a part of an election survey during a cycle where the Democratic candidate was favored. Depending on when the Pew survey was conducted the influence of an election may have boosted the number of Democrats and independents leaning Democratic within the ANES data. My 2008 data set shows that 42% of respondents identified as Democrat’s and Democratic leaning independents. 58% of respondents identified as Republicans or pure independents. This data resembles the same Pew survey fairly closely that found 57% of voters identified as Republicans or pure independents and 36% of voters with Democratic preferences (Pew Research: Party Affiliation).

Creating a turnout variable from survey data has been a consistently difficult practice for political scientists for a number of years. Researchers encounter the issue of respondents saying they voted when in reality they failed to cast a ballot. Moreover ANES estimates that the average time of the survey was around an hour, meaning that those who stay for the entirety of the survey are often people engaged or interested with the political process. Studies have shown that these people are more likely to vote, therefore exaggerating the actual turnout figure within the survey. It is also important to note that because this survey data operates at an individual level, the figures represent the probability of any voter voting on an
aggregate level. This means that any increase in turnout within a certain group, is a reflection of an increased probability that individual’s within that group voted. By creating a dichotomous variable I categorized those who voted (as 1) and those who did not (as 0), accordingly. The survey data shows that in 1960 77% of respondents said that they voted in some capacity (including absentee and mail in ballots) as opposed to 23% that said they did not vote at all. Census bureau data finds that turnout during this cycle was 62.8% (US Census Bureau: Voting and registration). In 2008 the ANES data shows turnout sitting at 76% with the census bureau figures showing turnout at 57% (US Census Bureau: Voting and registration). Both cycles show a typical inflation of turnout numbers expected from survey data.

In keeping with the analysis on the prevailing trend of more white collar union members, I created an education variable that could both measure the shifts in the education level of union members and look more broadly at the impact of class on voter turnout and party affiliation. In doing this I categorized individual’s within the survey who had at least some college education or greater as 1 and individual’s with a high school diploma or less as 0. The survey data indicates that in 1960 20.75% of those surveyed had received some form of a college education (even if they did not earn a degree). No outside sources had statistics that matched my defined variable but according to the Statista data base, roughly 16% of the population had a college degree (Statista: Education Stats). Because my variable includes individuals’ who attended college but may not have attained a degree, I would expect this figure to be larger than the survey data. In the 2008 cycle the number of college educated individual’s jumps to 56.2% (Statista: Education Stats).
Statista reports that in 2008 59% of American’s had a college degree. This reflects some disparity between the survey data and this outside source.

### Unions and Party Affiliation 1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Identification</th>
<th>Union</th>
<th>Non Union</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong Democrat</td>
<td>93 (35%)</td>
<td>175 (65%)</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Democrat</td>
<td>77 (27%)</td>
<td>205 (73%)</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Leaning Dem</td>
<td>19 (29%)</td>
<td>47 (71%)</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True Independent</td>
<td>33 (31%)</td>
<td>73 (69%)</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Leans Republican</td>
<td>20 (27%)</td>
<td>54 (73%)</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Republican</td>
<td>30 (19%)</td>
<td>132 (81%)</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Republican</td>
<td>20 (11%)</td>
<td>154 (89%)</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apolitical</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>300 (25%)</td>
<td>881 (75%)</td>
<td>1,181 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Unions and Party Affiliation 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Identification</th>
<th>Union</th>
<th>Non Union</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong Democrat</td>
<td>90 (16%)</td>
<td>485 (84%)</td>
<td>575 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Democrat</td>
<td>54 (14%)</td>
<td>336 (86%)</td>
<td>390 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Leaning Democrat</td>
<td>42 (11%)</td>
<td>349 (89%)</td>
<td>391 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True Independent</td>
<td>23 (9%)</td>
<td>239 (91%)</td>
<td>262 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Lean Republican</td>
<td>24 (11%)</td>
<td>199 (89%)</td>
<td>223 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Republican</td>
<td>18 (9%)</td>
<td>181 (95%)</td>
<td>199 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Republican</td>
<td>22 (10%)</td>
<td>207 (90%)</td>
<td>229 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaffiliated</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>37 (95%)</td>
<td>39 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>275 (12%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,033 (88%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,308 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although I use a dichotomous variable when conducting multiple regression tests, I decided that expanding the variable would assist in detailing the concentration of union members across the political spectrum. As expected we see the highest proportion of union members in the “Strong Democrat” category in both election cycles. However the concentration is much more spread out within the 2008 data indicating that political affiliation amongst union members may have become more diverse in 2008. In 1960, 65% of individuals’ considered strong Democrats were not in a union. By 2008 that number rises 19 points to 84%. This shows that the most partisan Democratic category contains less union influence in 2008. Meanwhile the opposite category of strong Republicans has seen just a 1% shift in the concentration of union members between 1960 and 2008.

Union Demographics 1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Union Member</th>
<th>Non-Union Member</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>274 (91%)</td>
<td>802 (91%)</td>
<td>1,076 (91%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>26 (9%)</td>
<td>79 (9%)</td>
<td>105 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300 (25%)</td>
<td>881 (75%)</td>
<td>1,181 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Union Demographics 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Union Member</th>
<th>Non-Union Member</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>137 (50%)</td>
<td>1,042 (51%)</td>
<td>1,179 (51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>138 (50%)</td>
<td>991 (49%)</td>
<td>1,129 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>275 (12%)</td>
<td>2,033 (88%)</td>
<td>2,308 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These numbers show the changing demographics within the labor movement that broadly reflect the demographic changes nationwide. According to the ANES data non-white union members now make up the majority (by a slim margin) of unionized workers. This seems to reinforce the BLS study cited above, that claims that in 2015, African American’s were more likely to be in a union than whites (Bureau of Labor Statistics: Labor Union Members). While these numbers could be inflated by Hispanic American’s lack of racial identity options in the 1960 survey, these results say a lot about the changing profile of organized labor. Once mostly white, organizations now mirror the growing diversity across American society that has had such a profound impact on party dynamics. This process may be a contributing factor to a phenomenon explored in detail by Huckfeldt. For decades political parties have generally reflected societies class divisions. In recent years the division between parties is becoming overwhelmingly race based (Huckfeldt 1989:13). The disintegration of unions as organizations that kept their members politically and ideologically united may be having an effect on the binding nature of class in the electoral arena.
Unions and Turnout 1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voter Status</th>
<th>Union</th>
<th>Non-Union</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>234 (78%)</td>
<td>678 (77%)</td>
<td>912 (77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Vote</td>
<td>66 (22%)</td>
<td>203 (23%)</td>
<td>269 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300 (25%)</td>
<td>881 (75%)</td>
<td>1,181 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unions and Turnout 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voter Status</th>
<th>Union</th>
<th>Non-Union</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>202 (82%)</td>
<td>1,390 (75%)</td>
<td>1,592 (76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Vote</td>
<td>44 (18%)</td>
<td>455 (25%)</td>
<td>269 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>246 (12%)</td>
<td>1,845 (88%)</td>
<td>2,091 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When looking at the descriptive statistics of union membership and voter turnout we see very little variation in an individual’s union status impacting the probability of them voting. In 1960 union members are slightly more likely to vote
(by about 1 percentage point) than non-union members. In 2008 the gap in the likelihood of turnout grew to indicate that union members were 7% points more likely to vote than non-union members. Multiple regressions tests will conclude if this gap is statistically significant or simply due to error variance.

### Education Level of Union Members 1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Union</th>
<th>Non-Union</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College Educated</td>
<td>31 (10%)</td>
<td>214 (25%)</td>
<td>245 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No College</td>
<td>269 (90%)</td>
<td>667 (75%)</td>
<td>936 (79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300 (25%)</td>
<td>881 (75%)</td>
<td>1,181 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Education Level of Union Members 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Union</th>
<th>Non-Union</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College Educated</td>
<td>176 (64%)</td>
<td>1,125 (55%)</td>
<td>1,301 (56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No College</td>
<td>99 (36%)</td>
<td>908 (45%)</td>
<td>1,017 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>275 (12%)</td>
<td>2,033 (88%)</td>
<td>2,308 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Before analyzing this data it is important to reinforce that individuals categorized as “College Educated” responded by claiming that they had been college educated in some way even if they did not complete a college degree. Those categorized as “No College” represent respondents with a high school diploma or less. When looking at the education level of union members an interesting pattern emerges. In 1960 union members were much less likely to have received any college education than those who were not in a labor union. This perhaps indicates the prevalence of blue collar manufacturing jobs in 1960 when union members were rarely college educated. In 2008 however, the union members surveyed were more likely to have gone through some form of college education than non-union members. This seems to support the narrative painted by Asher, who when writing in 1999 recognized the trend of emerging white collar union members (Asher 2001:30). The new face of labor may be reflecting the increased ratio of public sector workers who stand in contrast to the traditional manufacturing membership base. The effects of this change will be telling if it is impacting voter mobilization as well as labor’s political outreach overall. In accordance with the changing demographic profiles of union members, the movement towards more white collar union jobs is illustrated through the massive increase in college educated union members appearing within the data. Moreover it will be interesting to observe the relationship that class (reflected by education level) has with both the 1960 and 2008 elections. The overwhelming increase in individuals who attended college in all groups may influence the pattern of class voting.
**Multiple Regression Analysis**

Table 1. Determinants of Party Affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Affiliation</th>
<th>1960 B(se)</th>
<th>2008 B(se)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DV: 1= Dem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0= All other respondents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>.128 (.033)***</td>
<td>.113 (.030)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Union=1 No Union=0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>-.012 (.051)</td>
<td>-.317 (.019)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(White=1 Non-White=0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.122 (.036)***</td>
<td>.005 (.020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College=1 No College=0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.525 (.049)***</td>
<td>.565 (.017)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1181</td>
<td>2,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.1088</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P<.05** P<.01***
Table 2. Determinants of Turnout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turnout DV: 1= Voted 0= Did not Vote</th>
<th>1960 B(se)</th>
<th>2008 B(se)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Union (Union=1 No Union=0)</td>
<td>.028(.027)</td>
<td>.054(.028)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (White=1 Non-White=0)</td>
<td>.342(.041)***</td>
<td>.029(.114)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (College=1 No College=0)</td>
<td>.130(.021)***</td>
<td>.166(.019)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.423(.029)***</td>
<td>.645(.017)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>1181</th>
<th>2,308</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P<.05** P<.01***
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Affiliation</th>
<th>1960 B(se)</th>
<th>2008 B(se)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DV: 1 = Dem</td>
<td>0 = All other respondents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union (Rest of Country)</td>
<td>.147(.033)**</td>
<td>.098(.030) **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (White Rest of Country)</td>
<td>-.160(.086)</td>
<td>-.265(.033)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region South (Non-White South)</td>
<td>-.167(.106)</td>
<td>.027(.031)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region Midwest (Non White Midwest)</td>
<td>-.061(.147)</td>
<td>.152(.046)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RaceXRegion South (White South)</td>
<td>.389(.111)**</td>
<td>-.089(.432)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RaceXRegion Midwest (White Midwest)</td>
<td>.019(.151)</td>
<td>-.120(.059)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (Rest of Country)</td>
<td>-.123(.035)**</td>
<td>.011(.012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.618(.038)**</td>
<td>.523(.027)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1181</td>
<td>2091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-Squared</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P<.05** P<.01***
Table 4. Voter Turnout with Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voter Turnout</th>
<th>1960 B(se)</th>
<th>2008 B(se)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DV: 1=Voted</td>
<td>0= Did not vote</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union (Rest of Country)</td>
<td>-.003(.027)</td>
<td>.044(.029)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (White Rest of Country)</td>
<td>.293(.071)***</td>
<td>.039(.031)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region South (Non-White South)</td>
<td>-.260(.087)***</td>
<td>.007(.029)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region Midwest (Non White Midwest)</td>
<td>.187(.121)</td>
<td>.134(.043)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RaceXRegion South (White South)</td>
<td>.121(.092)</td>
<td>-.001(.041)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RaceXRegion Midwest (White Midwest)</td>
<td>-238(.125)***</td>
<td>-.087(.055)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (Rest of Country)</td>
<td>.122(.029)***</td>
<td>.171(.019)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.542(.067)***</td>
<td>.623(.026)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1181</td>
<td>2091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-Squared</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P<.05** P<.01***

Discussion

I first ran a test that measured the determinants of party affiliation against a number of different variables for both election cycles. In 1960 I found a statistically significant relationship between union membership and party affiliation. This means
that union members are more likely to be Democrats at a statistically significant level. This result was not surprising, as I had an expectation based on the literature that there would be a strong relationship during a period when union membership was high and there had been clear political unity between the labor movement and the Democratic Party. During the 1960 cycle union members were almost 13% more likely to be Democrat’s than non-union members. In 2008 we see that the relationship between union membership and Democratic affiliation is still statistically significant. In this case union members are roughly 11% more likely to be Democrat’s. The fact that this relationship still exists seems to promote the narrative that union leaders and in particular their members still overwhelmingly support Democrat’s. This does not necessarily mean that they are still a dominant force within party politics as we know that the raw membership numbers have declined from 25% in 1960 to 12% in 2008 (according to the ANES survey data). Having said this, evidence suggests that while unions are shrinking in size they are still a loyal and therefore still important part of the Democratic base.

In this same test I measured how race is interacting with individual’s party affiliation. In 1960 I observed no statistical significance between race and Democratic affiliation. White American’s were not voting for Democrats at a statistically significant level. In 2008 however I observed race become statistically significant at a negative level. Astoundingly, whites were 31% less likely to affiliate with Democrats than non-whites. This jump in the relationship between race and party affiliation seems to show a trend of racial divisions amongst political parties. In contrast to this, we can observe that education and party affiliation are negatively correlated within the 1960 set. This means that college educated voters were around
12% less likely to vote Democratic than voters who received no college education. This relationship seems to reinforce the notion that the Democrats used to be the party of blue collar workers who were less likely to be college educated. In 2008, the negative relationship between education level and being affiliated with the Democratic Party becomes statistically insignificant. These tests show that party divisions that used to be based on class are now based on race. White’s used to be no less likely to be affiliated with Democrat’s than non-whites. Instead, an individual’s education (or by extension their class status) level was a major determinant of party affiliation. This phenomenon appears to have switched during the 2008 cycle. Whites are now significantly less likely to vote Democratic and an individual’s education status does not appear to be impacting their pattern of party affiliation at any significant level. What my data shows is that the white working class base that for so long characterized the Democratic Party appears to be disappearing. What this will mean for the values the party stands for and the candidates that it puts forward remains uncertain.

I then wanted to test the effects that region had on party affiliation and racial voting patterns in both cycles. The addition of the two region variables indicates that union members from outside the south and Midwest are more likely to be Democratic at a statistically significant level. In 2008 that relationship still exists but with a lower coefficient, perhaps showing that unions are becoming less concentrated with members who affiliate with Democrats. Moreover we see non-whites in both the Midwest and the south in a statistically insignificant relationship with Democratic affiliation in 1960. This seems to indicate that African American voters in particular have yet to fully align with the Democratic Party. By 2008 non-
white voters in the Midwest are almost 15% more likely to be Democrats, a figure that is significant. The same is not true in the south where non-whites are not more likely to be Democrats at any significant rate. This surprising finding may be a product of my dichotomous race variable, where non-black voters are included in the category of non-white. Hispanics and Asian American’s in the south may be voting less Democratic than traditional African American voters in the south. What is evident is the massive shift in white Democratic affiliates in the south. In 1960 white southerners were 38% more likely to align with the Democrats (a statistically significant figure). By 2008 they were 8% less likely to be Democrats, showing negative statistical significance. In the Midwest white voters were no more likely to affiliate with the Democratic Party then with any other political party in 1960. This indicates the competitive nature of presidential races in Midwestern states at that time. By 2008 a negative relationship between white Midwesterners and the Democratic Party took hold. This demographic is now 12% less likely to be Democratic. These results seem to show the racial transformation that has taken place within American politics. All over the country white voters have left the Democratic Party and increasingly non-white voters have replaced them. The party no longer seems to be a home for working class voters and if this trend continues we could see an even more pronounced racial division within party politics.

The next test I conducted measured the effects that certain variables, in particular union membership has on the likelihood of individual’s voting. I was very surprised to see that union membership did not influence the likelihood of voting at a statistically significant level during either cycle. Perhaps the inflated level of turnout within the survey data may lower the variation in voting between union
members and non-union members. In 1960, race and turnout are statistically significant, showing that white voters are 34% more likely to vote. In 2008 there is no statistical significance between being white and turning out. Education level appears to be a major determinant of the likelihood of voting. In both 1960 and 2008 someone who is college educated is more likely to vote (13% more likely in 1960 and close to 17% in 2008). This represents a phenomenon discussed by Nagler and Leiley, that poorer American’s are less likely to turnout and therefore more isolated and underrepresented by the political system (Nagler:Leighley 2008:4). They hypothesized that unions would help to organize these isolated voters and turn them into a formidable part of the electorate. The survey data however does not seem to support this claim for either cycle.

In order to understand whether race and voter turnout were explicitly linked to the Jim Crow south or a broader nationwide phenomenon, I added both my southern and Midwest region variable to both sets. The results show that non-white voters in the south were clearly disenfranchised in 1960 by being 26% less likely to vote than their white counterparts (a figure showing negative statistical significance). In the Midwest we see no statistically significant evidence that non-whites were less likely to vote. The main take away appears to be that the nationwide turnout drag on non-white voters appears to be driven by a southern phenomenon. Interestingly in 2008 we see no statistical significance between non-whites and the likelihood of voting in the south, yet in the Midwest non-whites turnout at a negatively statistically significant rate of -13% (compared to their white counterparts). Perhaps this regional discrepancy may be due to African Americans in the south voting at a high rate because of such a long history of isolation from the
electoral process. In 1960 we see a slightly negative relationship between turnout and white individuals’. Although this is a difficult phenomenon to describe, there is a possibility that in the height of racial tensions in Midwestern cities, white voters may have been disillusioned by two candidates (Nixon and Kennedy) that supported elements of the civil rights movement. The racial resentment inside of urban labor unions that Huckfeldt alludes to, may have meant that swing voters in the Midwest could not support any of the candidates (1989:6). By 2008 this relationship disappears. In the south in 1960 there was no statistical significance between being white and the likelihood of voting. The same statistical insignificance can be observed amongst southern whites in 2008.

Overall when testing for turnout a clear trend can be seen. The racial factors that drove the individual probability of voting in 1960 is all but lost in 2008. However, an individual’s education is even more of a determinant of voter turnout in 2008 than it was in 1960. I expected that labor unions would play a larger role in driving turnout amongst poorly educated individuals. Instead it appears that unions are not playing a significant role in mobilizing their members to vote at any higher rate than non-union members.

When looking at ways in which I could have improved my experiment, I believe my turnout variable within the ANES data lacked some accuracy. Voter turnout is always a difficult variable to measure, especially within survey data. The data is often inflated due to a number of factors revolving around the type of respondents surveyed as well as the inclination that individuals have not to give accurate information about their voting history. Because of the limitations involved
with gathering turnout data (especially from election cycles as far back as 1960) the ANES surveys appeared to be the most reliable source that I had access to. While I was able to observe interesting trends within the turnout variable, if I were given the opportunity to research these patterns in the future I would attempt to find a mechanism of gathering turnout data that would more effectively highlight variations between different variables.

**Conclusion**

Over the past half-century political scientists have observed a significant shift in the dynamics of party politics. The Democratic Party has seen its support shift from a base of working class and southern voters to a base comprising primarily of racial minorities, public sector union members and progressives. When commencing this paper I believed that the decline of unions was playing a major role in the declining presence of whites within the Democratic Party. To an extent that phenomenon is evident. The raw number of union members has shrunk by over 13% points between 1960 and 2008. The data shows that union members are considerably more likely to be affiliated with Democrats than non-union members. The fall in these numbers almost certainly adversely effects the level of Democratic support.

Moreover, the statistical significance between Democratic affiliation and union status has weakened in 2008 from 1960. In other words the partisanship within labor unions is still present but slightly less pronounced. Evidence of far more racially diverse labor organization also highlights that unions are probably no longer binding white, working-class Democrats together. The emergence of well-educated
white collar union members replacing old manufacturing members appears to illustrate that unions are now also less likely to represent working class people. While these members are still affiliated with Democrats the decline of blue-collar unions may be partially responsible for low educated voters no longer being affiliated with the Democratic Party in any significant way.

Having written this, the decline in labor unions does not appear to be the driving force behind a changing Democratic Party. The findings above show a clear trend of a more racially divisive party system in 2008 than what existed in 1960. The 1960 data shows a party framework that is essentially determined by societal and geographic class cleavages. In 2008 we see some staggering numbers that show that partisanship has become highly racially divisive across the country. The trend of whites moving away from the party appears to have commenced in 1960, although the large number of white southerners still affiliated with the Democrats offset this trend. Whatever the root cause of this pattern (and there is some evidence that union decline has played a role) is, if this shift were to continue one could have some fear that the racially polarizing nature of our politics may lead to further racial divisions within our society. Moreover the lack of organization surrounding working class individuals may result in further isolation from the political system. My results show that lower educated individuals are far less likely to participate within the electorate in both cycles, yet the gap in 2008 has grown. Compounding this trend is the fact that the once politically united working class (reflected by less educated voters) vote appears to be splintered, meaning that there could be a lack of representation for some of societies most vulnerable members. The shift in the type of voters that the Democratic Party is appealing to may also influence the kind of
candidates that will be nominated for high office. As Robert Radash predicted, Democratic candidates are now more likely to answer to Hollywood progressives than manufacturing unions (Dark 2001:13). If this becomes the norm, we may begin to see an even more pronounced movement away from candidates with union backgrounds. These are just some of the many uncertainties that come with the changing nature of American party politics.

**Bibliography**


Apendix

ANES Survey Questions and Codes 1960:

1) Party Affiliation : VAR600091

Q. 36. GENERALLY SPEAKING, DO YOU USUALLY THINK OF YOURSELF AS A REPUBLICAN, A DEMOCRAT, AN INDEPENDENT, OR WHAT. Q.36A. (IF REP OR DEM) WOULD YOU CALL YOURSELF A STRONG (R) (D) OR NOT A VERY STRONG (R) (D). Q.36E. (IF INDEPENDENT OR OTHER) DO YOU THINK OF YOURSELF AS CLOSER TO THE REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRATIC PARTY. ............................................................

1. NOT VERY STRONG DEMOCRAT 121
2. INDEPENDENT CLOSER TO DEMOCRATS 188
3. INDEPENDENT ('NO, NEITHER' OR 'DK' TO Q.36E) 128
4. INDEPENDENT CLOSER TO REPUBLICANS 263
5. NOT VERY STRONG REPUBLICAN 299
6. STRONG REPUBLICAN 17
7. OTHER,
8. MINOR PARTY OR REFUSED TO SAY

*Stata Dichotomous

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2) Labor Union Membership Status: VAR 600150

NAME-ANYONE BLNG TO LBR UNION COLUMNS 395 - 395 NUMERIC MD=GE 8 PD 20. DOES ANYONE IN THIS HOUSEHOLD BELONG TO A LABOR UNION. (IF YES) PD 20A. WHO IS IT THAT BELONGS.

....................................................... 1406 0. NO, NOBODY 261

1. YES, R (ALONE) BELONGS 195 2
2. YES, HEAD (NOT R) (ALONE) BELONGS
3. BOTH R AND HEAD BELONG 32 4. SOMEONE ELSE IN HOUSEHOLD (ALONE) BELONGS
4. R AND SOMEONE ELSE IN HOUSEHOLD BELONG 4 6. HEAD AND SOMEONE ELSE IN
5. 1 8. DK 31
6. 9. NA

*Stata dicotomous

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Total | 1,181 | 100.00 |

3) Race of Respndent: VAR600119

NAME-RACE OF RESPONDENT COLUMNS 344 - 344 NUMERIC NO MISSING DATA CODES P2. RACE .......... 1764

1. WHITE 172
2. NEGRO

*Stata Dichotomous

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Total | 1,181 | 100.00 |

4) State Code (Region Variable): VAR600010
NAME-STATE CODE COLUMNS 33 - 34 NUMERIC NO MISSING DATA CODES STATE AND COUNTY CODE

-- STATES all coded from ANES appendix

Stata Dicotomous

region_south

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Total | 1,181 | 100.00|

Region_Midwest

region_midw

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Total | 1,181 | 100.00|

4) Education Level : VAR 600128

NAME-EDUCATION OF RESPONDENT COLUMNS 357 - 358 NUMERIC MD=GE 98 PD 10,10A,10B,10C. HOW MANY GRADES OF SCHOOL DID YOU FINISH. HAVE YOU HAD ANY SCHOOLING OTHER THAN HIGH SCHOOL. WHAT OTHER SCHOOLING HAVE YOU HAD. DO YOU HAVE A COLLEGE DEGREE.

1 GRADE 8 12.
2 GRADES 27 13.
3 GRADES 35 14.
4 GRADES 39 15.
5 GRADES 77 16.
6 GRADES 75 17.
7 GRADES 295 21.
8 GRADES 112 31.
9 GRADES 110 32.
10 GRADES 71 33.
11 GRADES 10 41. 9

GRADES PLUS NON-COLLEGE TRAINING 33 42. 10
GRADES PLUS NON-COLLEGE TRAINING 35 43. 11
GRADES PLUS NON-COLLEGE TRAINING 382 51. 12
GRADES Page 70 nes1960.txt 184 61. 12
GRADES PLUS NON-COLLEGE TRAINING 234 71. SOME COLLEGE 151 81
.COLLEGE DEGREE (4 YEARS COLLEGE) 43 82.
ADVANCED COLLEGE DEGREE, COURSE WORK BEYOND BA OR BS 1 98. DK 4 99. NA

*Stata Dichotomous

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Turnout: VAR600201

NAME-WHM R VTED FR PRES COLUMNS 490 - 491 NUMERIC MD=GE 90 Q. 12, 13, 22. IN TALKING TO PEOPLE ABOUT THE ELECTION WE FIND THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE WEREN'T ABLE TO VOTE BECAUSE THEY WEREN'T REGISTERED OR THEY WERE SICK OR THEY JUST DIDN'T HAVE TIME. HOW ABOUT YOU, DID YOU VOTE THIS TIME. (IF YES) Q. 13. WHO DID YOU VOTE FOR FOR PRESIDENT. (IF NO) Q. 22. WHO WOULD YOU HAVE VOTED FOR FOR PRESIDENT IF YOU HAD VOTED. ...........................................................

699 10. VOTED – DEMOCRATIC
722 20. VOTED – REPUBLICAN
7 30. VOTED - OTHER
17 40. VOTED - REFUSED TO SAY FOR WHOM 0
50. VOTED - DK FOR WHOM
0 60. VOTED - NA FOR WHOM
167 70. NON-VOTER - DEMOCRATIC PREFERENCE
162 80. NON-VOTER - REPUBLICAN PREFERENCE
0 90. NON-VOTER - OTHER PREFERENCE
6 97. NON-VOTER - REFUSED TO STATE PREFERENCE
47 98. NON-VOTER - DK PREFERENCE
127 99. NON-VOTER - NA PREFERENCE, PRE-ELECTION INTERVIEW ONLY
*Stata Dichotomous

```
turnout_all |     respondents |     Freq. |     Percent |   Cum.
-------------+--------------+-----------+-------------+-----
         0 |           269 |      22.78 |       22.78 |
         1 |           912 |      77.22 |      100.00 |
-------------+--------------+-----------+-------------+-----
        Total |          1,181 |      100.00 |

ANES Survey Questions and Codes 2008:

1b) Party Affiliation: Vo83098x

```

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
SUMMARY: R PARTY IDENTIFICATION
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
VALID CODES: 
0. Strong Democrat (1;1;-1)
1. Weak Democrat (1;5;-1)
2. Independent-Democrat (3,4,5,-8;-1,5)
3. Independent-Independent (3,4,5,-8;-1,3)
4. Independent-Republican (3,4,5,-8;-1,1)
5. Weak Republican (2;5;-1)
6. Strong Republican (2;1;-1)
MISSING CODES: --------- 
1. INAP, -9 in J1; -8,-9 in J1a; -8,-9 in J1b
*Stata Dichotomous

```

```
party_allre |     respondents |     Freq. |     Percent |   Cum.
-------------+--------------+-----------+-------------+-----
         0 |           1,345 |      57.92 |       57.92 |
         1 |            977 |      42.08 |       100.00 |
-------------+--------------+-----------+-------------+-----
        Total |           2,322 |      100.00 |
```
2b) Labor Union Membership Status: V083246

Do you or anyone else in this household belong to a labor union?  

--- VALID CODES:  
1. Yes  
5. No

*Stata Dichotomous

union  |  Freq.  Percent  Cum.  
-------+------------------------
  0  | 2,033  88.08  88.08
  1  |  275  11.92  100.00

Total  | 2,308  100.00

3b) Race of Respondent: V083251a

What racial or ethnic group or groups best describes you?  

10. Black  
20. Asian  
30. Native American  
40. Hispanic or Latino  
50. White  
81. Other: recoded to Black  
82. Other: recoded to Asian  
83. Other: recoded to Native American  
84. Other: recoded to Hispanic  
90. Other: {SPECIFY}

*Stata Dichotomous

race  |  Freq.  Percent  Cum.  
------|-----------------  --------
  0  | 1,139  49.05  49.05
  1  | 1,183  50.95  100.00

Total  | 2,322  100.00

4b) Region Variables: V091207
Available in appendix E. 2008 ANES state and county master code

*Stata Dichotomous

i) Midwest

region_midwest

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Total | 2,322 | 100.00 |

ii) South

region_south

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4b) Education: V083218x

PRE-ELECTION SURVEY

SUMMARY: R EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

0. DK/RF grades –
1. no HS diploma [-8,-9 in Y3 and 5 in Y3a]
2. 1. 0-8 grades - no HS diploma/equivalency [0-8 in Y3 and 5 in Y3a]
3. 2. 9-12 grades - no diploma/equivalency [9-12 in Y3 and 5 in Y3a]
4. 3. 0-12 grades - HS diploma/equivalency [0-12 in Y3 and 1 in Y3a] 259
5. 4. 13+ grades, no degree [0 in Y3b] 5. Junior or community college level degrees (AA degrees) [7 in Y3b]
6. 6. BA level degrees [6 in Y3b] or 17+ grades with no advanced degree [17 in Y3 and 0 in Y3b]
7. 7. Advanced degree (including LLB) [2-6 in Y3b]

*Stata Dichotomous

<table>
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5b) Turnout:V085036

SUMMARY: R VOTE TURNOUT [OLD and NEW]

VALID CODES:

- 0. Did not vote in November 2008
- 1. Voted in November 2008

*Stata Dichotomous

turnout_OLD |

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Total | 2,102 | 100.00