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# New York: An Analysis of Current Changes in Party Support

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# **New York: An Analysis of Current Changes in Party Support**

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper is an analysis of the recent changes in party support throughout the state of New York. Based on research by James Gimpel and Jason Schuknecht in their 2004 book "Patchwork Nation," the focus is on determining which specific factors have been contributing to the shifts in support for the two major parties in key regions of the state. In particular, migration and immigration as well as demographic changes within New York's electorate are considered. More importantly, economic changes within the state and the effects they have had on party support are examined as well. My research is based both on widely accepted theories about political parties and some theories of my own that have been inspired by popular political theories.

The quantitative data that I collected and analyzed has led me to conclude that the most significant forces behind changes in party support in New York are increased concentrations of young voters, changes in the economy, and increased minority and immigrant populations within counties. An increase in the young population within counties has led to more Republican voting. In terms of the economy, counties that have suffered from economic decline show increased support for the GOP. Conversely, counties that have experienced economic improvement tend to vote more Democratic. Increased minority populations, specifically a growth in the Hispanic population, have resulted in drastic declines in Republican voting. Similarly, counties that received a significant amount of immigrants experienced increased support for the Democratic Party. Migration was not substantially correlated with changes in party support, although it should be noted that counties that experienced an increase in voters from the Northeast became more Democratic, and counties that gained voters from the South became more Republican. It should also be noted that these correlations were found only for presidential election results. Gubernatorial election results, on the other hand, appear uncorrelated with changing demographics.

## **INTRODUCTION**

New York has historically been a classic example of a state where political influence is determined by region. Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the two major political parties have dominated key regions within the state. The Democrats have maintained power and influence within New York City and urban areas upstate, while the Republicans have found consistent support in rural regions of upstate New York and the suburbs just outside New York City. The two parties' regional dominance originated in the early 1900s when the Democrats established their control over New York City politics. Out of fear that the Democrats would eventually take over the entire state, upstate residents became increasingly supportive of the Republican Party (Green, J.C., & Shea, 1997). In turn, the Republican Party focused its efforts on mobilizing the electorate in rural upstate New York to contain the Democratic Party's power.

So in effect, New Yorkers began to identify themselves with one of the two major parties based on the region they lived in rather than according to ideological beliefs (Green, J.C., & Shea, 1997). This tendency still occurs today, and it has been the major cause of competition between the Republican and Democratic Parties. In order to fully understand the regional differences in party support, it should be noted that:

“for the last seventy years, political regionalism in New York has had foundations rooted in voters’ attitudes about the proper role of the government in the economic sphere...since beliefs about government’s role in the economic sphere still divide urban and rural voters, politics in New York has long had a regional basis, especially when the gulf between candidates on these policy matters is wide” (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004, 341; Stonecash, 1989).

However, during the last couple of decades the partisan makeup of some regions of New York has undergone substantial changes. Regions that were once dominated by Democrats are now showing significant support for the Republican Party, and areas once dominated by Republicans are growing markedly more Democratic. In addition, upstate counties of New York have become more competitive during presidential elections over the past few decades. The most recent examples of changes in party support are two important Congressional upsets that occurred within the last year. First was Democrat Kathy Hochul’s victory in upstate Republican territory for the 26<sup>th</sup> Congressional Seat. Soon after Republican Bob Turner won the 9<sup>th</sup> Congressional Seat in a heavily Democratic district of New York City that includes Queens and part of Brooklyn. In order to understand the shifts in party support within New York I have relied on key theories that address partisanship development and change among social groups.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

There is a significant amount of research that focuses on understanding partisan identities within the United States. Green, Palmquist and Schickler (2002) have found that people tend to identify with a particular party and remain loyal to that party throughout their lifetime. Often times the environment that one is raised in can have an effect on an individual’s partisan identity. Most people will identify with the same party as their parents, members of the religion they affiliate with, neighbors, and other peers (Hout & Knoke, 1974; Tedin, 1974; Achen, 2002). One of the most significant early influences on an individual’s partisan identity development is the political views of their parents. Converse (1969) found that intergenerational transmission of partisanship from parent to child is a key component of partisanship development, along with gained experience in politics and voting. Bill Bishop has also studied partisan identification and found that most people associate with the dominant party in the area in which they live because people want to be accepted among their neighbors (Bishop, 2009). Furthermore, if people perceive themselves to be “partisan outcasts,” they will typically seek out residence in areas where they can find people who share the same views and values (Bishop, 2009; Gosling, 2008; Florida, 2008; McDonald, 2007).

In regards to the state of New York, it appears that these theories only partially explain the sudden changes in party support. For instance, at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, aging suburbs that were previously dominated by the GOP began showing support for the Democratic Party in

large part because minorities were migrating from the City into these areas (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004). Minority groups were not under as much pressure as earlier migrants to convert to Republican partisanship and thus maintained their Democratic views in their new areas of residence (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004). The fact that there are distinct differences in partisanship between ethnic groups in certain suburbs runs counter to the notion that people will change their partisanship in order to fit in with their peers. Furthermore, these findings also do not support the hypothesis that people will necessarily migrate to areas where the majority shares their political views (e.g. Bishop, 2009). A more logical explanation is that migrants choose to move to a particular area because of common interests concerning quality of life rather than shared partisanship with the native residents (Baldassare, 1992; Frey, 1985; Frey & Kobrin, 1982). As a result, “Republicans and Democrats wind up living side by side in these politically diverse locales, and cannot be described as moving to different places according to their partisan biases” (Tam Cho, Gimpel & Hui, 2010).

There are also additional considerations that challenge some of these prominent theories. In particular, I hypothesized that the economic changes that New York has endured since the early 1990s has led to changes in party support, despite the widespread notion that such conditions are insignificant to partisan identification. In particular, I considered key factors such as migration within New York and from out of state, immigration from abroad, increased young populations, changes in the minority population, and changes in median income within the past twenty years and the extent to which these dynamics may have caused shifts in party support.

### **The Significance of Migration and Immigration for Changes in Party Support**

Over the course of the past century, New York City has been one of the most sought after destinations for immigrants and American natives alike; the city has historically been known for its endless opportunities and rich diversity. However, at the close of the twentieth century, New York was no longer an appealing destination for United States citizens. In fact, even New Yorkers began to flee from the Empire State; between 1990 and 1995, a little over one million residents migrated to other regions of the country (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004, 331). Aside from interstate migration, New York has seen some significant mobility changes within its borders as well. It appears that over the last couple of decades, New York City residents have migrated to suburban areas of the state while upstate New Yorkers have begun to move south toward the City; suburbs just outside the city that were once predominantly Republican are becoming more Democratic as voters move from the city to the suburbs (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004).

There are a number of possible explanations for the migration of voters throughout the state of New York. For the purpose of this paper the focus will be on ideas proposed by James Gimpel and James Schuknecht in their work “Patchwork Nation.” Gimpel and Schuknecht found that native residents of New York tend to be more Republican than immigrants and interstate migrants. It appears that in upstate New York regions that have historically been Republican are becoming more Democratic, and it may be the result of the settlement of voters from Democratic states such as Massachusetts, Connecticut, and other New England states (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004, 333). In the suburbs outside of New York City, it seems that Republicans are gaining more support because the cost of living in these areas is significantly

high, making it less appealing for lower-income migrants (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004, 333). Furthermore, interstate migrants may have moved to areas in New York where they share common views with their neighbors in terms of taxes, education, the economy, and public policy. (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004; Bishop, 2009).

However, because New York has not been attracting as many out of state migrants in recent decades as in the past, the effects of interstate migration may be limited. Thus, “far more attention should be paid to differences between the politics of immigrants and native New Yorkers because the foreign-born population will be driving electoral change for decades into the twenty-first century” (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004, 333). Immigration has had a considerable influence on New York politics as foreign-born voters tend to demonstrate strong support for the Democratic Party both historically and in the present. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most immigrants that came to New York identified themselves with the Democratic Party because of its support for individualism.

Individualism is a political ideology that emphasizes the worth of the individual; in the United States it is the foundation of the “American Dream.” The American Dream captivated immigrants because it is the “hope for a better quality of life and a higher standard of living... this belief is that anyone, regardless of their status can ‘pull up their boot straps’ and raise themselves from poverty” (“Making sense of,” 2009). Individualistic Democrats held “strong commercial attitude[s], both about life in general and about government. These industrious people sought their fortunes through business and hard work, and they did not see any problem with the government helping a person achieve his or her own personal economic goals” (Donovan, Mooney, & Smith, 2010, 29-30). Individualism still defines the political culture of New York today, and continues to appeal to immigrants who favor the Democratic Party.

Nationally, immigration has become increasingly important in politics as well. Immigrants are the “fastest-growing segment of the American electorate” (Fitz & Kelley, 2011) and New York in particular has seen a substantial increase in its immigrant population. According to the Census Bureau, between 2005 and 2009 a little less than a quarter of New York’s entire population was made up of foreign-born residents. Nationally, immigrants have become much more influential as they become more politically involved. Conservative anti-immigration movements have allowed the Democrats to gain more support among foreign-born voters. Throughout the country, immigrants have proven to be a significant force in elections:

“These voters have the power to swing elections. In Indiana, where immigrants accounted for only 2 percent of the electorate, Sen. Barack Obama received 24,000 more of their votes than Sen. John McCain, which gave Obama the 1 percent margin needed to win the state. Likewise in Nevada, where polls prior to the 2010 election gave Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D) little chance of winning re-election, Reid ended up winning another term with 90 percent of the Latino vote and helped secure Democratic control of the Senate” (Fitz & Kelley, 2011).

Similar to national trends, the vast majority of immigrants within New York support the Democratic Party. Therefore, I predict that increased immigrant populations in New York counties have led to more Democratic voting.

As it is clear that immigrants and interstate migrants have had an effect on party support within New York, it is important to consider the extent to which their political views have either

challenged or conformed to those held by the majority in the region to which they move. This leads to another important consideration for understanding the changes in party support within New York – The relevance of homogeneity within regions of New York.

### **Economic Effects of “The Big Sort” on Party Support in New York: Income, Education, and Class**

According to Bill Bishop, American voters will usually settle in areas where their values and interests are shared by the majority of residents. In New York, the state has long been known for its regional differences in terms of politics. It is important to note that people do not move to certain regions because of partisanship, but rather for economic reasons such as employment and cost of living. However, this tendency can result in political consequences as certain areas begin to show a majority preference for a party because its residents tend to be of the same class and share common interests (Bishop, 2009; Clark & Ladwith, 2007; Tam Cho, Gimpel & Hui, 2010). Seeing as certain regions in New York are beginning to stray away from previous party loyalties, it appears that changes in the population in certain areas are beginning to have an effect on regional politics. Bishop mentions a number of factors that have led to the “sorting” of American voters into specific regions throughout the country, and these ideas are relevant to the current phenomenon taking place in New York. Average income is a significant predictor of voter mobility, with poorer migrants moving to regions that are typically Republican landslides while higher-income migrants tend to move to areas dominated by the Democrats (Bishop, 2009).

This trend can be seen in New York as poor migrants are moving from the Democratically dominated boroughs of New York City to Republican territory in the nearby suburbs. In turn, the better educated and higher-income young migrants are moving from Republican rural areas upstate to Democratic regions downstate. Education is a significant force behind voter migration; Bishop found that areas with a high concentration of college-educated residents were among the richest and most developed regions in the country (Bishop, 2009). Educated people began to move from rural areas to more prosperous regions with the most opportunities. In New York, the contrast between regions is most certainly a deciding factor for migrant voters. Upstate New York has experienced a significant economic decline compared to other regions of the state due to changes in agricultural production. As a result, the rural regions of upstate New York have experienced an exodus of young voters as they seek out areas that are much more stable economically.

This leads me to posit that economic stability has been a driving force behind the migration trends of New York residents. Consequently, voter mobility due to changes in the economy may have had a significant impact on party support, despite the fact that some theories dismiss temporary political conditions as having little to no influence on partisan affiliation (e.g. Green, Palmquist & Shickler, 2002). I expect that economic decline will result in more support for the Republican Party, and economic prosperity will lead to more Democratic voting. Recent changes in the economy may be causing more support for the GOP amongst young voters, given the fact that economic policy and government spending are key issues that divide New York voters (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004). This leads to another important consideration in population mobility, which is age and generational replacement.

## **The Significance of Age and Generational Replacement in New York's Changing Electorate**

In regards to the notion that parents' partisanship has a significant impact on their offspring's partisan identity development, the intergenerational theory fails to explain the changes in party support within New York's electorate. In particular, parents' partisan identities do not appear to have as strong of an influence on the partisan identities of their children as was previously thought. Given the fact that younger voters are taking up different political stances compared to their older counterparts, it seems as though younger generations are abandoning the political views held by their parents and grandparents. The variance in partisan identification between generations is due to the fact that "although teenagers are strongly influenced by their parents' party affinities, this imprint fades over time as young adults are exposed to other influences and develop their own views." Furthermore, "partisans remain open to new information, and one reason that generations develop different party attachments is that they arrive at different impressions of which groups comprise and typify Democrats and Republicans" (Green, Palmquist & Schickler, 2002, 82; Converse, 1969).

According to Gimpel and Schuknecht (2004), the suburbs just outside of New York City experienced rapid generational replacement which resulted in a shift from traditional support for the Democratic Party to that of the GOP. Younger voters' partisan identities may be markedly different from those of older generations because they are assessing current economic issues that are relevant to their lives rather than relying on partisan cues from their parents and grandparents (Markus & Converse 1979; Fiorina 1981; Franklin & Jackson 1983). For instance, when the manufacturing industry was stable in New York during the 1940s and 1950s, the majority of manufacturing workers supported the Democratic Party because of its appeal to lower-income citizens. However, during the 1980s and 1990s, the manufacturing industry in New York drastically declined, resulting in decreased support for the Democratic Party amongst blue-collar workers who were facing new economic challenges that workers fifty years earlier had not experienced (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004, 338). Thus, party support can change from one generation to the next as voters determine which party best addresses the political issues that are significant during their lifetime.

Gimpel and Schuknecht examine how generational replacement has had an effect on party support among voters in New York and throughout the country in general. For instance, the New Deal realignment caused voters who had reached retirement age by the 1950s and 1960s to vote more Democratic, but as the generation was replaced with a new wave of young voters, voting trends shifted back in favor of the Republicans in the 1990s when the majority of the population showed support for the GOP (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004). Today, it appears that younger populations in New York are becoming more Republican, while older voters are leaning more towards the Democrats.

Upstate regions of New York that have historically supported the Republican Party are leaning more towards the Democrats as younger voters are leaving the area, causing the remaining population to be mostly made up of the elderly and the poor. It appears that younger voters are moving to the more prosperous suburbs downstate where there is more opportunity for jobs and financial stability. It is important to note that "young people are more likely than old people to move. And young, educated people are more likely to move farther and more often than are young, less educated people... the likelihood that a twenty-five- to thirty-four-year-old would live within three miles of a city center increased significantly in each of the fifty largest

metro areas during the 1990s. Older people, meanwhile, clustered in the country's least dynamic (economically and technologically, at least) cities" (Bishop, 2009, 133).

In New York, the better educated and higher-income voters tend to support the Republican Party, unlike national trends where although higher-income voters tend to vote Republican, the better educated have shown to be more supportive of the Democratic Party. So in New York it would follow that young, college-educated migrants are causing the suburbs close to New York City to become more Republican. On the other hand, due to the economic decline of upstate New York, older voters who once supported the GOP are now more inclined to support the Democratic Party because of its positions on issues such as welfare and health care (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004). In fact, Democrat Kathy Hochul was able to win over the Republican district in upstate New York because her campaign was specifically focused on defending Medicare against proposed cuts by the GOP, making her more appealing to elderly voters (Sarlin, 2011).

Thus, age will be a significant consideration throughout the course of this paper, specifically in terms of how increased concentrations of either younger or older voters in a given area have affected changes in party support within that region. In particular, I hypothesize that counties that experienced substantial increases in young voters are becoming more Republican. Aside from age, race and ethnicity are also important demographic considerations for changes in party support. Thus, the final factor for analysis will be the extent to which minority populations have contributed to shifts in party support throughout New York.

### **The Effects of Increased Minority Populations on Party Support**

Since the 1960s, New York City has had high levels of intergroup conflict during local elections. Furthermore, over the last few decades there has been a substantial increase in the African-American and Hispanic/Latino populations. At the same time there has been a decrease in the overall white population within the City. Gimpel and Schuknecht found distinct polarization between racial groups in New York City, citing that the growing minority population has increased support for the Democrats, but the decreasing white population has resulted in less support for the Democrats amongst white voters since the New Deal (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004). The same trend can be seen nationally as well. In a recent study, Norrander & Manzano (2010) analyzed the effects of minority group voting on the partisanship and ideology of all fifty states. They found that "minority groups move state ideology in the liberal direction and state partisanship in the Democratic direction... white citizens move the voting electorate significantly in conservative and Republican directions" (Norrander & Manzano, 2010,465). In sum, "minority voters, even though a small proportion of many state electorates, affect overall state ideology and partisanship... This is an important substantive finding given the increasing non-white share of the electorate across the states" (Norrander & Manzano, 2010, 467).

Since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, minorities have become increasingly influential in American politics. By passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, President Johnson and the Democrats were recognized as proponents of African-American rights (Carmines & Stimson, 1989, 43). As African-Americans became more actively involved in politics, the two parties recognized the significance of minority voting during elections. The Democrats put forth great



effort to mobilize African-American voters, and as a result they were able to garner overwhelming support among the minority population. In New York, the majority of minorities have settled within the boroughs of New York City, which has strengthened Democratic control of the City. However, minority groups have begun to leave the urban boroughs and move to the suburban areas of New York. This has resulted in significant political changes in the counties just outside of New York City:

“Aging suburbs that were once the destination for white family-age migrants found themselves undergoing a kind of population succession fueled by local migration that benefited Democrats in the decades that closed the century. Minorities, including African Americans, Latinos, and Asians, moved to the suburbs in unprecedented numbers. Inasmuch as the neighborhoods into which they move are often racially and ethnically segregated, they do not face the same local political pressure to convert to GOP politics that the earlier Anglo migrants faced when they had moved out from Queens and Brooklyn thirty years earlier. The established Republican regulars have not always welcomed the newer immigrant and minority populations, and these feelings of exclusion have been the foundation for Democratic party renewal in Nassau County” (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004, 333-4).

Moreover, the Republicans have made little to no effort to mobilize minority voters. During the Civil Rights Movement the Republicans nominated Barry Goldwater for president in 1964, which resulted in an image of the GOP as the anti-civil rights party. Consequently, the Republican Party turned its back on the black electorate (Carmines & Stimson, 1989, 47) and the negative impression it made has endured up until the present day. In fact, the GOP has been accused of making efforts to deliberately disenfranchise minority groups, such as supporting proposals for stricter voter registration requirements, which make it more difficult and less likely that these groups will vote.

Felon disenfranchisement has been a recent issue in New York with some considerable political consequences. While it is completely legal to deny convicted felons of the right to vote, New York’s Constitution specifically states that felons must not be considered as residents of the prisons where they are incarcerated. Although the U.S. Census counts prisoners as residents of the counties where they are held, New York legislators should account for them based on where they resided before being imprisoned, especially when considering redistricting proposals for the Senate and Assembly (Wagner, 2002). In reality, New York legislators are not adhering to these requirements because they have increased the sizes of rural districts upstate by counting urban prisoners from New York City as residents of these counties. Furthermore, New York’s State Senate has been dominated by the Republicans for decades, and some of the strongest proponents for redistricting have been Republican Senators (Wagner, 2002).

Felon disenfranchisement has been particularly disadvantageous to minority groups because “the majority of New York’s prisoners are urban and non-white, but the majority of New York’s 70 prisons are in predominately white rural areas. In essence, these rural whites will be able to ‘speak for’ the incarcerated urban prisoners in ways counter to their interests” (Wagner, 2002). The consequences of felon disenfranchisement have not gone unnoticed, especially among minority groups. Pinaire, Heumann and Bilotta (2002) conducted a study in which they examined public opinion on felon disenfranchisement, particularly the differences in opinion between races and party affiliation. They found that African Americans were significantly more opposed to felon disenfranchisement than whites or Hispanics, and that there is “evidence that

the racist origins and intentions of many of these disenfranchisement laws have translated into direct and disproportionate impact in terms of subgroups' attitudes" (Pinaire, Heumann & Bilotta, 2002, 1546). Moreover, it was also clear that Republicans were more likely than Democrats to support felon disenfranchisement (Pinaire, Heumann & Bilotta, 2002).

Given the fact that minorities are more likely to vote Democratic than Republican and Republican support for felon disenfranchisement in New York could be leading to resentment towards the party from minorities, it is reasonable to believe that minorities are largely responsible for increased support for the Democrats. In addition, the fact that minorities are dispersing to other regions of the state may be causing former Republican strongholds to become more competitive. Hence I also focus on the affects of increased or decreased populations of a particular race on party support. In particular, I predict that areas that have experienced an increase in minority populations have also experienced an increase in support for the Democratic Party, because the Democrats have historically been more welcoming towards minorities compared to the Republicans.

### **Hypothesis 1:**

**Hypothesis 1a.** Regions of New York that have gained migrants from other states have undergone significant changes in party support.

**Hypothesis 1b.** Increased immigrant populations in counties have resulted in more Democratic voting.

**Hypothesis 2:** Economic decline will result in more support for the Republican Party, and economic prosperity will lead to more Democratic voting.

**Hypothesis 3:** Greater populations of young voters within counties will result in increased Republican voting.

**Hypothesis 4:** Areas in New York that have experienced an increase in minority populations have also experienced an increase in support for the Democratic Party.

## **DATA COLLECTION AND METHODS**

In order to test my hypotheses, I collected demographic and voting data for all of the counties in New York spanning from 1988 to 2010. I focused specifically on factors including race and ages of county populations, as well as the average median income for a given county. I also looked at migration and immigration trends for each county. For voting data I collected both presidential and gubernatorial election results from 1988 to 2008. I then calculated the change in the Republican vote from 1988 to 2008 to see which counties became more or less Republican. I then tested the change in the Republican vote against each variable to see which factors have had the most significant effect on the changes in party support.

To test my first hypothesis regarding the effects of interstate migration on party support within counties, I calculated the percent of the population that had moved to each county from a different state. Given that there was limited Census data available for migration trends during

the 1990s on the county level, I restricted my analysis of interstate migration to the period between 2005 and 2009. I found that the number of out of state migrants is uncorrelated with the change in the Republican share of the vote. However, given that Gimpel and Schuknecht had mentioned that migrants from specific areas of the country may have had an influence on partisanship in New York, I decided to assign out of state migrants to subgroups according to their region of origin. I created groups for the Northeast, Midwest, South and West to see if there were any particular regions whose migrants may have contributed to changes in party support.

For hypothesis two I gathered the average median income for each county for 1989 and 2009 and calculated the difference. I then tested it against the change in the Republican vote from 1988 to 2008 to see if economic changes have had a significant effect on changes in party support. To test my third hypothesis regarding the effects of high concentrations of young people on party support, I obtained the population by age for each county for 1990 and 2000. I considered people between the ages of 25 and 44 as the young population, and those that were 65 and older as the elderly population. I calculated the change in the percent of each county's population that was made up of young people from 1990 to 2000. I then tested it against the change in the Republican vote between 1988 and 2008 to see if there was any correlation between age and party support.

To test my fourth and final hypothesis, I determined what percent of each county's population was made up of African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos in 1990 and 2010. I then combined the percentages to get a total minority population for each county. I tested the change in the minority population to see if it was correlated with changes in party support in New York. Furthermore, knowing that the Hispanic/Latino population has been the fastest growing minority group in New York and the nation as a whole, I wanted to determine the extent to which the Hispanic/Latino population alone has influenced shifts in party support. I predicted that the Hispanic/Latino population is largely responsible for the decline in Republican voting. Therefore, I calculated the change in the Hispanic/Latino population from 1990 to 2010 and tested it against the change in the Republican vote from 1988 to 2008.

## **RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

Using the change in the Republican vote from 1988 to 2008, I found that the counties that became more Republican were Montgomery, Schoharie, Genesee, Herkimer, and Niagara. However, since the presidential elections of the 1920s and 1930s (with the exception of Genesee and Schoharie) these counties have shown stronger support for the Democrats. It is interesting to see that within the last few decades these counties are beginning to shift support for the Republican Party after maintaining support for the Democrats for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In turn, the counties that became much more Democratic included Warren, Clinton, Westchester, Essex, and Ulster. These counties have traditionally demonstrated support for the Democrats, and it appears that they have only strengthened their loyalty to the Democratic Party in recent decades. However, Westchester County has long been one of the suburban strongholds for the Republicans, and so it is significant that it has become much more Democratic since the 1980s. Although the counties mentioned have experienced the most substantial increases in support for either party, it is also important to look at the counties that have become more

competitive during the last few presidential elections. Suburban counties outside of New York City such as Suffolk and Nassau that were once highly supportive of the Republicans have begun to show more support for the Democrats. This is significant because:

“for fifty years, Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester Counties had drawn white residents out from the boroughs with the promise of lower crime, less traffic, ethnically homogenous neighborhoods, and better schools...By the late 1990s and 2000s, though, the flight to Nassau County was sustained not by whites but by minorities looking for their way out of Brooklyn and Queens. North of the City, Westchester’s new populations included minorities who had migrated from The Bronx. These voters exported their Democratic party affiliation to the suburbs but were less inclined to switch parties than earlier arrivals had been, leading to a resurgence of Democratic strength in once one-party Republican towns” (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004, 325).

At the same time, a number of regions that comprised Republican territory in upstate New York became more Democratic. These results confirm Gimpel and Schuknecht’s research on New York’s changing politics. They found that “many parts of upstate New York have become more Democratic, particularly in central New York...the greater Albany area has become more Republican with the growth of that city’s suburbs. Overall trends indicate that the counties upstate have become more competitive in presidential elections than they were at mid-century” (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004, 327).

In regards to the effects of out of state migrants moving to New York from specific regions of the country, I found that a gain in migrants from the Midwest is uncorrelated with changes in party support. Although counties that received a substantial amount of migrants from the West became somewhat more Republican, the correlation is just short of meeting standard levels of statistical significance. On the other hand, counties that gained a significant amount of migrants from the Northeast became more Democratic, and those that received migrants from the South became more Republican. Given that the Northeast is recognized as being very supportive of the Democrats and the majority of the South is Republican, these findings support the notion that migrants will maintain their partisan loyalties when moving from politically homogenous regions to unfamiliar locations, rather than conform to the native majority (Baldassare, 1992; Frey, 1985; Frey & Kobrin, 1982, Cho, Gimpel & Hui, 2010).

**Table 1. Correlation between the Change in the Republican Vote Share and Out of State Migration by Region**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Presidential</b>		<b>Gubernatorial</b>	
	<i>Correlation</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Correlation</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Northeast	-0.4254 *	0.0006	-0.0642	0.6199
Midwest	0.0076	0.9535	-0.0023	0.9859
South	0.3235 *	0.0103	0.0088	0.9457
West	0.2093	0.1026	0.1020	0.4303

\* p<.05

After analyzing the relationship between average median income and the change in the Republican vote, my hypothesis held true that as the economy declines, Republican voting increases. Conversely, if a county's economy improves then Republican voting declines. For instance, counties that became much more Democratic, such as Westchester, Orange and Ulster County, also experienced significant increases in average median incomes compared to other regions within New York. Moreover, counties that did not see much of an increase in average median incomes between 1989 and 2009, such as Montgomery and Niagara County, have become much more Republican due to their struggling economies.

**Table .2 Correlation between the Change in the Republican Vote Share and Average Median Income Change by County**

	Presidential		Gubernatorial	
	<i>Correlation</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Correlation</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Change in the average median income between 1989 and 2009	-0.3139 *	0.0130	0.0037	0.9774

\*p<.05

After testing my third hypothesis to determine if increased populations have had a significant influence of the changes in party support, the results showed that there is some evidence that more young people in a given county leads to more Republican voting. For example, Schoharie County was one of the regions that became significantly more Republican between 1988 and 2008, and its population is also made up of a significant amount of young voters. It should also be noted that Schoharie is located in the more southern part of New York where the economy is more prosperous. Furthermore, Schoharie is also part of the greater Albany area that Gimpel and Schuknecht had noted as becoming more Republican due to the growth of Albany's suburbs (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004, 327). With all points considered, Schoharie is a clear example of a region in New York that has become more appealing to young voters and thus more Republican due to its economic prosperity and proximity to cities that provide countless opportunities for employment.

**Table .3 Correlation between the Change in the Republican Vote Share and Age and the Effects on Party Support**

	Presidential		Gubernatorial	
	<i>Correlation</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Correlation</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Change in the young population between 1990 and 2000	0.3975 *	0.0014	-0.0536	0.6793

\* p<.05

Lastly, after testing the change in the minority population against the change in the Republican vote I found that as the percent of the minority population for a given county increases, the percent of the total population voting Republican declines. In some counties, specifically Westchester and Orange Counties, there was a particularly drastic decline in Republican voting coupled with a massive influx of minorities. I then tested the Hispanic/Latino population alone to see if they were largely responsible for the major changes in party support in certain regions of New York. The results proved that the Hispanic/Latino population is in fact the driving force behind drastically declining support for the Republicans, especially in counties where there has been a considerable increase in the Hispanic/Latino population.

**Table .4 Correlation between the Change in the Republican Vote Share and the Changes in the Minority Population by County**

	Presidential		Gubernatorial	
	<i>Correlation</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Correlation</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Change in minority populations between 1990 and 2010	-0.2548 *	0.0456	0.0928	0.4729

\*p<.05

I then tested the Hispanic/Latino population alone to see if they were largely responsible for the major changes in party support in certain regions of New York. The results proved that the Hispanic/Latino population is in fact the driving force behind drastically declining support for the Republicans, especially in counties where there has been a considerable increase in the Hispanic/Latino population.

**Table .5 Correlation between the Change in the Republican Vote Share and the Changes in the Hispanic/Latino Population Alone by County**

	Presidential		Gubernatorial	
	<i>Correlation</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Correlation</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Change in the Hispanic/Latino population between 1990 and 2010	-0.3740 *	0.0028	0.0702	0.5879

\*p<.05

It should be noted that all of the significant correlations were found when the variables were tested against the change in the Republican vote for the presidential elections; none of the gubernatorial election tests were statistically significant. There are a number of reasons as to

why this may have occurred. First and foremost, New York gubernatorial elections take place during “off-years,” meaning they do not occur during the same years as presidential elections. Consequently, people are less likely to vote during gubernatorial elections because the cost of voting is much higher during off-year elections. The cost of voting can be determined by a formula known as the calculus of voting, which is illustrated as follows:

$$y = a + x_1 - x_2 - x_3 - x_4$$

In this formula,  $y$  represents the likelihood of voting,  $a$  represents the initial likelihood of voting, and  $x_1$ ,  $x_2$ ,  $x_3$ , and  $x_4$  represent psychological benefits, time costs, monetary costs, and information costs, respectively (Pearson-Merkowitz, 2011, February 4<sup>th</sup>). For presidential elections, the political parties go to great lengths to keep voters informed on their party platforms regarding national issues. It is very easy for average voters to identify with a presidential candidate solely based on which party they represent. If gubernatorial elections take place during presidential election years, then it is relatively easy for voters to participate in elections because they are up to date with current party positions on key issues.

However, for gubernatorial elections during off-years when current political issues are not being debated nationally, it is much more difficult for voters to keep up with current party platforms. Moreover, candidates for office on the state-level may be markedly different than the majority of their party in their positions on certain issues, and so more time and effort is required for voters to become familiar with each candidate. In the case of New York, the increasing populations from out of state and abroad may find it particularly difficult to participate in gubernatorial elections during off-years because they cannot rely on national party platforms. As a result, they must spend a significant amount of time becoming acquainted with gubernatorial candidates’ positions because they are unfamiliar with New York politics. In sum, the overall cost of voting during off-year gubernatorial elections for New Yorkers is high, making it less likely that voters will participate. Thus the changes in the Republican vote for gubernatorial elections in New York from 1988 to 2008 may not be significant because less people are voting compared to presidential elections, making the data unrepresentative of the general population.

## CONCLUSION

Although the state of New York remains divided by region in terms of party support, there have been some significant changes that have altered century-old partisan ties in certain regions. More specifically, economic and demographic changes, such as increased populations of young voters, minorities and immigrants that have occurred within New York over the last couple of decades have had a considerable impact on New York politics. Although some regions have become more Republican, New York continues to be a state dominated by the Democrats as they have been gaining considerable ground in formally Republican territories. The immigrant and minority populations in particular have been largely responsible for the changes in party support. These diverse groups have increased Democratic power by migrating to more suburban areas of New York rather than staying within the confines of the City where they have historically settled. The results of this study support the findings of Gimpel and Schuknecht, who concluded that:

“The increasing proportion of minority voters moving to New York City and their rising level of political involvement had the impact of solidifying Democratic domination in gubernatorial and presidential elections across the four large boroughs. Racial balkanization has led to political balkanization. With the browning of their populations, the Long Island and Westchester suburbs are not as politically distinct from New York City as they once were. As the suburbs become more productive of Democratic victories, New York may be headed for a purer sectionalism dividing upstate from downstate because the suburban counties will come to resemble New York City more closely. The challenge for Republicans in presidential contests is that they face the loss of the New York City suburbs without the prospect of making up much new ground upstate or in New York City” (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004, 341).

Indeed, if the Republicans wish to gain more power in New York, they must focus on mobilizing the minority and immigrant electorate rather than ignoring them as they have in the past. Although the current state of the economy may be beneficial to the Republicans, it is only a temporary condition that will change in time. For example, Republican Bob Turner was able to win over the heavily Democratic 9<sup>th</sup> district because the majority of voters were dissatisfied with the way President Obama has been handling the economy and they wanted to see a change. According to an article in “The New York Times,” “the Turner campaign had eagerly courted disenchanted Democrats, and outside polling places around the district on Tuesday, multiple longtime Democrats confessed that despite concern about Mr. Turner’s eagerness to slash federal spending, they chose him hoping that his election would get lawmakers’ attention” (Kaplan, 2011).

As Gimpel and Schuknecht pointed out, “in presidential elections, then, New York looks like an increasingly dim prospect for GOP candidates, except in the most lopsided elections when the Democrat has proven to be an exceptionally poor contender well before the Empire State voters stream to the polls,” (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2004, 341) much like Obama’s performance in office has not satisfied New York voters. Thus it appears that Republican control over the Democratic 9<sup>th</sup> district may not be long-term, especially if the economy begins to recover. After all, as the results of this study have shown, people tend to vote more Democratic as the economy improves. Therefore it seems as though the Republican Party in its current position will only be able to gain significant support in New York under unique circumstances. However, if the GOP wants to increase their chances of gaining support in New York, they must pay close attention to the long-term changes in New York’s demographics and the political implications of increased populations of minorities and immigrants throughout the state.



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