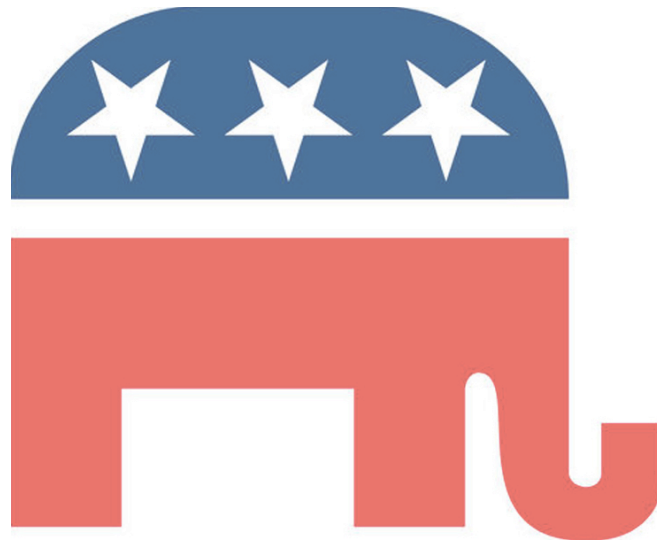


A Republican Party in decline

– *Ideological issues and the race against demography*



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Resumé

Et republikansk parti i forfald

– Ideologiske udfordringer og kapløbet mod demografi

Denne kandidatafhandling handler om hvorvidt det Republikanske Parti står overfor uoverkommelige udfordringer. I denne afhandling argumenterer jeg for, at det Republikanske Parti står overfor meget store udfordringer både ideologisk set og i forhold til eksterne, demografiske ændringer i landet. For at forklare hvordan, og i hvor stor udstrækning, disse faktorer spiller ind for partiets nuværende situation, har jeg undersøgt historiske faktorer og trends, som går tilbage til New Deal-reformen i 1930'erne. Derudover har jeg analyseret hvordan demografiske ændringer, såsom tilstrømningen af immigranter og en voksende yngre befolkning, også har en indvirkning på partiets problemer i dag og på længere sigt. Disse udfordringer, især de demografiske, leder til en republikansk vælgerskare i forfald. Dette kan konkluderes på baggrund af netop den stigende tilstrømning af immigranter, allerede etablerede minoritetsgrupper, såsom sorte og latinamerikanere, kvinder og til sidst den yngre generation, hvilke alle i de fleste tilfælde støtter det Demokratiske Parti frem for det Republikanske Parti.

Ydermere kan det konkluderes, at den konservative ideologi, som partiet har været styret efter siden, især, 1960'erne, bærer en stor del af skylden for hvorfor partiet i dag har svært ved at tiltrække nye vælgere frem for de traditionelle, kristne vælgergrupper, som får stor indflydelse på partiet og dets politikker igennem organisationer som "the Tea Party". Herudover er der udledt en anderledes form for konservatisme, nemlig populistisk konservatisme, som blandt andet sættes i forbindelse med den nuværende præsidentkandidat for det Republikanske Parti, Donald Trump. Han har ikke kun personificeret den populistiske konservatisme, men har også skabt stor mistillid til partiet fra den generelle befolkning og fra partiets elite.

Et tredje aspekt, som denne afhandling også behandler, er mediernes rolle i amerikansk politik og valgkampe. Især nyhedsmedierne, Fox News Channel og The Rush Limbaugh Show, er store kanaler, som påvirker befolkningens, dog især republikanske tilhængeres, holdning til politik og de kandidater, som opstiller til valg generelt.

På baggrund af analysen af disse tre forskellige aspekter kan det til sidst konkluderes, at det Republikanske Parti står overfor yderst alvorlige udfordringer i forhold til at skulle beholde deres position som et magtfuldt parti i USA. Hvordan det politiske landskab vil se ud efter det kommende præsidentvalg i november 2016 er dog stadig uklart. Under alle omstændigheder vil partiet blive nødt til at stå sammen som én samlet enhed for både at kunne overkomme Trump-fænomenet, samt i forhold til at skulle tilpasse sig de nye demografiske tendenser, som viser sig i øjeblikket, og som uden tvivl vil have en indvirkning på den amerikanske befolknings vælgeradfærd.

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1. Introduction

In American politics, the Republican Party has always been a conservative stronghold. Together with the Democratic Party, the two parties dominate the nation's political landscape. The strong conservative party has, however, seen its power diminishing to some extent over the recent years. The reasons for this are both external and internal factors. The reasons for having chosen this particular subject for the thesis are based on the upcoming presidential election later this year, in November 2016, because the election will undoubtedly alter the national political landscape as well as the Republican Party's reality. The ongoing campaign has already split the party and the purpose of this thesis is therefore to outline why it has done so by examining historic trends leading up to present time. The Republican Party has experienced massive changes on both electoral and on governmental level. To understand the development of the party and the electorate, I have examined historical, political, and demographic trends leading up to today in order to explain the crisis that the Republican Party is up against. The academic and professional reasons for choosing this subject are also based on the drastic changes, which are happening across the US, and which will alter the political landscape. However, it remains to be seen if the looming crisis will be too big for the party to overcome. Therefore, the research question of this thesis sounds: *Is the Republican Party facing insurmountable problems?*

The purpose of this thesis is to provide an answer to the research question, however, the underlying reasons for posing this particular research question are to give a thorough overview of the causes that have resulted in the ideological and demographic issues the Republican Party is currently experiencing. The thesis is structured around three main chapters, which include demographic changes, the conservative path the Republican Party has taken, and finally the role of media in politics and elections. The US demography is changing – e.g. there is an increasing influx of immigrants entering the country and millennials are playing a larger role in the political landscape. These circumstances alter how society is made up, and in that way, they affect the distribution of Democratic and Republican votes. In the end, these alterations have a great impact on the Republican Party, because the current trends are benefitting the Democratic Party the most, and therefore the Republican Party has to take action to be able to cope with these external factors. However, it is not only the demographic

changes that affect the Republican Party, but also specific circumstances concerning their conservative ideology that have had an impact on the party.

The second key chapter in this thesis focuses on the argument that the Republican Party has ideologically taken a turn rightwards. This has now caught up with the party in a way that hinders the party in e.g. reaching out to new groups of voters. The reason for why conservatism is hindering the party is because it has given a foundation for right-wing evangelical Christian supporters, in particular, who now have the ability of influencing the party through organizations, such as the Tea Party. They have become an integral part of the voter base for the Republican Party. Therefore, it is difficult for the party to ignore this group of voters and to attract new voters from minority groups, women and the younger generation. Lastly, the third chapter, which considers the aspect of the role of media in US politics, is included. The reason for identifying the nature of this issue is that media has come to play a significant role in politics in general, but in the US, media plays an even larger role in shaping people's political attitudes and behavior – especially Fox News Channel and conservative talk radio shows, which are both a blessing and a curse to the Republican Party. Social media is also considered because it has become a key factor in political campaigns and elections and therefore cannot be ignored.

I have chosen to structure the thesis around these three main subjects because they all cast a different light on the challenges the Republican Party is confronted by. Furthermore, the subjects also differentiate from existing literature and previous research, as they are put in the perspective of the upcoming 2016 presidential election. In this thesis, data and material from relevant, valid and contemporary sources have been collected into one study. Consequently, it has been possible to give an indication of which challenges the Republican Party faces in the near future, and if the party has the capability of overcoming them.

2. Theory

The overall theory applied in this thesis is structuralism. Structuralism belongs under sociology and it can be used in explaining what humans do and why they do it. Structuralism is a method of interpretation and analysis of aspects of human cognition, behavior, culture, and experience, which focuses on the relationships between contrasting elements in a theoretical system (Holm, 2011: 116; Sociology Guide, 2016). Two other important concepts within social sciences are the concepts of “structure and agency”. These concepts are debated as to which of the two is the most dominating in explaining human behavior. “Structure” is the recurring patterned arrangements, which influence or limit the choices and opportunities available to individuals in society. “Agency” is individuals’ capability of acting independently and making their own free choices. The debate is an issue of socialization and autonomy determining whether an individual acts as a free agent or acts in a certain way dictated by society (Loyal, 2003: 51). To put the two theories into perspective, structure and agency will be exemplified in the most extreme forms below.

A structuralist argument would be stating that people act and behave in a certain way because of structural variables beyond their own control. The variables include: Class, race, gender, and age. These variables explain everything an individual does and individuals are therefore deemed to live by a script or manual that has already been written for them by the existing structures in society. If used to explain voting behavior in the 2016 presidential election, the structuralist argument would be that Hillary Clinton would win simply based on the fact that she has the most experience, and that she has more supporters voting for her – e.g. women, minorities, a number of white men, and college-educated. This is the extreme structuralist view put into context to help identify the theories that is applied in this thesis.

An agency argument would be stating that people are different than animals and therefore, they are individuals who think, talk, learn, are conscious and make free choices based on rationalized decisions. To again apply into context of the 2016 presidential election, from an extreme agency point of view, one could argue that anything could happen in the upcoming election, as there is still six months left. Moreover, it could be argued that Hillary Clinton is not a good campaigner and therefore she is not able to attract the votes she needs to win the election. Donald Trump, on the other hand, may have proved to be a successful campaigner

(as he has been so far), and therefore people will choose to vote for him. Therefore, the idea of agency, in this context, is that whomever runs the best campaign in the end will win and it is not determined by structures and patterns in society beforehand.

The theoretical concepts applied in this thesis include both structure and agency, as it would not be sufficient to rely on only one of the concepts. The world is not black and white and the same goes for American society and politics. Structure is, however, the concept that best explains what has happened in the Republican electorate for the past 50-60 years. It also helps in explaining how, because of demography, the Republican Party is a major party in decline. The way structure helps to explain this is by the specific patterns that guide people in certain directions – e.g. the Democratic Party is more likely to receive the larger share of women votes because women prefer the values presented by the Democratic Party in general. The British sociologist, Anthony Giddens, introduced the term, “structuration” in 1979, which expresses mutual dependency of social structure and human agency. According to this theory, social structure should be viewed as associated with, and not separate from, social action driven by individuals (Sociology Guide, 2016). He presented the idea that structuration is the constant interaction between structure and agency, and that this theoretical concept gives the most detailed overview and explanation of individual actions in a structuralized society.

I have applied structuration in this thesis because it provides the best theoretical framework for answering the research question. However, it is important to discuss how far structure explains the certain trends that have occurred in the US, and to some extent is still occurring today, and how far agency provides the best explanation. I argue that structure holds primacy in this context because individuals are shaped by society in different time periods and are most likely to follow certain trends – e.g. when it comes to conservatism. The fact that the Republican Party has become much more conservative through the years also reflects the role of structure and how it shapes people’s actions and behaviors. Agency also plays a role, to some extent, because regarding elections, people do have a free choice to vote for whomever they prefer. However, my argument is that in this context, people vote for a specific candidate due to the underlying pattern of society and the way it is structured, and therefore, structure is the key theoretical concept for the analysis presented in this thesis.

3. Methodology

The analysis of this thesis is based on scientific research, books, and articles published by acknowledged researchers mainly operating within the field of politics and social sciences. To support the arguments in this thesis, polls and statistics have also been greatly relied upon. Secondary sources have been the main type of sources that have been used in the analysis. Polling results and surveys, included particularly in Chapter 4, have been conducted by the Pew Research Center, which is an American non-profit, non-partisan public opinion institute. It provides information on attitudes and trends of the American public and society in general (Pew Research Center, 2016). The statistics retrieved from Pew Research Center have been used in several of the chapters in the thesis. Also, data collected by the United States Census Bureau has been greatly relied on. The numbers and statistics provide the scientific groundwork for the analysis because they identify, with great accuracy, exactly how e.g. demography in the US has changed over time. The matter of changing demographics make up a substantial part of the thesis, as it is an area of great importance because it is an ongoing trend that alters the electorate. Therefore, a shift in demography also alters people's voter behavior and political attitudes, which again affect the political parties and policy outcomes in the end.

Online newspaper articles have also been included as secondary sources throughout the thesis. These have been included because they provide real-life examples that support the findings done by scientific researchers. Moreover, they are relevant to include because they present current trends and situations, which makes the scientific research results easier to put into context and perspective. A majority of the sources used in this thesis are from the 2000s until present day. However, I have included two sources that were published in 1988 and 1996; respectively, *The Conservative Movement*, by Paul Gottfried and Thomas Fleming and *They Only Look Dead – Why Progressives Will Dominate the Next Political Era*, by E.J. Dionne. These have been included because they give a relevant historic overview of the trends that can be seen in the US today and how they have roots going back a number of decades.

I have relied on the work of some authors more than others as they have provided the best material in regard to answering the research question. Specifically, the works of John Judis and Ruy Teixeira have been heavily relied on, as they predicted an increase of Democratic

voters in their book, *The Democratic Majority*, from 2002. This source has been particularly relevant because it helped provide an answer for what problems the Republican Party is experiencing today and why. The book contains a detailed explanation of how the US demography plays a large role in making up the electorate – especially the Democratic electorate. It also contains the explanation of why this is of importance to the Republican Party, because the trends that Judis and Teixeira foresaw then appear to be true today. The shift in the country's demography is a key factor for the analysis in this thesis. Thus, using the work of demographer, William Frey, have been significantly important as well. Frey's research has provided the material for answering what specific challenges the Republican Party faces today. The demographic changes are a great obstacle for the Republicans because it is a continuously developing factor that they cannot compete with. If the population is made up by a larger share of millennials, and more and more immigrants are arriving in America (which in both cases are true), and these demographic groups prefer the Democratic Party, then the Republican Party will experience a declining electorate.

To prove the relevancy of the subject of the thesis I have also relied on the book, *Why the Right Went Wrong*, by E.J. Dionne Jr. who is a journalist and political commentator. The book strongly emphasizes that the Republican Party is experiencing problems and Dionne's work indicates exactly what these problems are. Dionne illustrates how the party ideologically has turned in a rightward direction and what implications this turn have resulted in. In the 2016 presidential race, it has come as a shock to many that businessman Donald Trump has experienced the level of success that he has. Most of the literature that I have used throughout the thesis has been published years before the rise of Trump and the 2016 presidential election campaign. Consequently, many aspects of the ongoing campaign will not be included in the thesis as the circumstances are changing on a daily basis and therefore the main focus will be on the trends leading up to the current situation that the Republican Party is in. However, Dionne has provided an aspect of the phenomenon of "Trumpism"¹ helping to shape a more recent perspective on the Republican Party's crisis and therefore his book has been a relevant source to include.

¹ The term, "Trumpism", has derived from the name of businessman Donald Trump who joined the 2016 presidential race for the Republican Party in June 2015. The term describes a phenomenon that entails populist opinions.

4. Demographic changes in the US

This chapter presents the most important trends regarding demographic changes in the US. The theories behind an emerged Democratic majority will be addressed as these theories give guidance as to how the American electorate has developed, how it is still developing, and how demography plays a role in this. I argue that the Republican electorate is shrinking, which can be seen through different studies in the field of US demographics. First of all, there are more white people dying than white people being born, which means that the aging white population who tends to vote Republican will not make up as large a part of the electorate in the future. Second of all, there is a surge in minority groups that is leading to a “majority-minority”² and this will happen sooner than what has previously been predicted. The reasons for the growing minority population are both immigration and fertility. However, there is also an external factor that has influenced growth of the population, which is the economic downturn in 2008. The recession influenced the overall birth rate in the US and therefore may have altered population growth. Another point, which is discussed in this chapter, is how the minority population is not growing at the same pace in all regions of the country and the changes are happening much more rapidly in metropolitan areas in particular.

4.1. The Emerging Democratic Majority

The theories put forth by John Judis and Ruy Teixeira in their book, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, from 2002 have had an immensely important influence on the general idea of how the US demography is made up in relation to how different groups of people vote and how there have been several trends pointing toward a growing number of Democratic voters. This is highly relevant because it explains how certain groups vote and especially why certain demographic groups vote Democratic. Since the 2000s there has been a general agreement of an emerging Democratic majority in the American electorate and an examination of how the demographic groups tend to vote will therefore be presented below.

In 1972, teachers, nurses and engineers, who usually voted Republican, started moving toward the Democratic Party and by 1988 these groups, which are defined as professionals in this context, became solidly Democratic (Judis & Teixeira, 2002: 48). Moreover, women, who

² “Majority-minority” is a term coined by demographer, William Frey, which means when the number of minorities, such as Hispanics, Asians and blacks, will surpass that of whites.

had disproportionately voted Republican started voting Democratic in 1964 and this number accelerated after 1980 (Ibid., 50). The minority groups, which include blacks, Hispanics and Asians, did not vote solidly Democratic prior to the 1990s but became much more committed to the party then, increasing from about a tenth of the voting electorate in 1972 to 19% in 2002. In the 2012 presidential elections, Hispanics, blacks, Asians and “others” made up 24,7% of the electorate – almost a quarter of the electorate (Ibid., 38; United States Census Bureau, 2013: 5). These three groups; professionals, women, and minorities, are argued to have had the most crucial influence on the success of the Democratic Party and are still having the greatest influence today.

4.1.1. Gender gap and the white working class

The fact that women are generally voting more Democratic than men is extremely relevant since women make up 50.8% of the US population (United States Census Bureau, 2014). Not only do women vote more Democratic than men, but they also vote disproportionately more Democratic than Republican. This is particularly accurate for women who work outside the home, women who are single and women with college degrees (Judis & Teixeira, 2002: 55). In the 2012 presidential election it was clear that women do vote for the Democratic Party far more so than men as Obama carried women’s votes 55 to 44 against Mitt Romney and lost men’s votes 45 to 52. In 2008, however, Obama carried women’s votes 56 to 43 and men’s votes 49 to 48, which shows a marginally larger gender gap in 2012 compared to 2008 (Teixeira, 2012).

Furthermore, as predicted by Judis and Teixeira in 2002, particularly single women voted Democratic in 2012 and they also made up a larger share of the electorate (Ibid.). More recent numbers show that women tend to lean Democratic by 52% to 36% where men are almost equally divided with 44% leaning Democratic and 43% leaning Republican. There are, however, gender differences in many subcategories and particularly married men favor Republicans with 51% to 38%, yet married women are equally divided with 44% leaning Republican and 44% leaning Democratic. However, as mentioned above, particularly single women made up a bigger share of the electorate in the 2012 presidential election and unmarried or single women favor the Democrats as much as 57% to 29%, a recent study shows (Pew Research Center, 2015).

Judis' and Teixeira's theories of an emerging Democratic majority is still important today since they have established how the Democratic electorate has evolved and how this development influences the politics of today. However, John Judis has in an article from last year, *The Emerging Republican Advantage*, 2015, stated that the Republicans now have the upper hand when it comes to gaining voters in the American electorate. He argues that the theory of the emerging Democratic majority is now "being severely undermined". He argues this is based on the Democratic Party having lost vast support from white working-class voters. However, this is not surprising to him, as he argues that the shift toward the Republican Party among this group of voters started decades ago, but the increase in numbers has made the trend much more pronounced in recent years. This was not applicable when *The Emerging Democratic Majority* was published in 2002 – back then, Judis and Teixeira argued that the Democrats would continue attracting white working-class voters (Judis & Teixeira, 2002: 49; Taranto, 2015). This is important to note because it seems that this shift within specific groups turns more people rightward ideologically and therefore more people lean Republican than what the earlier theories by Judis and Teixeira (2002) indicated.

4.1.2. College degrees and the white middle class

The trend pointing toward the Republican Party now attracting significantly more voters from the group of middle-class Americans, who leaned Democratic in 2008, should be addressed as it shows how people might identify themselves on the political spectrum in the future. Overall, the voters in the group of middle-class Americans can be identified as people with college degrees – but most likely an undergraduate degree and not necessarily a graduate degree or a postdoctoral degree. This group is nonetheless still expanding since an increasing number of people are attaining higher degrees and people with post-graduate degrees still favor the Democratic Party. In fact, in 2008, the number of people who held a post-graduate degree favored Obama 58% to 40% (CNN Election Center, 2008). The growing number of people with college degrees is adding to the Republican voter base, while post-graduates are adding to the Democratic voter base. However, the number of people attaining a college degree is growing much faster than people attaining a graduate degree or a postdoctoral degree. The population of whites who are less educated and with a lower-income has shifted significantly toward the Republican Party since 2008. The party has obtained the lead, which the Democrats held among white voters, both among the lower-income class as well as among white voters in the

middle-income class. The white middle class was evenly split between Republicans and Democrats in 2008 but now favors the Republicans. In the group of higher-income whites, there has not been a shift as they continue to favor the Republican Party. In 2012, the Republicans held a 54% to 37% advantage among whites without a college degree, and this was an even number four years earlier in 2008 (Pew Research Center, 2012). This tells us that both Republicans and Democrats are gaining a higher number of votes from people attaining a higher education in general. Even though this trend favors both parties, the number of people attaining an undergraduate degree is higher than that of people attaining a graduate degree or a postdoctoral degree, which means that the Republican Party in the end are benefitting the most from this tendency. Therefore, this works as a counterargument against Judis' and Teixeira's previous assumptions, but is in accordance with Judis' recent stance on the Republican Party's growing advantage in the form of support from the white middle-class.

4.1.3. Minority groups

The voting behavior of minorities affected the 2012 presidential election the way it had been predicted by Judis and Teixeira (2002: 56-62), and moreover, minorities played a vital role in the success of the Democratic Party and in re-electing President Barack Obama. In the 2012 presidential election, minority voters increased their share of votes compared to previous elections. Black voter turnout was at the same level in 2012 compared to 2008, but Hispanics increased their share of votes from 8.5% to 10% keeping in line with the growing Hispanic population. Asians, which is the fastest growing minority group in the US, also increased their share of votes in the 2012 election (Teixeira, 2012). These numbers show that voters from the minority groups continued their strong support for Obama and this trend is something, which can be seen clearly today as the growing number of minorities in society reflects this trend. This will be examined later in this chapter in relation to the demographic changes that are seen throughout the US at the moment.

The trends that Judis and Teixeira (2002) pointed toward can be seen in various degrees and within the group of minority voters in particular. The US minority population, which predominantly votes Democratic, has become a larger part of the general electorate and the number of people within this group is continuing to increase. Also women and people with a higher degree of education vote Democratic and is becoming a larger part of the electorate as

well. Judis and Teixeira (2002) have definitely had an impact on how the make up of the American, and especially the Democratic electorate, is being viewed. It is nonetheless not only the electorate of the Democratic Party that is developing in certain ways, but also that of the Republican Party's. Therefore, in the next section, the voter profile of the Republican voter will be examined.

4.2. The Republican voter

It is important to get a more detailed overview of the profile of the Republican voter in terms of demographic groups because it can then be put into context of the general demographics in the US and how these are changing. Historically, Republicans have held an advantage with whites and they continue to hold this advantage. When it comes to race and ethnicity, the Republican Party holds a 49% to 40% advantage over the Democratic Party concerning party identification among whites. When it comes to white men who have not completed college, the advantage is broadened by 54% to Republicans and 33% leaning toward Democrats. The margin is almost identical to that of whites from the southern states where the Republicans lead by 55% to 34% (Pew Research Center, 2015). This shows that in some geographical areas there is a majority of whites favoring the Republican Party compared to the overall Republican electorate. Particularly, the South is regarded as a Republican stronghold, but has not always been that, as will also be discussed in Chapter 5.

Regarding education, some interesting trends have developed, as previously discussed. Numbers show that the Democratic Party is leading among people who hold a post-graduate degree. However, the lead is narrower when it comes to people with college degrees (49% to 42%) and among people with less education (47% to 39%). The ongoing trend is that a higher number of people are attaining college degrees and it seems that the gap is narrowing even further. Gender also plays a role in the education category because women with post-graduate degrees prefer Democrats 64% to 29% and for men with post-graduate degrees the number is quite lower with 50% to 42% (Ibid.).

When taking a look at the different generations in society it is clear that millennials (born between 1981 to 1997) mostly lean Democratic (51% to 35%), but in the older generation,

the so-called Silent Generation (born between 1928 and 1945), Republicans lead with 47% to 43% (Ibid.). The Republican Party typically attracts people from older generations, as they tend to be more conservative in their worldview.

Finally, religion also plays an important role in how Americans identify themselves with the political parties. In the 2012 presidential election, 79% of the Republican voters were white Christians and among the Democratic voters, the percentage was only 35%. The most important religious group among the Republican electorate is the white evangelical Protestants who make up 36% of Republican voters. On the contrary, white evangelical Protestants make up only 7% of Democratic voters. Religiously unaffiliated voters comprise 30% of Democratic voters but only 12% of Republican voters (Public Religion Research Institute, 2014). These numbers give a clear picture of how important religion is for voters favoring the Republican Party and therefore religion is also very important to the Republican Party's identity.

In conclusion, these segments play a large role in forming the Republican Party's electorate as well as in the Republican voters' understanding of, and affiliation to, the party. Based on the main categories listed above, it can therefore be established that the typical Republican voter is more likely to be male, white, Christian, married, and older than the overall pool of registered voters. The figure below includes the categories that give an exact depiction of the profile of the registered voters who voted Republican in the 2012 presidential elections:

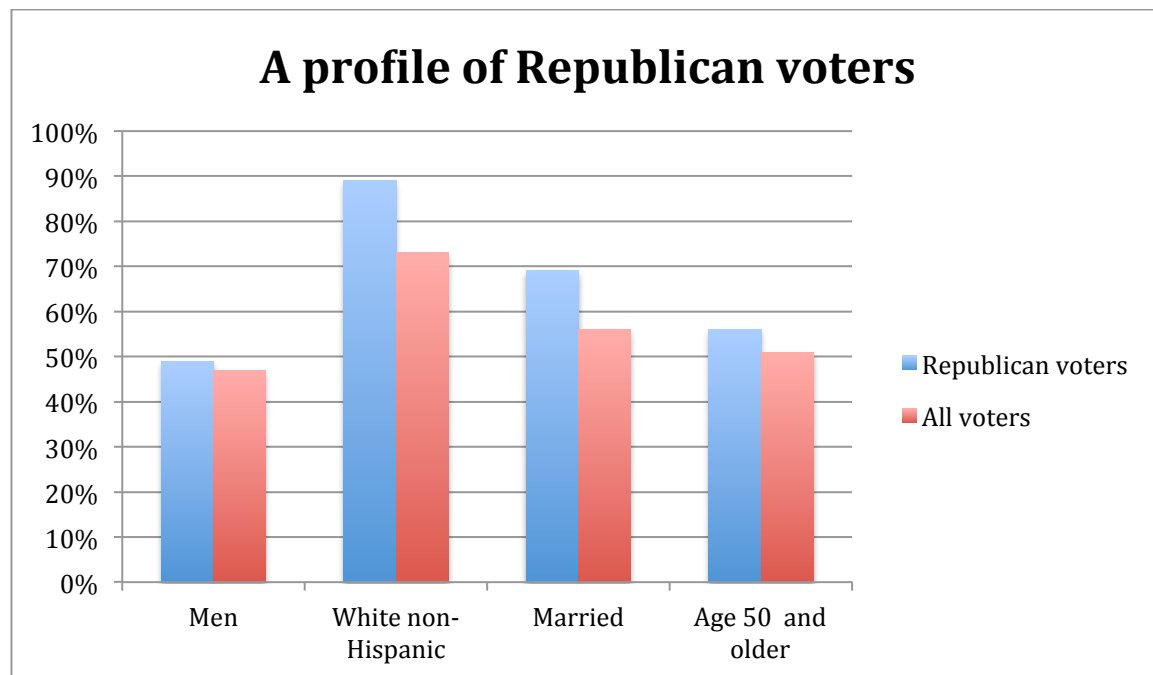


Figure 1 (Source: Chicago Tribune, 2012)

As Figure 1 shows, in 2012, out of the total number of voters, 47% were men and within this group, 49% voted Republican. There were 73% of all voters who were white and non-Hispanic, and within this group 89% voted Republican as well. Also 56% of the total number of voters were registered as married and within this segment, 66% voted Republican and in the age group of 50 years and older, 56% voted Republican out of the overall voter pool for this segment of 51%. It is important to note that exactly the segment containing older, white and married men is in decline and this means a shrinking Republican electorate, which will be further identified below.

4.3. A shrinking electorate

In recent years, a general understanding and acknowledgement of a changing demography and a new "majority-minority" has developed. The reason why the number of minorities is important is that minorities have accounted for 85% of the country's population growth over the past decade and therefore they have to be addressed by the political parties in order for them to enlarge, as well as include them in, their voter bases (United States Census Bureau, 2014). Further prediction from the United States Census Bureau is that non-whites will outnumber whites by 2043 (Frey, Census Projects New "Majority Minority" Tipping Points,

2012). This will mean that if the existing voting and population trends continue, the Republican Party will reach an “electoral tipping point”, when securing majority of the popular vote will become a problem (Dwoskin, 2012). However, party leaders changing their position on certain issues to gain support from women and minorities would possibly mean abandoning some of the Republican Party’s core values and beliefs. Even though the shift in society creates a cultural generation gap and the minority groups are growing rapidly, giving the Republican Party a desire to attract these “new” voters, and are trying to in some ways, still 89% of Republican voters are white (Chicago Tribune, 2012; Dwoskin, 2012).

It is believed that the same party does rarely keep the White House after having held it for two consecutive turns, which has been the case several times throughout history. This should in theory favor the Republican Party in the 2016 presidential election according to Charlie Cook and David Wasserman (Cook & Wasserman, 2015; Sargent, 2015). However, according to recent studies of the American electorate and demography, this advantage will not be enough for the Republican Party. The findings suggest that the Republican electorate is shrinking and therefore the Republican Party has trouble with both gaining new supporters from e.g. minority groups as well as keeping a solid Republican voter base comprising their typical voters. It would be problematic for the Republican Party to rely solely on their typical voter base, which consists of primarily white, older, working-class voters and no non-white voters. In 2012, non-white voters accounted for 24,7% of the total American electorate and the white share of the electorate has dropped 10 percentage points since the mid-1990s up to present. According to political scientist, Michael McDonald, a preliminary analysis indicates that this trend is not disappearing, which further indicates that the American electorate is in fact changing (Cook & Wasserman, 2015; Frey, *Shift to a Majority-Minority Population in the U.S. Happening Faster than Expected*, 2013; Sargent, 2015). It is therefore hard to see how the Republican Party could gain more non-white voters, in particular, if the party does not change how it positions itself and the party’s values. In other words, the Republicans need to change the party’s image and reinvent it in some ways due to the fact that the American electorate is even more diverse in 2016 than it was just four years ago.

The United States Census Bureau estimates that if the electorate indeed does change, the percentage of white voters would drop from 73% in 2012 to 70% in 2016, the African-

American share would remain stable at 13%, the Hispanic share would grow from 10% to 11%, and the Asian/other share would increase from 5% to 6%. At first glance these changes in percentages do not look significant, but the fact is that if these had been the numbers of shares in 2012 and all other variables had been kept at a stable point, President Obama would have won by 5.4 percentage points compared to his actual 3.85-point margin. Consequently, this would turn a narrow win into a more confident election result (Cook & Wasserman, 2015).

Further proof of a diminishing Republican electorate is that there are indications that show that the segment of white voters without a college degree – one of the segments with which the Republican Party does best – will shrink in the 2016 elections. President Obama won only 36% of these voters in 2012, but if the electorate changes concurring with the United States Census Bureau's estimates, the share of college-educated white voters will grow by one point to 37% of the total number of voters while the share of white voters without a college degree will shrink 3 points, which equals 33% of all voters (Ibid.). The situation is therefore not only that the Republican Party has a growing problem with attracting non-white voters; they also have a problem with their typical voter pool shrinking. Republican white seniors, who are often more conservative, are starting to be replaced by college-educated millennials who have various cultural mindsets and backgrounds and therefore prefer liberal and progressive ideas over conservative values.

4.4. Demographic changes

The change in demographics has been predicted to not take place until around 2020 but as demographer William Frey argues, it is already happening around the country and can even be seen in the numbers from 2012 (Frey, *Shift to a Majority-Minority Population in the U.S. Happening Faster than Expected*, 2013). The shift is already noticeable in Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and California. This shift is important to be aware of in terms of how it will be affecting the American electorate. The shift is due to a combination of fewer births and a higher number of deaths among white people as well as a massive increase in births within minority groups. According to Frey, the US will be a majority-minority country sooner than previously predicted (Ibid.).

The reasons for the increasing number of minorities are both immigration and fertility. Immigration is the biggest factor in explaining the numbers of Asians whereas fertility plays a large role for Hispanics. Both minority groups are within the younger part of the general population. Not only are Hispanic women having more children than white women, but there is simply also a higher number of older white women, which means that there are fewer childbearing white women as well as a lower fertility rate amongst whites. Even if the number of immigrants decreases, the number of minorities will exceed that of whites and for the above-mentioned reasons, the white population simply cannot replace itself (Frey, Census Projects New “Majority Minority” Tipping Points, 2012). New projections show that the 18-29 year olds will be the new majority-minority in 2027, but they already played an important role in the 2012 presidential election.

Furthermore, it is interesting to look at how whites will become the minority, which is happening sooner than earlier predictions. Below, Figure 2 shows when it is predicted that different minority age groups will surpass the number of whites:

Year when whites become minority by age group

Total population	2043
Age under 18	2018
Age 18-29	2027
Age 30-44	2035
Age 45-64	2051
Age 65 and older	After 2060

Figure 2 (Source: Frey, Census Projects New “Majority Minority” Tipping Points, 2012)

The 18-29 years old age group, in which minorities make up a substantial part, will continue to be the most racially diverse. It is evident that these shifts in every age group will resonate through society and on a political level as well both when it comes to e.g. the education system and the labor force. What these new projections of the future of America’s minorities mean, is that they highly point out that the country is becoming a more racially diverse society and it has already started with the American youth. Frey (2012) compares the shift in diversity to the postwar baby boom, which influenced different aspects of the US economy and social institutions and argues that this shift has a similar effect on many of the same aspects.

Therefore, it is crucial for politicians and policy makers to emphasize this shift in society, as the decisions about how to involve and integrate this new generation will have a great impact on many aspects of the American society.

There are places in the US where the changes in diversity are more visible than in others and the pace of change varies across different regions and states. It can particularly be seen in metropolitan areas where as much as 98% of the growth in the last 10 years, in the 100 largest metropolitan areas, has derived from minority groups (Frey, *The New Metro Minority Map: Regional Shifts in Hispanics, Asians, and Blacks from Census 2010*, 2011). Minority groups are much bigger factors for metropolitan areas than for rural areas. The large metropolitan areas are sort of laboratories in which the change is visible and this is important to continue to study because this is where the rest of the country can learn to understand these changes in society. The majority of the US is still white but the “cultural generation gap” can be seen much more vividly in these large metropolitan areas – where New York City and Washington D.C. are new additions to the already expanding list (Ibid.).

4.4.1. Relationship between the economic recession and fertility rates

There are several factors that play a role when it comes to the shift in society and as mentioned earlier it is not only affected by immigration, but also fertility. Fertility as a factor is interesting because it is influenced by another external factor, which is the economy. Especially the economic downturn in 2008 has had an impact on the average birth rate in the US. The recession caused fewer births overall and affected the birth rate for both white and non-white women (Livingston & Cohn, *U.S. Birth Rate Decline Linked to Recession*, 2010; Livingston, *In a Down Economy, Fewer Births*, 2011).

In 2007, 4,316,233 babies were born, which was a record high number of births in the US, and up until then, the number of births had been increasing but this continuing rise in number of births declined significantly after 2007, even though the US population continued its growth. In 2009, preliminary data showed that the number of births was down to 4,131,018, which is the lowest number since 2004 and further provisional data showed that in 2010 the number of births would have fallen to 4,007,000 (Livingston, *In a Down Economy, Fewer Births*, 2011). The analysis conducted by Pew Research Center shows that there is a connection

between the economic recession and fewer births, which is evident when looking at the numbers on state level as well. The states experiencing the largest economic declines were most likely to experience large fertility declines and the same was true for states that experienced minor economic declines in 2007 and 2008 – these states were more likely to experience small declines in numbers of births from 2008-2009 (Ibid.).

Even though the birth rate in general has declined, the study also finds evidence that there is a connection between the economic downturn and fertility declines by race and ethnicity. The analysis is conducted on the basis of income per capita, gross domestic product per capita, employment rate and unemployment rate as well as initial unemployment claims and foreclosure rates. Employment levels and household wealth among Hispanics, particularly, fell drastically due to the recession and this group experienced the largest decline in fertility levels of the three major racial and ethnic groups in the country. On the contrary, whites did not suffer as strongly economically and therefore did not experience as dramatic a drop in fertility. The numbers show that from 2008 to 2009, birth rates dropped by 5.9% among Hispanic women, 2.4% among black women, and just 1.6% among white women (Ibid.). The Hispanic women continue to have a much higher birth rate than non-Hispanics, despite the fact that the 2009 birth rate among Hispanics was the lowest since 1999.

The decline in fertility that occurs during an economic recession is most likely the consequence of postponing having children and does not reflect a decision to have fewer children. This means that people put off having children during an economic downturn and then catch up once the economy shows improvement. However, as the economy is still not doing well, there might still be a drop in fertility rates compared to before the economic recession in 2008. The Pew Research Center survey from 2011 showed that the economic downturn is closer related to fertility declines among younger women and the reason for this might be their actual possibility to postpone childbearing until their economic situation has improved. Older women on the contrary are the only age group in which fertility has been consistent or has even shown a small increase in recent years (Ibid.). The declining birth rate caused by the economic recession in 2008 has undoubtedly had an effect on the country's demography, as there will be less natural born children to make up the national electorate when they get older.

4.4.2. Demographic changes in Texas and metropolitan areas

After the 2012 presidential election, there were several indications of an emerged Democratic majority. One example could be seen in the state of Texas, which is a solid Republican-voting state, which now started to lose ground to the Democrats due to the increasing Hispanic population. In general, the Republicans had aimed at winning middle-class America in this election but this group of voters turned out not to play as significant a part in the election as had been presumed, which consequently led to the country now tilting toward Obama and the Democratic Party (Chait, 2012). The reason for the then-declining support for the Republicans was to be found in the lack of outreach toward the Hispanic population – especially in a state like Texas. In Texas, Hispanics make up 38% of the population, adding to the already ongoing trend of the white population becoming a minority (Pew Research Center, 2011). The Hispanic electorate in Texas is “ground zero” when it comes to the Republican Party’s demographic issues according to Chait (2012). However, in spite of the growing Hispanic population, Texas is still dominated by the Republican Party due to the fact that the growing Hispanic population is under the age of 18, and therefore not old enough to cast a vote as well as the fact that they may not be registered and are therefore not eligible to vote either.

Texas is the largest and most important state for the Republican Party when it comes to the number of electoral votes. Regarding electoral votes, the state is second only to California with Texas having 38 electoral votes versus California’s 55 (National Archives, 2010). For the Republicans, Texas anchors the whole party so if the state should turn Democratic in the future, the Republican Party would not be able to win the presidency since they would lose too many electoral votes, and they would not gain enough votes – even if they won the swing states. Once, it was not debatable whether Texas could even become Democratic or lean leftwards but already after the election in 2012, this scenario did not seem so impossible. There are trends pointing toward the Republicans losing ground in Texas, as well as there are indicators of a solid Republican voter base still present in the state. It was argued whether Republicans would have to be more careful after the 2012 presidential election or if they were still in control of the state – meaning that it should not be a problem for the party to continue winning the state in future elections. Observers argued that Texas was still a one-party state and that would not suddenly change. This argument was backed up by how every state-wide

office was held by a Republican as well as both US Senate seats, 24 out of 36 seats in the House of Representatives, and on the basis of this, it is hard to see how Texas could turn Democratic in the near future (Lizza, 2012).

Another state where the demographic changes and surge in minorities are visible is in the state of California where Hispanics make up 38% of the state's population (Pew Research Center, 2011). In fact, the United States Census Bureau estimates that the number of Hispanics in California was 14.99 million in July 2014 compared to 14.92 million white non-Hispanics. Thus the Hispanic population seems to have already surpassed the number of whites in the state (Reuters, 2015). In spite of the large, and growing, number of Hispanic residents in the state, the demographic changes here are not happening as fast as in other regions in the country. As William Frey (2011) has pointed out, most rapid growth is seen in metropolitan areas and between 2000 and 2010, Riverside, New York was one of three suburban areas to experience the highest numeric gains in Hispanic population numbers. The other two metropolitan areas to experience the highest numeric gains were Houston, Texas and Miami, Florida (Frey, Diversity Explosion – How New Racial Demographics Are Remaking America, 2015: 151). Subsequently, the demographic changes are mainly to be seen in metropolitan areas and it is these places in the US that experience the largest amount of growth of especially the Hispanic population. However, Frey (2015) states that where the fastest Hispanic growth rates, and not numerically gains, are in the suburbs of Nashville, Tennessee, Charlotte and Raleigh, North Carolina and Provo, Utah (Ibid.). Overall the Hispanic populations are still small in these areas but the fast pace of the growth indicates that the demographic changes are also happening outside of the major metropolitan areas in the US, where historically there is a large and growing population of Hispanics.

4.5. Life expectancy in the US

The following section proves relevant when pointing out the various aspects of the American demography and the trends and changes that can be seen throughout the country at the moment. Life expectancy has increased all over the world and therefore many countries have to deal with an expanding older population. This is also the case for the US and therefore it will be examined in greater detail. In 2014, life expectancy at birth for the total US population

was 78.8 years, respectively 81.2 years for females and 76.4 years for males. Life expectancy at birth represents the average number of years that a group of infants would live if the group was to experience the age-specific death rates present in the year of their birth. Life expectancy for women has been consistently higher than for men for many years (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015).

Due to the baby boom generation (born between 1947 and 1965), a generation defined by the increase in the number of births in the US following the Second World War, age 51 to 69, entering retirement and becoming a part of the older generation, there are now more people in the older age group (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). Life expectancy has simply increased and therefore there is an increasing number of people who are getting older, which is something that also plays a huge role in relation to demography. There has been a major transition in human health in the last century, which has had a positive effect on average life expectancy all over the world. The transitions have had an effect everywhere, however, these changes are happening at a different pace depending on the region. The transition in human health includes changes in fertility, in life expectancy at birth, at older ages, and a shift in the leading causes of death and illnesses – from infectious and parasitic diseases to non-communicable diseases and chronic conditions. In the early 20th century, the risk of death at every age was high and only a small proportion of people reached older age. Today, most people live past middle age and deaths are mainly concentrated at older ages (Ibid.).

The number of people at very old ages is increasing, and the improvement in health and the ability to cure a number of diseases are the reasons for that. The eldest of the older generation, people aged 85 and older, now constitute 8% of the world's population – the number is even 12% in more advanced and developed countries, but as low as 6% in less developed countries. The National Institute on Aging states that in many countries, the oldest generation is the fastest growing part of the population. Below, Figure 3 shows the global increase in life expectancy. The population aged 85 and older has been projected to increase 351% between 2010 and 2050, compared to a 188% increase for the population aged 65 and older and a mere 22% increase for the population under age 65. Furthermore, the number of centenarians (people who live to become a 100 years old or older) has been projected to

increase ten times between 2010 and 2050 on a global scale, which is a 1004% increase. In the 1990s, it was estimated that over the course of human history, the odds of living to become 100 years old have risen from 1 in 20,000,000 to 1 in 50 for females in low-mortality countries. The longevity within the female population may even increase faster than current projections presume.

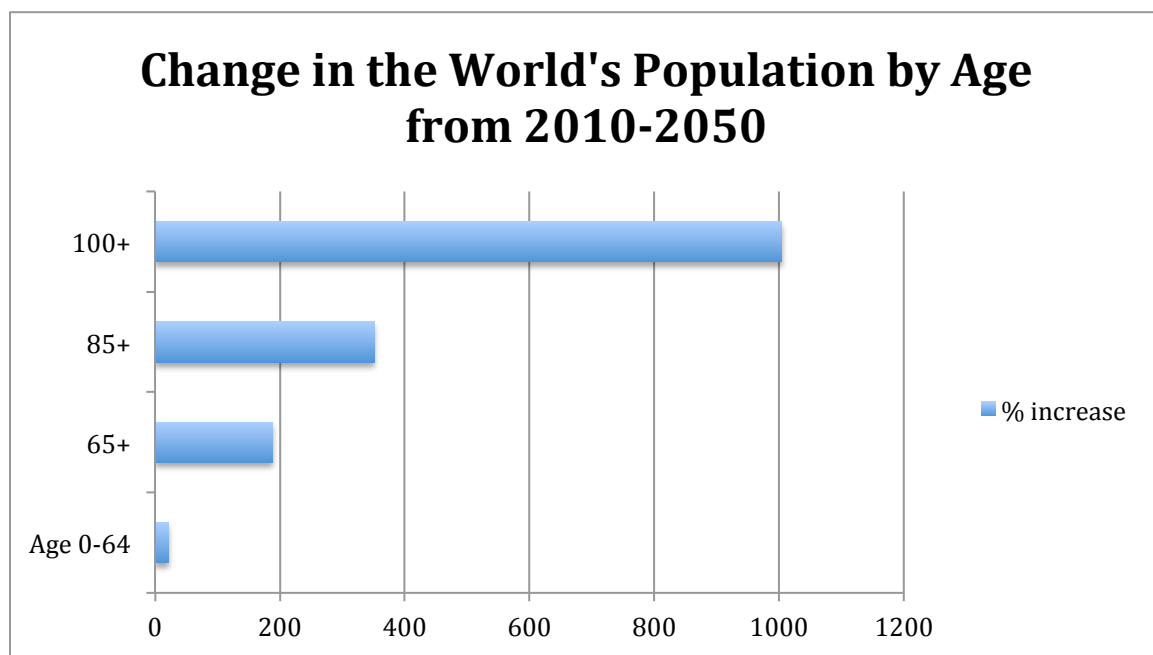


Figure 3 (Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011)

Even though the baby boom generation is adding to the expanding number of people in the old age group and life expectancy in general has increased, also adding to the large number of older people in the world, numbers from the United States Census Bureau show that the generation of millennials is becoming the largest age group. In 2015, the millennial generation (born between 1981 and 1997) was projected to tally a number of 75.3 million, thus surpassing the 74.9 million people from the baby boom generation (born between 1946 and 1964), which has always been an exceptionally large generation in numbers (Fry, 2015). The reason for the growing millennial generation is the increasing number of young immigrants. The baby boom generation is now being surpassed in numbers by millennials, because the baby boom generation is becoming older and the number of deaths among this group exceeds the number of immigrants in the same age group arriving in the US. Moreover, another projection on the millennial population is that it is set to peak in 2036 with 81.1 million when the oldest millennial will be at least 56 years old and mortality is projected to outweigh net

immigration, as it has been predicted that the generation will have declined to 79.2 million by 2050 (Ibid.).

The baby boom generation has always been exceptionally large compared to other generations. They were the largest generation before the recent study finding that the number of millennials had surpassed them. They peaked at a population of 78.8 million people in 1999. The 2014 number of 75.4 million will drop to 16.6 million people in 2050 (Ibid.). The reason for including these numbers is that it gives an important overview of how, and in which ways, the US population is growing. The growing number of people in the older age group as well as the large population of millennials will also have a significant effect on the American electorate, and have possibly already had an effect on the electorate.

4.6. How the demographic shift is influencing the American electorate

The undeniable shift in the American demography is influencing all parts of society and the fact that the minority population will surpass that of whites in numbers by 2043 is highly important to take into consideration when discussing the future of American demography and how it is going to affect society and future presidential elections. These changes also resonate in the American electorate, however it is happening at a different rate than that happening in society. There are several parallels that can be drawn from the demographic changes to the electoral changes but the shifts do not occur at exactly the same time and pace. Furthermore, there are different factors such as the actual number of eligible voters among Hispanic voters compared to the Hispanic population that also needs to be taken into consideration when comparing the changes in demography in society and in the electorate (Oakford, 2015).

While the demographic changes in the American electorate do not completely track those seen in society, there are nevertheless significant changes happening in the electorate. There is especially one significant factor that is becoming clearer, which is that white voters are a shrinking part of the electorate. Additionally, a non-white majority-minority will be playing a more prominent role than ever both on a national level and on state level. It will especially play a key role in important states like Texas and California, where the Hispanic population is beginning to surpass that of whites, which will undoubtedly change how the electorate is

made up. The undeniable demographic changes that can be seen nationwide in the US are going to affect the American electorate. Nevertheless, the changes may not be affecting the electorate in the 2016 elections as there are many factors in play and the consequences of the ongoing changes might not be visible already. Therefore, it can be concluded that even though the changes in demographics are positive for the Democrats, they are still not destiny.

4.7. Hispanic voters

Following the defeat in the 2012 presidential election, the Republican Party needed to improve their overall image and become more appealing to the Hispanic voter base. One of the possible answers was Senator Ted Cruz, who besides being a conservative Republican also has Hispanic roots, and is a first-generation US citizen. He has been running for his party's nomination for president in the 2016 presidential election and only recently suspended his campaign. Cruz was viewed to be a solution to the Republican Party's problem of gaining Hispanic voters in Texas as well as playing a role in an overall transformation of the party (Lizza, 2012). Ted Cruz has, among others, warned that the Republicans will not be able to win the state of Texas in future elections if the party does not improve with the Hispanic voters. The Republican Party simply would not be able to hold the majority in the state and as some trends point toward – the idea of a Democratic leaning Texas in the future is no longer a far-fetched idea. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the Hispanic population in Texas is of huge significance to the Republican Party since the state is made up of 38% Hispanics (Pew Research Center, 2011).

4.7.1. The Cuban population

Although, the Democratic Party historically is the preferred party for minority groups, especially for blacks, many Hispanics vote Republican in spite of harsh rhetoric concerning immigration in the current 2016 presidential campaign. One of the reasons for this is the traditional conservative background and values that many Hispanic families have been brought up with and are bringing with them to the US. There is, however, a clear distinction between the various groups of people of Hispanic origin – e.g. between people of Cuban and Mexican heritage. Cuban immigrants account for less than 1% of the total US population, yet they have had greater success in receiving power and status in the American society

compared to that of people emigrating from Mexico. Even as they only make up less than 1% of the population, they have been able to contribute with two presidential candidates in the 2016 presidential election, namely Senator Ted Cruz and Senator Marco Rubio. It is argued that Cuban immigrants are more likely to have experienced a greater benefit from the US immigration system that gives them a social and economic advantage that e.g. Mexicans have not experienced (Casares, 2015; López, 2015).

In this thesis, the Cuban population is most often described as a whole, but it is important to note that within the Cuban population, particular differences exist, especially between the groups that arrived to the US before 1980 and those who arrived in the following years. Yet, as a group, Cubans are distinct in several ways from the rest of the Hispanic population in the US. Compared to the rest of the Hispanic population, Cubans are older, have a higher level of education, a higher median household income and a higher rate of home ownership (Pew Research Center, 2006). One of the characteristics of the general Hispanic population is that they tend to be younger than the rest of the US population. However, Cubans are older than the Hispanic population as well as the overall US population. Compared with Hispanics, where 46% are under the age of 25, only 29% of Cubans are under 25 (Pew Research Center, 2006). The median age for Cubans is 40 years, while it is 37 years for the US population and 28 years for the Hispanic population. Within the Cuban population in the US, the median age for Cuban immigrants are 51 years and only 22 years among the first-generation Cubans born in the US (López, 2015). It can be determined that these numbers most likely tell us that the age aspect proves a connection to the Republican Party. It can be argued that why the age aspect does so is because older Cubans are more anti-Castro than younger Cubans, who lean more Democratic. The older generation of Cubans migrated to the US because they wanted to escape communism in Cuba and therefore they tend to be more conservative than other Hispanic groups. That is part of the explanation for why many Cubans vote Republican, and why the party has been able to contribute with two politicians with Cuban descent competing in the 2016 presidential campaign.

4.7.2. Feeling of identity among Hispanic population

Another aspect that may have led Cubans to be more likely to identify as being “typical American” is their exceptional welcome through the US immigration system. About 60% of Cubans are American citizens, which is more than double the rate for other Hispanics, where the number of US citizens is as low as 26%. It is also higher than that for non-Hispanic foreign-born whites, which is 56%. Numbers show that nine out of ten Cubans who arrived prior to 1990 are US citizens. For Cuban immigrants who arrived between 1980 and 1990, 60% are US citizens and among those who arrived after 1990, 18% have become US citizens (Pew Research Center, 2006). In 2013, Pew Research Center asked Cubans in a survey if they thought of themselves as “typical Americans” or thought of themselves as very different from “typical Americans”. Of Cuban adults, 55% answered that they saw themselves as a typical American, while 37% think of themselves as very different from a typical American. In contrast, 49% of the overall Hispanic population asked in the survey stated that they were less likely to see themselves as typical Americans. However, the Hispanic population is still more likely to see themselves as typical Americans (49%) than seeing themselves as very different from typical Americans (44%) (López, 2015). Thus, it seems that even though the overall Hispanic population are more likely to identify themselves as typical Americans, Cubans do identify themselves as being typical Americans the most within this group.

Regarding identity, Cubans are also significantly more likely to identify themselves as “white” when asked about their race than other Hispanic groups according to a Pew Research report. Data from the United States Census Bureau in 2004 shows that 86% of Cubans said that they identified themselves as white, in comparison, 60% of Mexicans identified themselves as white, 53% among other Central and South Americans and 50% among Puerto Ricans. The data also showed that a third or more Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and other Hispanics chose “some other race” when asked this question but among Cubans, just 8% chose “some other race” (Pew Hispanic Center, 2006). The Pew Hispanic Center survey conducted in 2004 establishes that there are some distinguished characteristics for the Hispanic participants. There are the Hispanics that identify themselves as white and those who identify themselves as “some other race”. Some key aspects that show this distinctiveness is that the Hispanics who identify themselves as white have a higher level of education and income compared to those who identified themselves as “some other race”. Therefore, “the report concluded that

these findings suggest that Hispanics see race as a measure of belonging and “whiteness” as a measure of inclusion, or perceived inclusion” (Pew Hispanic Center, 2006: 4).

Furthermore, the National Survey of Latinos conducted by Pew Hispanic Center in 2006 asked participants whether they considered the US or their country of origin to be their homeland. Out of the Cuban respondents, 52% answered that they considered the US as their homeland, which was a notably higher percentage than Mexicans, where 36% said they considered the US as their homeland, 35% of Central and South Americans and 33% of Puerto Ricans (who are US citizens by birth) considered it so. These numbers, and the fact that Cubans in general identify themselves as both white and “typical American”, strengthens their position in the overall electorate – especially as an asset for the Republican Party when it comes to the party’s affiliation with the Hispanic population and electorate. Based on the evidence, mainly from surveys conducted by Pew Research Center, it becomes clear that Cuban immigrants as a group is very distinctive among the Hispanic population. That has an effect on the overall Hispanic electorate, which is becoming more and more important since it is growing in numbers both due to immigration and fertility as discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore it is relevant for both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party to cater to all the individual groups within the Hispanic population to be able to keep their Hispanic voters and attract more Hispanic voters respectively.

4.7.3. Political identification among Hispanic population

When it comes to politics, the vast majority of Hispanics in general lean Democratic but within this group of voters, it is the Mexican Americans who make up the largest group of the Hispanic share of voters who vote Democratic. Mexicans make up the largest proportion of Hispanics accounting for 64% of the Hispanic population in the US in 2012. Mexicans also make up a significant amount of the US population, accounting for 11% overall (Gonzalez-Barrera & Lopez, 2013).

As previously mentioned, Mexican and Cuban immigrants have entered the US in very different ways and have had very different experiences of entering the country, which have led to differences in social and economic statuses. Cubans, who are caught entering the US without documentation are granted refuge if they set foot on American soil. The fact is that US

immigration policy has been considerably more welcoming toward Cuban immigrants than other Latin American and Hispanic migrants. This fact is stated in a report published by the Pew Research Center:

“[...] Cuban migrants have been admitted under a special parole power exercised by the U.S. Attorney General that immediately grants them full legal status and puts them on a path to U.S. Citizenship. Under current U.S. policy, Cuban migrants apprehended at sea are returned to Cuba while those who are able to reach U.S. soil are allowed to stay.” (Pew Hispanic Center, 2006: 2)

Prior to 1980, Cubans could receive political refuge in the US – also when they were rescued at sea. After having stayed in the US for a year, Cuban immigrants could then apply for permanent residency and eventually US citizenship. Hence, immigration policy has greatly affected Cuban migrants' way of life in the US positively and has been a good start for Cuban immigrants' social and economic advantage over the rest of the Hispanic population (Casares, 2015). One of the reasons that Cuban immigrants have had an economic advantage compared with the Mexican immigrants is the fact that American banks founded small business loans for Cuban exiles who had no credit or collateral in the US. This project lasted during the time Fidel Castro lead the country up until 2008. A startup capital such as this gave Cuban immigrants a great economic advantage and a means to succeed financially, which have led to Cuban communities being able to establish a robust economic and political system to support newly arriving Cuban immigrants. Because of the economic advantage that some Cuban immigrants have experienced, the Cuban population has a higher level of education, higher median household income and a higher rate of home ownership than the rest of the Hispanic population in the US and are therefore more likely to vote Republican (Pew Research Center, 2006).

4.8. Discussion

What is essential to draw from this chapter on demographics is that there are a lot of factors that play a role in changing the landscape of American society. An emerging Democratic majority was predicted by Judis and Teixeira in 2002 and has proven to be true as can be seen in the higher share of votes from women and minorities. The population growth stemming from immigrants, and largely Hispanics, also points in the direction of an advantage for the Democratic Party. The fact that the younger generation, women, and minorities are more likely to support the Democratic Party poses a huge challenge for the Republican Party. Not only do these groups already make up a substantial part of the population and electorate, they are also growing in numbers whereas the counterpart, which are middle-aged white men and the older generation, are shrinking in size. The data collected from Pew Research Center support this trend of a declining Republican electorate, which is based on the demographic groups in society and how these are altering the landscape. The economic recession in 2008 also created a minor decline in fertility rates. However, the decline has not proven to be of significance in altering the demographics.

The Hispanic population also affects the American electorate and as Hispanics tend to favor the Democratic Party over the Republican Party, and are growing in numbers, they are also an important element in the race against demography, which the Republicans now have entered. However, Hispanics should not just be considered as one group as there are several racial, ethnical, and cultural subdivisions within this demographic group. Particularly Cubans tend to diverge from the general political preferences of Hispanics. As a great number of Cubans have had an entirely different experience of migrating to the US, and most having fled their homeland because of communism, they are more likely to favor conservatism and the Republican Party than other Hispanic groups, such as Mexicans. This shows that there is great contrast in the political preferences held by minority groups. However, the Republican Party does face a great challenge in overcoming the shift in American demography, which seems to benefit the Democratic Party the most.

5. The conservative path the Republican Party has taken

In this chapter, the main focus will be the internal changes and tensions that have developed through a number of decades in the Republican Party. I argue that the Republican Party has turned right-wards ideologically and they especially took a sharp turn to the right in the 1960s. There are five main reasons for the rightward turn, and they are all due to broader social-political processes, some of which have been personified. More specifically, the five main reasons for the conservative direction the party has taken are the reaction toward the New Deal policies, a feeling of too much government control, specific social and cultural changes involving abortion issues in particular, segregation in the South and finally a dwindling number of Republican voters in the northeastern states. In different time periods, various social and cultural movements have spurred in reaction to some of the key factors mentioned above. Furthermore, the problems that the party has experienced during the past several decades and the ideological issues that have developed within the party have led to the rise of "Trumpism", which is a phenomenon that will also be discussed in this chapter.

5.1. Five key reasons for the conservative direction the Republican Party has taken

5.1.1. Perceived failure of New Deal policies

In the 1930s, the Democratic president Franklin D. Roosevelt introduced the New Deal, which was a reform agenda entailing progressive social and economic programs aimed at restructuring American society. The programs seemingly worked well in the 1950s and 1960s. However, this was also during an economic upswing. The New Deal policies were built on Keynesian economics, which is a macroeconomic theory developed by John Maynard Keynes in 1936. The theory is based on how decisions of the private sector can lead to ineffective macroeconomic results, and therefore Keynesian economists suggest that the public sector and government should establish certain policies to be followed by the private sector. These policies should include fiscal policies from both the National Bank and from the government to stabilize cyclical fluctuations (Gyldendal, 2009). The implementation of Keynesian economics in the New Deal proved successful in the way that it worked as a plausible explanation of the Great Depression of the 1930s, and the suggestions for tackling the economic crisis included in the theory were more convincing than others at the time. Keynesian economics were therefore applied unto economic policies up until the 1970s.

In the second half of the 1970s in particular, the world economy and the US economy experienced great problems because of the oil crisis and moreover, the US economy experienced stagflation, which is a poor combination of no economic growth and high inflation. The frustration with the economy and the economic policies adapted by the US government led to a large common feeling of discontent with the government, and consequently a rise of new right-wing thinking began to develop (Gottfried & Fleming, 1988). This “new” turn to the right entailed protecting conservatism and traditional family roles. Americans were frustrated with government and with President Nixon in the early 1970s, whose presidency had undermined people’s faith in the federal government. Therefore, a feeling of disappointment and distrust spread in society and in some ways still exists today. Because of these issues with the economy, the otherwise perceived success of the New Deal policies was now seen as a failure in improving social and economic aspects in society, because the success of the New Deal was rather based on the well-being of the economy, in the years the Keynesian economic theory was applied, than on the theory itself. Chronologically, this is the first reason for the rightward turn the Republican Party has taken and marks a shift in society when more and more people started questioning government’s role in society.

5.1.2. Government’s role in society

The second reason for the Republicans’ conservative direction started to become pronounced in the late 1960s and early 1970s, beginning with Lyndon B. Johnson’s presidency and became particularly pronounced during Richard Nixon’s presidency. This was due to a growing common feeling in society that government was getting too big, e.g. because of numerous new government agencies that were established during Nixon’s presidency, and as a reaction toward the perceived failure of the New Deal policies. Lyndon B. Johnson’s war on poverty was also a big factor in the public’s opinion of government control. President Johnson had an ambitious agenda labeled “The Great Society”, which was based on the idea of moving the nation upwards – especially the underprivileged in society. Some of the most important parts of his program included bringing aid to underprivileged Americans, regulating natural resources, and protecting American consumers against low-quality goods and products containing dangerous material. He took measures regarding landmark land conservation, established environmental protection laws, the significantly influential Immigration Act, a

Highway Safety Act, the Public Broadcasting Act and an additional number of bills. Johnson's presidency therefore marked a wide expansion of the federal government's role in domestic affairs. He wanted to end poverty and racial injustice, thus government had to establish specific policies, a minimum level of commitments for state governments to meet, and he enabled government to provide the funding needed to reach these goals for society (Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia).

The "War on Poverty" was centered around four pieces of legislation. These were the Social Security Amendments of 1965, which created Medicare and Medicaid, expanded social security benefits for people on retirement, widows, disabled and college students. These efforts were financed by an increase in taxes on salary. The second act that was made permanent was The Food Stamp Act of 1964, and The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which founded the Job Corps, a federal work-study program. Finally, the "War on Poverty" initiative included The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which established a program subsidizing school districts with a large share of disadvantaged students. This act has since been reauthorized and most recently it has changed to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Ibid.). These efforts of improving life for underprivileged Americans shaped society in a different way and made government much more involved in people's personal life. Now, government also played an active role in giving American citizens opportunities in life by providing these basic services for them to rely on. President Nixon took over the presidency in 1969, following Lyndon B. Johnson, and created a number of government agencies and regulations. One of the most important achievements President Nixon founded was the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which was established as a response to the rising concern over pollution and environmental conservation. The agency later oversaw the passage of Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Mammal Marine Protection Act (Richard Nixon Foundation). However, the increasing number of agencies, regulations and acts in this ever-expanding government, and later the Watergate Scandal in 1974, implicated how the American government was viewed by the public, and how its growing role in society was not deemed welcome.

5.1.3. Social and cultural changes

Changes in society moved away from the economy and toward social and cultural changes. In 1973, an important and much discussed legal case was decided upon in the Supreme Court. The case was *Roe v. Wade*, which concerned abortion and the verdict manifested abortion as a constitutional right. The case created a huge debate that is still ongoing today and reshaped national politics, dividing the US into pro-choice and pro-life camps, and generating a surge of grassroots movements on both sides. *Roe v. Wade* was crucial to the Republican Party in the sense that cultural and social rights had not been a particular priority for the party up until then. The reason for this was that many evangelical Christians had not been voting in elections prior to this case, but as abortion was an issue that they are deeply concerned with, they started supporting the Republican Party. They chose the Republican Party, as that was the party that appeared to be more pro-life than the Democratic Party. Following the case of *Roe v. Wade*, the Republican Party Platform in 1976 acknowledged the aspect of abortion and declared their position on the matter as one that values human life (The American Presidency Project, 2016). With its decision, the Supreme Court disaffected the evangelical Christians, a whole "new" segment of voters, which consequently led them to supporting the Republican Party.

Another cause for entering the conservative era that American politics did in the 1970s was that conservatism emerged as a backlash against the liberalization of American culture, racial conflicts, the Vietnam War, and the Watergate Scandal, which all took place during the 1960s and in the early 1970s. However, it is considered that there are deeper reasons lying underneath the cultural shifts and liberalization of the 1960s (Schulman & Zelizer, 2008). The reasons for helping conservatism gain momentum were the struggle over jobs, taxes, and the reconstruction of neighborhoods (i.e. a more diverse mixture of ethnicity), as well as the deindustrialization of cities, the rise of suburbs and the migration of people and resources toward the southern part of the country. These circumstances all gave strength to the right-wing conservatives and through grassroots movements and individual politicians; the conservative movement began to reshape American values and policies (Ibid.). The 1970s therefore marked a significant political and cultural tipping point in which the right-wing movement became a strong force in guiding politics for many years to come.

5.1.4. Segregation and the South

The fourth reason this chapter will focus on in explaining why the Republican Party took a turn to the right is the matter of race. Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law, which was a monumental step toward desegregation. President Johnson himself had grown up in the South under the Jim Crow laws, which separated whites and blacks in public facilities – such as schools, hotels, restaurants, parks, swimming pools and hospitals. Segregation was therefore an issue that President Johnson was determined to end, as he had become a moderate on race issues as a senator and had been part of efforts to guarantee civil rights for African Americans (Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia). Therefore, he was committed to pass the Civil Rights Act originally initiated by his predecessor, President John F. Kennedy, to end segregation in the South. He succeeded in shaping a bipartisan coalition of northern and border-state Democratic senators and moderate Republican senators. These two groups counteracted a coalition of southern Democrats and conservative Republicans, who were against the bill, and hence President Johnson was able to pass it.

The measures included in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin and thereby ended segregation. Furthermore, it legalized voting for blacks with the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which was followed by large protests from activists in the South (Ibid.). Segregation was a huge problem in the southern states in particular and therefore the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the least popular with many white people in the South. The big efforts of desegregation made white Southerners, who historically had voted Democratic, move toward the Republican Party. President Johnson allegedly stated that the Democratic Party had now lost the South for a generation when signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law because he knew that many white voters would turn against his party and support the conservative Republican Party that did not encourage desegregation instead. The move toward the Republican Party in the South in the 1960s is still visible today as the southern states have become a Republican stronghold, and the move has meant a geographical shift leading to a majority of Republicans in the South.

5.1.5. Disappearance of Republicans in the Northeast

The fifth and final reason that this chapter will be concerned with is the physical disappearance of Republican voters in the northeastern states. The Republican voters in this area were typically conservatives on aspects of the economy but progressives on cultural and social issues. With the conservative direction the party has taken, the Republican voters in this area has disappeared and moved to the Democratic Party instead. As these Republican voters have left the party, the party's voter base has geographically shifted toward the South, which indicates that a balance between the moderate Republican voters and the more conservative voters has faded away. Once, several northeastern Republican politicians had great influence within the Republican Party as they advocated a style of conservatism, which prioritized fiscal and regulatory economic issues over social and cultural issues. These moderate Republicans tended to focus more on issues central to their constituencies and rather than fighting for all or nothing, they were willing to compromise to be able to constrain and direct domestic programs in the direction they favored. The ability to compromise was crucial to the northeastern Republicans as they had to survive in states heavily controlled by Democrats and therefore they knew how important this ability was and had learned to work within divided political systems (Zelizer, 2011).

After conservative Republican senator Barry Goldwater entered the political stage in 1964, the Republican Party gained strength in the southern and western states. The Democratic Party on the other side gained ground in the coastal states both on the east and the west coast, and in the north where voters were more liberal on social and cultural issues and where unions still had a strong presence and played an important role. Voters in the Southern United States had turned to the Republican Party after Lyndon B. Johnson's successful efforts of desegregation in this area and therefore both Democratic presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton made a promise of strengthening the Democratic Party in the South. In the subsequent years, the Republican Party's strategy was to feed off of and use the southern discontent with the Democratic Party following the implementation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Since then, moderate, progressive Republicans in the northeastern states have not been very pronounced nor successful in guiding or influencing policies in the conservative Republican Party (Ibid.).

How the South shifted from being solidly Democratic to a Republican stronghold has been established in the previous section and is something that is more publicly known than the shift concerning a political transformation of what had previously been a Republican Northeast (Altimari, 2011). The reason for why this shift is not as commonly known as the shift in the South is because it was a more gradual process than that in the South. According to Professor Howard L. Reiter the process already begun during the Roosevelt presidency and the New Deal years. In 1964, when the Republicans decided to move into the South after seeing how many Democratic voters had turned on the party, they created a divide in the party. This divide happened due to the fact that the northeastern Republicans did not like the “southern strategy”, which meant that the Republican Party capitalized on the southern Democrats’ discontentment with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Another key turning point for the northeastern Republicans happened in the 1980s when the Republican Party formed an alliance with evangelical Christian organizations – such as the Moral Majority (Ibid.).

The alliance with the Christian groups created a cultural problem for the Republicans in the Northeast because religion does not play a big role in this region and more particularly, Northeasterners do not find religious appeals attractive and important to concern themselves with in general (Ibid.). This fallout within the Republican Party still exists today, as the northeastern states are more progressive and liberal than other states across the country. A good recent example of this is the success of Senator Bernie Sanders from Vermont, who is currently running for the presidential nomination for the Democratic Party, who identifies himself as a social Democrat and has, surprisingly to many, experienced great support and overall praise and is particularly popular among millennials. The shift from moderate Republicans in the Northeast to more conservative Republicans in the South alters the political balance within the party and has given a platform for conservative movements to grow.

5.2. Conservative movements

The five reasons stated above clearly indicate how the Republican Party has moved further to the right. However, there are also other influences in play – such as individual politicians pulling the party in a conservative direction as well as movements that have risen in reaction

toward some of the social and cultural changes discussed above. A specific person, who greatly influenced the party's ideology, was the conservative senator, Barry Goldwater, from whom a whole movement took its name. The Goldwater movement is particularly important to consider because it mobilized and brought together a great number of people who had conservative beliefs and wanted to have an influence on the Republican Party. There have also been other Christian conservative movements, which have had an influence on the party, such as the Moral Majority in the 1980s, and the Christian Coalition in the 1990s. The Moral Majority focused on social and cultural issues and greatly influenced the election of President Richard Nixon. Before 1980, abortion was not a political issue that the Republicans had been concerned with but after the case of *Roe v. Wade* it became more important to the party. A year after the Moral Majority was founded, in 1980, the Republican Party dedicated a section on the party's platform, which presented their conservative stance on the matter (The American Presidency Project, 2016). This proves as an example of how the Christian organizations had the ability to affect the political parties' policies and general beliefs.

If the Republican Party neglects this conservative segment of voters, then the party simply would not be able to win elections, and therefore these movements have been able to have an impact on the party. A recent example of a movement that is continuing to have an impact on the Republican Party is the Tea Party movement that was formed in 2009, which will be discussed in further detail in a subsequent section of this chapter. Movements often form as a reaction to broader social or economic issues. Culture wars have particularly been a result of broader socio-cultural issues such as civil rights, immigration rights, women's rights and the sexual revolution, which have pushed already Republican leaning voters further toward the right (Edsall, 2006). These issues, which all aim at creating greater equality to previously otherwise marginalized groups, tend to drive conservatives more to the right as these rights alter how the traditional family structure is built. These culture wars are not only a phenomenon happening in the US but can also be seen as revolutionizing universally, as argued by Professor Edsall: "These wars have not been confined to American soil; they underpin much of the antagonism between fundamentalism and modernism that characterizes both domestic and international affairs." (Ibid.: 155). All these small revolutions happening globally as well as nationally in the US have led to the birth of conservative movements based on traditional Christian values.

5.2.1. The success of conservative movements

Even though the conservatives started to experience issues in the 1990s, the conservative branch of the party started to flourish. The problems that arose, however, were problems that followed the beliefs of the party – e.g. that they “[...] continued to preach that less government and low taxes were the answer to most of the nation’s problems.” (Dionne, *They Only Look Dead - Why Progressives Will Dominate the Next Political Era*, 1996: 155). The party applied ideas that were rooted in a sort of neo-Reaganism³ in the 1990s – the same ideas they had applied in the 1970s and 1980s. Until the 1994 House of Representatives election, they did not reconsider their political and ideological position, which resulted in the problems that were already a part of the conservative ideology, to reemerge. However, the party understood that divisions internally in the party on social issues, e.g. abortion and the role of religion in public life, threatened the party’s chances of forming a majority coalition at this moment in time and therefore they united behind a culturally conservative political structure (Ibid.). Nonetheless, a wave of success for conservative movements occurred in the 1990s. The Democratic, progressive movements such as trade unions and civil rights groups were in decline, but conservative Republican movements such as Christian conservative groups and groups organized by gun owners experienced great popularity and success – as did movements concerned with limiting taxes, opposing immigration and punishing illegal immigrants (Dionne, *They Only Look Dead - Why Progressives Will Dominate the Next Political Era*, 1996: 153).

There has been a rise of cultural and religious conservatism and an emergence of a white South, which have become a central part of the foundation of the Republican Party. This has caused moderate and progressive Republicans outside the South to leave the party, which furthermore has driven away moderate and moderately conservative voters and leaders who would have supported more moderate conservative candidates in the 2016 presidential primaries. The fact that the Republican Party has become more conservative is supported by the numbers that show that: “[...] between January 1995 and January 2015, the proportion of Republicans who called themselves “very conservative” nearly doubled, from 19 percent to 33

³ Neo-Reaganism is a derivative of Reaganism – an ideology that has taken name from Republican Ronald Reagan and his presidency from 1981-1989. Reaganism includes believing in traditional family values and most importantly minimizing government and believing in a self-regulating market rather than a state-controlled.

percent" (Ibid., p. 3). This indicates that while a shift in a more conservative direction have already taken place in the 1960s – the party has become even more conservative during the last 20 years and has spawned the Tea Party movement as a reaction to social, cultural and economic factors. Below, however, a section discussing the Goldwater movement is first presented, and then followed by a section on the Tea Party movement.

5.2.2. The Goldwater movement

A general belief that the Republican Party has become much more conservative and unyielding since the election of President Barack Obama in 2008 still exists. Regardless, the fact is that the real reason for the Republican Party's problems today is the ideology of conservatism itself or at least how the very conservative individuals have adapted the ideology. In his latest book, *Why the Right Went Wrong*, E.J. Dionne Jr. establishes that the ideological problems the party faces today are rooted in the different directions that conservatism has pulled the party in during the last fifty years. Dionne's key point is that the condition of the Republican Party today is a condition that has been long in the making beginning with the party taking a turn in a more conservative direction when the party adopted Barry Goldwater's⁴ point of view and his conservative values during – and after, the presidential election campaign in 1964 (Dionne, *Why the Right Went Wrong - Conservatism from Goldwater to the Tea Party and Beyond*, 2016: 4).

The Goldwater movement was created as a conservative reaction toward the social welfare programs of the New Deal in 1930-1950s as well as a revolt against the more moderate conservatives (Ibid.). Therefore, it was feared that when Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected president in 1952, he would scale back the programs of the New Deal and what it had achieved, but instead he institutionalized more of the programs as well as expanding them and made them reach more extensively. With the threat of the Soviet Union, the American government seemed to have found shared values between Democrats and Republicans and a form of consensus was reached. However, year by year and crisis after crisis (e.g. the Cuban Missile Crisis), the American people became less and less satisfied with government and thus started to become more divided than united (Perlstein, 2009: Preface, p.

⁴ Barry Goldwater was a Republican senator who ran for presidency in 1964 against Lyndon B. Johnson. He is credited for the resurgence of the American conservative political movement in the 1960s (Biography.com).

x-xi). The Goldwater Campaign in 1964 created a massive feeling of unity for the conservatives that had felt neglected by both liberals and conservative leaders. More than just uniting conservatives with the same ideology, the Goldwater movement taught people how to make their anger useful and enabling instead of feeling bitter and resentful. Even though Lyndon B. Johnson won the election against Barry Goldwater in 1964 by a landslide, it was the beginning of a movement that has set a footprint in the Republican Party and its conservative values and ideas have been incorporated ever since. The critical issue of the Goldwater movement was that it drove liberals and moderate Republicans away from the party and succeeded in defeating alternative definitions of conservatism, which could have been defined as being more inclined to shape, rather than resist, cultural change and an openness toward the government playing a more significant role in solving the nation's problems (Dionne, *Why the Right Went Wrong - Conservatism from Goldwater to the Tea Party and Beyond*, 2016: 5).

5.2.3. The Tea Party movement

The rise of cultural conservatives is reflected in the Tea Party movement, a movement that mainly focuses on economic issues, but also some social issues. The movement took form and was established in 2009 as a reaction against financial aid given to companies that had been affected by the financial crisis as well as a protest against President Obama's health care reform (Gyldendal, 2013). The Tea Party does not have any particular leader, but one person who has personified the movement is former governor of Alaska, Sarah Palin. With the passing of the Affordable Care and Patient Protection Act, commonly referred to as Obamacare, in 2010, members of the Tea Party felt even more energized in opposing President Obama and the Democrats instead of feeling discouraged as the bill was signed into law (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012: 3). The conservatives of the Republican Party had argued that President George W. Bush was an advocate for "big government" and that he himself was not conservative enough on a number of political areas such as government expenditure, immigration, education, and on Medicare. This resulted in the conservative members of the Republican Party returning to the true faith of conservatism, which spawned the Tea Party movement, instead of it taking a road leading to more moderate conservatism. The Tea Party was therefore not only created as a reaction toward the election of Barack Obama but also as

a protesting reaction against George W. Bush (Dionne, *Why the Right Went Wrong - Conservatism from Goldwater to the Tea Party and Beyond*, 2016: 3).

Most Tea Partiers are loyal to traditional social values and share a feeling of dissatisfaction with cultural changes that many members see as a sign of the nation they know and have grown up with as being taken away from them. The members are both economic and social conservatives. Social conservatives, who can also be identified as cultural conservatives, are mainly concerned with family values and the traditional structure of the family. They are pro-life i.e. against abortion and do not approve of same-sex marriage. Many of them are Protestant Evangelicals or Roman Catholics.

One of the main issues for the Republican Party is that the conservative voters feel led down by the party due to the fact that the party has not kept the promises that have been made. This is very much in accordance with the rhetoric of the candidates during campaigns. The pressure on Republican elected officials is almost unilaterally coming from the right and the party has become more resistant to pursuing other directions. Republican administration in the past has failed to satisfy the base of the conservative movement, which has led to the party having taken a more radical conservative stance (Dionne, *Why the Right Went Wrong - Conservatism from Goldwater to the Tea Party and Beyond*, 2016: 444). The problem with having neglected the working class voters goes a long way back. Dionne argues that since 1968, no conservative Republican administration has been able to live up to the rhetoric conservative politicians delivered, which was supposed to rally the party's supporters. What has been appealing to the conservative voters has been the aspiration of the ideas that sprung from the Goldwater movement, which reshaped the Republican Party and politics back in the 1960s. Even President George W. Bush sought a political moderation of the right and searched for a way to modernize the party, though he was not successful in accomplishing it. Karl Rove, former Senior Advisor to President George W. Bush, concluded that a moderation of the party's conservatism was a much less effective political strategy than gathering the conservative voters (Ibid., p. 3; Karl Rove & Co., 2016). Thus, because the party has had a need for attracting voters and keeping the conservative voters, they have adapted to these very right-wing messages and ideas because they have simply proved the most effective in rallying voters.

What characterizes Tea Partiers the most is not only the basic demographic characteristics such as being white, older, from the middle class and often religious, because these features characterize most Republican voters – it is their very right-wing political views that distinguish them even from other conservatives (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012: 26). Tea Parties overwhelmingly vote for the Republican Party, however, many voters might identify themselves as “independents” due to categorizing themselves as being more conservative than what they think the Republican Party is. Many Tea Party members are skeptical toward the Republican “establishment”⁵ and Republican politicians who act and work in accordance with the “establishment’s” lines. Instead of letting the Republican Party influence the Tea Party organization, the Tea Party’s agenda is to influence the Republican Party toward change and embracing more traditional conservative values – such as e.g. a limited government and lowering taxes (Ibid., p. 27). As much as Tea Partiers may oppose the elected “establishment”, Tea Party members in office do always support the Republican Party in elections. They do so because their main opponents are President Obama and the Democratic Party, and therefore they support whoever runs against them and has a chance of displacing them. Even though Tea Partiers do not support the moderate Republicans and distrust the “establishment”, they do not want the Tea Party to become a third political party. The movement’s main goal is to push President Obama out and gain further ground in Congress, governorships, and state legislatures and to accomplish this goal, they need to vote for the most conservative Republicans and get them elected (Ibid., p. 29).

The power of the Tea Party movement is grounded in how they have the ability to control Republican politicians in office. On one hand, if Republicans in office do not abide by the Tea Party’s demands for policy changes, then the right-wing conservatives will challenge the party in future elections. The Republican Party needs the conservative voters to be able to win elections and therefore it is particularly hard for the party to break with the organization that attracts many of these important votes. On the other hand, however, the enthusiasm and resources coming from the movement have without a doubt energized the Republican Party and boosted the party’s success. Besides energizing the Republican Party, the Tea Partiers have been able to opt in on the very design of the party by the means of wealthy and

⁵ The term “establishment” is written with quotation marks since the word carries a negative connotation. In this context, however, the term should be thought of as a description of the core of the Republican Party,

influential advocates supporting the Tea Party (Dionne, *Why the Right Went Wrong - Conservatism from Goldwater to the Tea Party and Beyond*, 2016: 155). The purpose for the Tea Party is to remake the Republican Party “[...] into a much more uncompromising and ideologically principled force.” (Ibid.). To achieve this, the Tea Party is steering the Republican Party even further to the right and associates the party with values and policies that appeal much more to the older, white, very conservative voters than other demographic groups.

The Tea Party can be claimed to be both helpful and harming for the Republican Party. There are several forces that are at work within the Tea Party – grassroots organizations, media and national advocacy groups backing the movement with funds and endorsements. These forces all push in the same direction most of the time, but sometimes the ultra-free-market advocates operating on the behalf of the Tea Party urge for policies that may impede the Republican Party’s efforts in constructing majorities in election contests (Ibid., p. 157). The aim is, as mentioned above, to push the Republican Party further toward the right and adopting a “new” conservative ideology for them to rule and govern by. The advocacy groups backed by billionaires are not only aiming for the Republicans to win elections, but to turn the Republican Party into an uncompromising institution, which is devoted to radicalizing the free market, in favor of non-regulation that would limit control of businesses and the wealthiest people. In this way, the Tea Party is not helping the Republican Party, because many moderate Republicans know that they must compromise when it comes to passing legislature on a national level. Therefore, the Tea Party is more than a “booster” for the party – it is also a constraint.

It is not surprising that a movement like the Tea Party has risen based on how divided Americans are and how frustrated right-wing conservatives have felt. Several different factors have played a role in creating the Tea Party, as explained above. Mainly white, older people have been discontent with the election of Barack Obama and the public elation over his victory as well as what he stood for; specifically change and the connection between him and the younger population, and African-Americans. Therefore, with the election of Barack Obama, the conservative Republicans have had an even harder time identifying themselves with the government – and the president in particular. The discontentment has been bound to finding an outlet because more than a third of Americans is “reliably conservative” and a fifth

or more of this group leans even more to the right. Thus, it has been inevitable that some sort of reaction toward this within the Republican Party has had to be formed (Ibid., 236).

Not only were the Republican conservatives dissatisfied with the election of President Obama and that he stood for the young and African-American, but also that he stood for: “[...] the secular and sophisticated, the vast new populations of Latinos and Asians, and a scientific and technical class that seemed to own the future even as factories closed and blue-collar jobs disappeared.” (Ibid., p. 237). The older conservative generation that mostly make up the Tea Party movement can be described as frightened for what the future brings and the changes that they foresaw coming with the election of Barack Obama. For them, the US was changing and they were afraid that the next generations would not experience the same America that they grew up with. The Tea Party was therefore a result of the combination of social unease as well as economic rage that would have been impossible to avoid.

5.3. The role of welfare programs

The internal problems that the Republican Party is facing today have roots going back to the Goldwater movement in the 1960s, however, there have been multiple examples of issues that have pulled the party in an even more conservative direction, namely the welfare programs in the 1990s. In 1996, President Bill Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) into law, which was a fundamental change for the US welfare system. The structure of the public assistance programs to low-income families was changed drastically with the PRWORA. The law was designed to move unemployed citizens into the workforce permanently, promote stability in the family, and allow more flexibility to states creating public-assistance programs. The PRWORA replaced several existing federal welfare programs with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which provided grants to states for them to provide cash allowances to families in need. Furthermore, what was different with the PRWORA was that it was a comprehensive welfare reform that required work in exchange for time-limited assistance to low-income families and unemployed. It consists of work requirements and a bonus for states that move people into jobs and support families that move from relying on welfare allowances into the workforce as

well as increased funding for childcare and medical coverage (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

In 1995, before the PRWORA was signed into law, Republicans were critically split in the matter of welfare programs. There were the ones who wanted the welfare programs to be controlled at state level and those who wanted tougher rules imposed at congressional level before any decentralization took place. The Republicans in the Senate were split between the moderate, conservative and very conservative constituencies over how far the welfare system should be pushed (Dionne, *They Only Look Dead - Why Progressives Will Dominate the Next Political Era*, 1996: 154-155). This showed that there was a fundamental problem confronting the Republicans in the 1990s, namely that they were only able to win votes by talking against big government as Americans had become rather skeptical about the efficiency of the government in solving the nation's problems.

When looking at the role of welfare programs in recent times, the interesting thing is that there is actually a quite narrow gap between traditional Republican ideas on welfare and Democratic ideas. The Republicans have been consistently resistant toward Obamacare despite the fact that the party's Republican presidential candidate in 2012, Mitt Romney, endorsed a similar health care plan in Massachusetts. Obama has picked up on several policy ideas that were designed by conservatives, which Obamacare is a good example of since it is built on the idea of keeping the private health insurance market intact, which is something conservatives favor greatly. If Obama had then supported a single-payer system or another kind of more government-oriented plan, then conservative Republicans, or reform conservatives, might have endorsed something similar to Obamacare. To Dionne, this is the challenge that has confronted progressives since Bill Clinton's presidency (Dionne, *Why the Right Went Wrong - Conservatism from Goldwater to the Tea Party and Beyond*, 2016: 419). This also reflects how Obama is being personified as a symbol of socialism – any idea he presents, supports or endorses will seem suspect to conservatives. The reason for why it is relevant to consider the role of welfare reforms in this context is that they function as indicators of the growing influence of conservative ideas. Finally, it can be concluded that even though there have been strong resistance from Republicans against President Obama

with the belief of him leading the country in a “socialist” direction, the gap between Obamacare and the traditional Republican ideas is not very wide.

5.4. The Republican “establishment” and the rise of populist conservatism

When laying out the details of the different parts of the Republican Party and the different types of Republicans, the top “establishment” has to be considered as well. It is seen as being the core of the Republican Party – or at least it used to be – as well as the top of the Republican institution. The “establishment” can be viewed as the elite of the Republican Party and it consists of four different branches – officials, organizations, donors and the media. It is connected to people who are engaged in the political process and supports traditional Republican values like fiscal conservatism and limited government control. It can include several different groups and organizations such as donors who fund Republican candidates, super PACs, activists and strategists (Mindock, 2016). It is a structure that makes up the Republican Party and traditionally controls the rules of the party system, elections and funding disbursements. The “establishment” is more likely to be perceived as the political elite, politically moderate and often out of touch with the conservative voters. Moreover, the Republican “establishment” does not support the, Donald Trump, who currently runs for the party’s nomination, as he goes against many of the party’s ideological and political values with his own populist ideas. Though, they have not yet been able to either stop or control him. This primary season has shown that the Republican institution does not have the power to control the party’s candidates, as Donald Trump has been very successful this far to attract the “angry” voters that the party has previously neglected or led down.

5.5. The matter of “Trumpism”

Conservatism has become much more radical, which the Tea Party movement is also proof of, but as Dionne argues, the Tea Party is a logical consequence of the ideology that Goldwater preached (Dionne, *Why the Right Went Wrong - Conservatism from Goldwater to the Tea Party and Beyond*, 2016: 4). The phenomenon of “Trumpism” has also risen with its offset in populist conservatism. The populist conservative is a type of Republican who does not comply with the party’s “establishment”. They identify with the people and not with the “establishment”. They particularly concern themselves with protecting entitlement programs

and are fiercely opposed to newcomers – especially immigrants arriving from Mexico. They can also be defined as politicians who act by popular demand and act in accordance with what pleases and attracts the most voters – regardless of the official party line and the Republican Party's politics and values in general.

Donald Trump's political beliefs are not far from what can be seen in other parts of the world today – some of the same ideas have developed in Europe as well, e.g. in France with the political party, Front National. "Trumpism" is different from other radical conservatives' beliefs as it goes against a small government and extreme religious views and is opposing these with populist ideas and values instead (Schwartzman & Johnson, 2015). Trump believes in defending entitlement programs for certain groups in society. His priorities are to keep protections for white elderly people i.e. improving health care, defending programs that are already functioning as well as keeping foreigners out of the country – and this is an issue he comes down on hard. He also argues that elected government officials are not doing their job as they should and he wants to change that as well. These priorities are very appealing to a large number of people. One example of how he diverges from other Republican conservatives is his stance on Planned Parenthood. Planned Parenthood is a non-profit organization that supports women with contraceptive methods and medication as well as abortion, which has been established in this thesis is a much-debated organization in the US and for Christian conservatives in particular. Many conservative politicians and candidates plan to defund Planned Parenthood because the organization receives government funding and they are greatly opposed in supporting an organization that helps women undergo surgical abortions voluntarily. Trump, on the other hand, wants to continue supporting Planned Parenthood, however, he wants to make sure that government funding does not go to abortion clinics, but only to contraception (Gass, 2016).

If the public is told again and again that if they only work hard enough and stay true to themselves and to the party, a positive outcome would be inevitable, but the Republican administration fails and there is no improvement, then the voters' obvious response is to search for people and institutions to blame. This anger and frustration with the Republican administration is what has led to "Trumpism" and caused millions of Republican voters to support Trump, a populist conservative who does not comply with the "establishment". When

Donald Trump entered the primaries in the summer of 2015 seeking the Republican Party's nomination, it was evident that it would have an epoch-making effect on the political landscape in the US. The surge of Trump's success in the primaries this far has indeed come from the voters' discontent and anger with the Republican "establishment" and the government in general. However, the deeper ideological problems that have pushed Trump forward stem from history and are the results of the party itself because of the many promises, which have been given but have not been kept (Dionne, *Why the Right Went Wrong - Conservatism from Goldwater to the Tea Party and Beyond*, 2016: 2). It is not the first time a radical reaction like this has emerged after a period of frustration – the Tea Party movement, which has previously been discussed, is another example of the same type of reaction from conservative Americans.

Back in 2011, Donald Trump and other Republican officials rejected Obamas' right to be president in the US, since he had not produced a birth certificate showing that he was born in the United States of America. Back then, many Republicans supported Trump's notion, and even after Obama showed his birth certificate, which indeed proved that he was born in the US, Trump was still not convinced that the certificate was authentic. There were some Republicans who then withdraw from Trump and his accusations, but many stayed and continued their support, as he was important for their potential campaign funding (Dionne, *Why the Right Went Wrong - Conservatism from Goldwater to the Tea Party and Beyond*, 2016: 436). Leaders of the Republican Party praised Trump then, but since he entered politics the tables have turned and he is now a threat to the party. Especially the harsh rhetoric that Trump uses when speaking of immigration is far beyond the traditional rhetoric the Republican Party uses and something they want to be distanced from. Former governor, who also participated in the 2016 primaries to become the party's presidential candidate, Jeb Bush, even made it central to his campaign to oppose Trump as he "[...] warned that Trump's rhetoric and his ideas risked deepening the party's deficits among Latinos and Asian-Americans." (Dionne, *Why the Right Went Wrong - Conservatism from Goldwater to the Tea Party and Beyond*, 2016: 437).

It is important to point out that Trump has not developed any new views on immigration policies seen in relation to the Republican Party. What he has done, however, is having taken

the anti-immigration sentiments and the negative feelings toward immigrants much further than the party has done previously – mainly with his xenophobic sentiments. Securing the borders was also a big issue in the 2014 mid-term elections for the House of Representatives and the Senate and Trump has “only” proposed measures as tough and extreme as the rhetoric used then, which were included in both the 2014 mid-term elections as well as the 2016 primaries (Ibid., p. 438). What is arguable is nonetheless how Trump has been innovative and what has made him attract a large amount of voters. In this primary season he has spoken to voters through rhetoric of fear and focusing on how the police should be able, and have the proper resources, to protect American citizens. This is at a time when police brutality against black people has been a crucial focal point in several incidents and is therefore a quite sensitive topic that divides the nation.

Trump has managed to unite the “the silent majority” consisting of the working class, which the Republican Party has been neglecting in order to cater to the Christian right-wing voters. The neglected working class voters who Trump has attracted the support from can be identified as white Republican voters without a college degree and with incomes below 50,000 dollars a year. Trump has therefore filled a void in Republican politics where he appeals to the middle and lower classes, which is quite paradoxical as he is a billionaire himself. The way he has been able to garner the support from working class Americans is again by his rhetoric and in this regard, he has distanced himself from the conventional Republican understanding and talked of how a number of issues are not being handled correctly by the elected Republican officials. Besides immigration policies, the issues that Trump has spoken of include trade, taxes, and political power of the wealthy and how the salary of a CEO have risen excessively. In this way, because he speaks what is on his mind and “he tells it as it is”, he has spoken to the cultural conservative voters who have never believed in the party’s economic conventions. He has in particular catered to the needs of the estranged, angry white voters who have no interest in a party whose policies favor the rich and neglect the working class (Ibid.).

Donald Trump is running against the Republican “establishment” and challenging the party with his controversial opinions and ideas without producing or presenting any real policies and solutions to the problems he is addressing. In other words, he lacks a political strategy. He

is challenging the “establishment” in a more profound way than the Tea Party has done by not just deviating from general conservative principles but also opposing the entire idea of post-Reaganism, which the Tea Party is still leaning toward and idealizing. Trump has managed to campaign against his own upper class, or at least have had the appeal of campaigning against his own class, which is quite paradoxical. Moreover, he has been able to unite a substantial amount of Tea Party supporters and moderate but dissatisfied working class voters in supporting him and opposing the Republican “establishment” and the party’s traditional and conventional policies. By doing so, he has created a political divide in the Republican Party, as well as in the American electorate, which will have severe repercussions in the upcoming 2016 presidential election and for the political landscape in the future. Though, it remains to be seen exactly what harm the rise of “Trumpism” has done to the party and how the party will be divided into different fractions after the 2016 presidential election. The party will undoubtedly have to regroup and execute serious damage control after this year’s primary season.

5.6. Reform conservatives

There is nonetheless some hope as to whether the Republican Party has a chance in changing their conservative course into a more moderate direction. A change within the Republican Party happened when a new group of conservatives was formed. They had begun to acknowledge the fact that the party was not on the right track and was headed too far rightwards than what was ideal for the sake of both the voters and the party. The group can be described as reform conservatives, also referred to as “Reformicons” – conservatives who believe in conservative policies that support initiatives, which create growth of the American economy, an expanding middle class as well as creating opportunity for Americans. What is distinctive about the reform conservatives is that they accept the limits posed by a string of circumstances – e.g. the increasingly conservative Republican electorate, the geographical shift of the center of the Republican Party toward the South, and the right-leaning shift that is happening within the business community. The reform conservatives therefore maneuver in a very constrained environment where some of them oppose the Tea Party’s disapproval of the government (Dionne, *Why the Right Went Wrong - Conservatism from Goldwater to the Tea Party and Beyond*, 2016: 419). There is a problem with the ideas that the reform

conservatives present, however. The problem is especially between the market and the family – two political areas, which the Republicans are very concerned with. The solutions that the reform conservatives propose to the party's internal and ideological problems are not challenging enough. Thus, even though they acknowledge the contradictions of the conservative ideology, they do not propose solutions that are big enough to tackle the problems they are addressing (Ibid., p. 425). The contradictions referred to here contain the problems with catering to the traditional family's needs and to that of businesses' and the market's simultaneously. It is hard to limit government control in favor of a self-regulating market and at the same time raise money and government aid for the families in need.

Before the campaign took off in the summer of 2015, the reform conservatives were praised for acknowledging problems such as income inequality – even if the proposed solutions seemed weak (Ibid.; Gosselin, 2015). Editor of the magazine, *National Affairs*, and leader of the reform conservatives, Yuval Levin, argued that liberalism is being controlled by technocrats whereas reform conservatism relies on experimentation and evolution from the bottom-up and will therefore keep the social programs that work and move on from the programs that do not (Davis, 2015). The reform conservatives have been facing some critique for their attempts on changing the Republican Party. One of the reform conservatives, Senator Marco Rubio, who has also been running for becoming the Republican Party's presidential candidate in the 2016 primaries, made a tax plan that was supposed to help the less well-off instead of cutting taxes for the wealthiest Americans. However, the tax cuts that the 2014 tax plan, which Senator Marco Rubio together with Senator Mike Lee proposed, would add an astonishing amount to the nation's debt and still favored the wealthiest instead of generating benefits for the middle class (Ibid., p. 431). This was another example of how the conservative Republicans who favor reform might not deviate that far from the traditional, regressive conservatives of the Republican Party.

On the basis of this, in order for the reform conservatives to be successful and have any impact on the Republican Party's rightward direction, they need to respond to the crisis of insecurity among the conservative voters who have given their support to political candidates such as Dr. Ben Carson and Donald Trump. They have the possibility to actually change the course that the Republican Party has taken, but to be able to do so:

"[...] They will have to challenge not only the tactics of the Tea Party but also the turn conservatism took during the Goldwater revolution. It was once common for conservatives to say that liberals needed to free themselves from the 1960s. That is now the imperative for the American right." (Ibid., p. 442).

They can be part of the solution in correcting the conservative movement and as noted by reform conservative, Ross Douthat – if Republicans would figure out a way to diminish Trump – without adapting to his message nonetheless, then the pressure from the angry voters that Trump has utilized will continue to build up and some day suddenly burst. This will be crucially damaging to the Republican Party as it will be shattered into different fractions and give no possibility for the Republican leaders to unite the party and satisfy the different groups of voters at the same time (Ibid., p. 439). Reform conservatives are, however, a fleeting phenomenon as they are not very prominent in today's political landscape, but the initiatives that they have shown proves that there is a part of the Republican Party that seeks to reject the conservative direction the party has taken.

5.7. Discussion

It can be debated whether "Trumpism" is a continuation of the conservative development the Republican Party has gone through over time or if it is a completely different type of development. Based on this chapter and how several factors have played a role historically in pushing the party rightward it is evident that the party is facing major ideological and structural problems, which for example has been personified by the Republican candidate Donald Trump. Trump's ideas and his populist beliefs lie relatively far from the conservative values the party has adopted since the 1960s, and therefore it seems as the phenomenon of "Trumpism" is rather a new type of development, which is not a continuation of the party's conservative ideas. It can instead be described as a reaction toward the conventional conservative movements. It is supported by a "new" segment of voters – the "forgotten" or neglected working-class voters, who support Trump and now see an opportunity to change the way the Republican Party, and politics in general, works and the conservative ideology that the party lives by.

Furthermore, the party has been shaped both by bigger socio-economic processes as well as actual persons, who can be viewed as policy entrepreneurs, such as Barry Goldwater in the 1960s, when the Republican Party took a sharp turn to the right. It can further be debated how far individuals have pushed the party rightward and how far the party has been pushed due to broader socio-economic issues. On the basis of the findings in this chapter, mainly the five key reasons for the conservative path the party has taken, which have been identified, it can be concluded that these broader issues have had the most significant impact on shaping the party's general ideology, whereas individuals have been able to built upon the reactions from society and have pushed the party in a more specific conservative direction.

6. The role of media in politics and presidential elections

The main focus of this chapter is the influence of media in elections in general and the influence of Fox News Channel and the Rush Limbaugh Show in particular, as well as social media in the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections. The Republican Party has lagged behind the Democratic Party when it comes to the use of social media. However, I argue that the Republican Party has been able to create and maintain a solid voter base through cable network and talk radio. Talk radio and cable network channels were particularly influential in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In the latest presidential elections, social media has played a large role in influencing both campaigning and voting behavior. Beginning with the 2008 presidential election, social media has given a platform to political candidates for reaching out to millennials in particular and enabling the candidates to become more interactive with their voter base in general. Using social media proved to be a huge success leading to the victory of Barack Obama in 2008 but since then, the Republican Party has lagged behind in this perspective, being particularly reliant on traditional conservative talk radio programs as well as Fox News Channel.

6.1. The influence of talk radio shows and traditional news media

6.1.1. The Rush Limbaugh Show

The talk radio show named after the host himself, Rush Limbaugh, is the most listened to radio talk program in the US. It is broadcast on more than 600 stations nationwide and has approximately 14 million listeners tuning in weekly (Ho, 2014; Talk Media, Inc., 2016). As a conservative talk radio host, Limbaugh has had an immense influence on his listeners throughout the years since he began the show in 1988. It has been the highest ranked talk radio show for several years and is argued to have shaped the way conservative politics is discussed in the media (Rosenwald, 2014). However, within recent years, the popularity of the show has declined massively and Limbaugh is no longer in high demand on a wide range of radio stations. One of the reasons for why the declining popularity of the show is that Limbaugh himself no longer has the political influence that he used to have (Ibid.).

Even though The Rush Limbaugh Show has experienced great success with a time span over several years, the popularity of the show has massively declined in the past year. However, PhD Rosenwald (2014) argues that though talk radio, and The Rush Limbaugh Show, might be

deceased, talk radio has still had a powerful effect on the outcome of the 2008 and 2012 primaries. The most effective way that the conservative talk radio hosts have influenced primaries is by having specific candidates that they support on their show promoting their campaigns – and in some instances donating money to the campaigns as well. According to Rosenwald, the influence of talk radio on general elections has been exaggerated, but it can however, do significant damage to moderate Republican candidates in particular. He argues that talk radio hosts are representatives of a new kind of party leader who uses primaries to help pushing their own political agenda onto the Republican Party. Their power lies with the listeners. The weekly listeners have a special relationship with the host, which resembles friendship as they spend time everyday listening to a particular program and therefore a feeling of familiarity is formed. Therefore, many listeners are inclined to agree with the host's opinion and follow their guidelines regarding e.g. voting for a specific candidate that the host prefers (Ibid.).

In the beginning, it was only Limbaugh who had the power to get listeners rallying behind a certain candidate, but local hosts also helped candidates by campaigning and fundraising for them. With the wave of success of talk radio programs in the late 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, and the ability to use the Internet for fundraising, talk radio became even more distinguished as a power source of contributing insurgent primary candidates (Ibid.). The talk radio programs give a platform to these lesser-known primary candidates for them to reach out to voters and present themselves. Moreover, local hosts have the advantage of being able to discuss a primary race daily for weeks and thereby get the attention from a great number of listeners for a longer time than national hosts, since they have to be mindful of the wide span of listeners from all over the country. Talk radio hosts often support insurgent primary candidates as they have become increasingly hostile toward moderate Republicans and constantly oppose compromises made by the Republican Party. The power of talk radio creates great issues in governing as making compromises, which are necessary in many circumstances, are impossible when incumbent Republicans are worried about how their actions will be portrayed in the talk radio shows. Talk radio programs continually compel Republicans to take a hard conservative stance on a wide range of issues and many elected Republicans follow the agendas of the radio programs for electoral reasons (Ibid.). In this way, moderate Republicans turn more rightwards ideologically in order to be in the good

graces of conservative hosts. Moreover, the listeners follow suit, voting for them at the elections, thereby pressuring candidates to deliver conservative policies and abide by them.

In the late 1990s and in the early 2000s when talk radio gained widespread popularity, it became increasingly easy for Americans to choose news media sources leaning toward their own personal political views rather than listening to other sources providing a more varied range of perspectives. This constituted a problem as people who no longer would receive more diverse political views were instead more likely to be exposed to the likeminded talk radio hosts and other news reporters (Dilliplane, 2011). Furthermore, if these people were more engaged in elections and political campaigns, while people who were more exposed to diverse views in the news would withdraw for the same reasons, then the diversity in the media would decrease even more. However, data collected by PhD Susanna Dilliplane in 2008 showed that exposure to one-sided, partisan news sources did not change a person's habitual decision to vote. Nevertheless, the perceived energy or enervating effects of being exposed to partisan media does affect when the voters decide who they are going to cast their vote for and the level of their participation in the future (Ibid.). Consequently, if people are very receptive to what they listen to in talk radio, and the majority of talk radio programs in the US are conservative, then a large number of people will be more inclined to support conservative political candidates in elections.

6.1.2. Fox News Channel

When discussing the Republican Party's relationship with media there is one network in particular that cannot be overlooked, namely Fox News Channel. In the US, media plays a large role in covering political affairs in election years in particular, covering every aspect of the political parties and the presidential hopefuls from both sides of the political specter. Presidential candidates face a high level of scrutiny from the media in the relatively long time leading up to a general election. The reason for why Fox News Channel is particularly important to discuss in this context is that the cable network is considered as being biased toward the Republican Party. Therefore, Fox News has the ability of influencing the audience's general voting behavior. The cable network, which was established in 1996, has always been known to lean conservative, however, it has been criticized several times for only portraying the Republican Party's point of view as well as taking sides. It is commonly known in the US

that Fox News favors the Republican Party but the cable network have ignored the criticism and have tried to persuade people that they are “fair and balanced”, which is also a slogan the channel has used. On the left side of the political spectrum, no equivalent news channel exists. MSNBC, though, is in some ways considered to lean Democratic. However, they are not considered leaning as Democratic as Fox News is leaning Republican (Engel, 2014).

It is argued that Fox News is one of the reasons that political right-wing views that used to be considered extreme have now become commonplace. Rodney Ohebsion (2012) argues that too many Americans are now obsessed with cutting taxes on the wealthy, denying basic constitutional rights to Muslims and homosexuals, letting corporations do whatever it takes to make a profit, taking aid away from the educational system, combatting “liberal media”, affiliating the government with Christianity, and last but not least, associating President Obama with anything that is deemed un-American to them. He gives reasons to believe that conservative media outlets, such as Fox News Channel, is a key force in spreading these views and making them mainstream. Furthermore, the cable network is influencing US politics in the sense that it has given legitimacy to a new kind of conservatism (Ohebsion, 2012). It should be considered, however, how much Fox News actually affects people’s voting behavior and if the opinions presented on Fox News are persuading the audience.

A report, made by professors Stefano DellaVigna and Ethan Kaplan in 2007, addresses the question of whether media bias affects voting. They have looked at how the entry of Fox News impacted voting between October 1996 and November 2000 in the areas where the cable network was introduced. Fox News Channel was introduced into cable programming in 20% of American towns. They found that the introduction of the cable network had a small but significant impact on the vote share in presidential elections between 1996 and 2000. The Republican Party gained between 0.4 and 0.7 percentage points of votes in the towns where Fox News had been introduced. The same applied to Senate vote share, which also experienced a higher voter turnout. The estimates in a first audience measure indicated that the news channel convinced 3 to 8% of its viewers to vote Republican and 11 to 28% in a second, more restrictive audience measure (DellaVigna & Kaplan, 2007). In 2000, Fox News was available in 35% of American households and therefore its impact on the presidential election that year was estimated to be 0.15 to 0.2 percentage points – or 200,000 voters

across the country. While these numbers are relatively small, the outcome is still considered to have had a decisive effect in the narrow 2000 presidential election result between George W. Bush and Al Gore. Finally, the results imply that complications for policies, such as for the regulation of media concentration, exist and should be considered. This means that if media bias affects voter behavior, then deregulation of the media may affect political outcomes (Ibid.).

Even though, the research done by DellaVigna and Kaplan is from 2000 and television news has changed drastically since then, as well as the audience of Fox News, it still shows that even then, the channel provided a more conservative take on coverage than other media outlets and had a political influence. It can be difficult to establish exactly the political effects of media outlets in general. A survey conducted by Pew Research Center in 2010 showed that 40% of Republicans watched Fox News as opposed to just 20% of independents and 15% of Democrats (Pew Research Center, 2010). Republicans tend to prefer the news coverage provided by Fox News, ergo they watch this channel more than independents and Democrats. However, political implications of watching Fox News Channel depend on whether it is Republicans, independents or Democrats who are being influenced. Based on the 2000 presidential election, research carried out by Jonathan M. Ladd and Daniel J. Hopkins in 2012 found that the effect of Fox News was concentrated among people who already identified as Republicans and pure independents. Democrats and independents who leaned Democratic, however, voiced the same (low) level of support for George W. Bush – irrespective of their access to the cable network (Hopkins & Ladd, 2012; Hopkins, How the rise of Fox News helped Republican candidates, 2013).

When considered as one group, people who identified as Republicans, people who leaned Republican, and pure independents, were estimated as being 2.6 percentage points more likely to support George W. Bush when living in towns that broadcasted Fox News. These effects appeared stronger among respondents who were not registered voters, suggesting that access to Fox News was particularly influential among less politically engaged Republicans (Ibid.). The influence of Fox News is, however, not uniform. The prior political leanings of individuals affected how Americans reacted to Fox News in 2000, which denies the general claim of the influence of unchecked media. Democrats who had access to Fox News

were unaffected by the channel either because they did not watch it or because they did not find the news coverage persuasive (Ibid.). Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that Fox News Channel does affect voting behavior, and in that way it also benefits the Republican Party. It does so because viewers who have not been politically active prior to viewing the cable news are more likely to support the party and confirm their support by engaging in Republican politics.

6.2. Social media as a campaign strategy

6.2.1. The success of Obama's social media campaign

The use of social media was without a doubt one of the key factors that contributed to Barack Obama's victory in the 2008 presidential election. The voter turnout from both young and blacks played a major role, and the way that Obama managed to engage especially the younger generation was pivotal in the success of his campaign. However, Obama's campaign did not invent anything new, but the people behind it managed to combine different social networking sites into one movement, which they used to both fundraising, local organizing and attract the votes that helped them win firstly over Hillary Clinton and finally over the Republican candidate, John McCain (Carr, 2008). Obama was neither the first presidential hopeful who made use of social media as a campaign tactic – Howard Dean did so in the 2004 Democratic primary. However, Obama was the first to use social media as an essential aspect of his candidacy (Hellweg, 2011).

It is also important to note that with his use of social media, Obama managed to garner the support from regular, American citizens – and not just from the traditional relationships that the Democratic Party has with unions and influential Hollywood personas. With its structure, the online campaign managed to raise \$600 million, which was a record-breaking high (Carr, 2008). The campaign created video clips, which attracted the younger viewers, and garnered millions of views, which again was proof of how including the younger voters increased the overall voting engagement. However, the younger generation may not have affected Obama's campaign in their share of votes, as a report published by Pew Research Center suggests. If the number of young people had not voted, then Obama would have lost the states of Indiana and North Carolina, but would still have carried key states such as Ohio and Florida as well as

the national vote (Pew Research Center, 2008). Young people not only provided their votes, however, but they also helped spread Obama's message on social media as well as volunteering for his campaign. They may also have helped persuade parents and older family members to vote for, or just consider, Obama's candidacy. This means that even though the share of younger people's votes may not have been the tipping point for Obama's success, they may still have indirectly influenced his victory (Ibid.).

All of the people who provided their personal information to be a part of the movement, such as following Obama on Facebook and by receiving information on e-mail, gave the campaign a database of millions of supporters who, still after the election, could be reached almost instantly. Furthermore, this has given the possibility for the Obama administration to measure and collect voter attitudes via use of the Internet instead of polling, which has traditionally played an important role in presidential governance. In this way, the president has access to a large network that can be mobilized and called into action when needed (Carr, 2008). Using social media is a great way to interact voters and campaigners in between. It gives much greater transparency in what the politicians do, their general actions and social behavior. This is something that is very important to the voter who feels more secure knowing that they have access to the politicians' lives and in that way it gives the perception of the politicians being more trustworthy. There is also great power in opening the access to government for regular citizens and it is a sign of how transparency helps form a more genuine relationship between government and citizens (Carr, 2008).

6.2.2. A politician's social media profile and relationship with voters

There is, however, some issues regarding the use of social media. For politicians who engage with the voters through all these different networking channels, it is inevitable that the electorate also expects something from the relationship. It is a two-way channel. When Obama entered his presidency after almost two years of having engaged and interacted with the electorate, his relationship with the many online supports reached a new level. In a way, a feeling of ownership of Obama was created, in the sense that by having supported him, voted for him and elected him as president, people felt that they were entitled to a share of his success. This is reflected in the very name of the website called, My.BarackObama.com, where people could exchange information, create events and establish fundraising – a platform for

mobilizing supporters (Harfoush, 2009). The name of the website suggests that voters can feel a form of entitlement over a political campaign for a candidate that they support. Thomas Gensemer, former Managing Partner of Blue State Digital, which is an organization that helped develop Obama's digital campaign, discloses that the people who engaged themselves in Obama's campaign would continue to expect a conversation between them and the administration a long time after he had been elected president. The supporters preferred to take an active role in being part of the political and governing sphere (Carr, 2008).

A study conducted by Annie Hellweg of Elon University, North Carolina, in 2011 showed that voters actually value a political profile's personal content over professional content, general electability and trustworthiness. The research examined how politicians used Facebook and Twitter and how they could use these forums in the most effective manner to communicate and interact with citizens. Conclusively, the research identified that a politician's use of social media considerably influenced and enriched the experience with, and outlook an individual had on, a particular politician (Hellweg, 2011). The object of the online Obama campaign was helping him get elected as president, but the essence of My.BarackObama.com was equally to create a sense of community and this is what made Obama's social media campaign so successful (Harfoush, 2009).

6.3. The importance of social media to voters

In recent years, social media has come to play a large role in many people's lives. However, the way people utilize social media platforms has changed – especially for political candidates. People no longer only use social media to stay up to date and be connected to one's social network of family, friends and colleagues. A survey conducted by Pew Research Center in 2014 shows that overall 16% of registered voters follow candidates for office, political parties or elected officials on a social media site. In 2010, only 6% of voters did so, and this increase shows that social media now plays an even bigger role in voters' perception and interaction with political candidates. The biggest gap is apparent for the voters aged 30 to 49 years old. Within this age group, the increase has been as significant as tripling from 6% to 21% of people who are now following politicians on social media during the short period of time of four years. Below, Figure 4 shows how the different age groups' use of social media has changed.

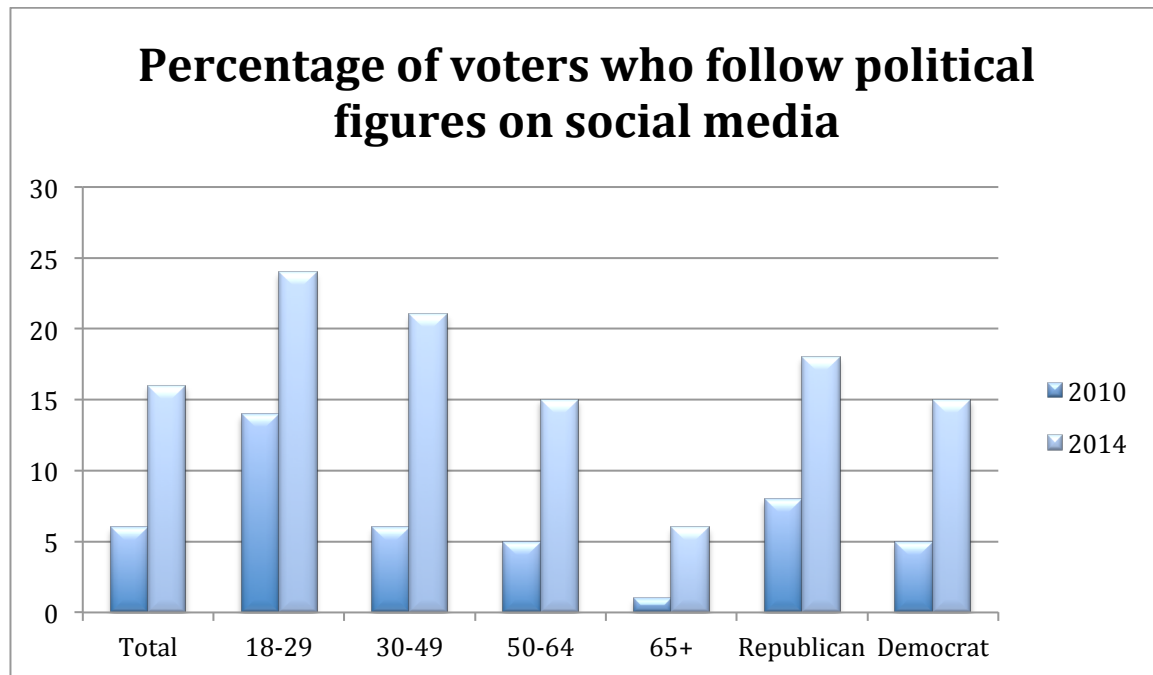


Figure 4 (Source: Pew Research Center, 2014)

As explicated in Figure 4 above, the number of registered voters who use social media to connect with political figures has especially increased within the 30-49 year olds and the 50-64 year olds, where the increase nearly has tripled within both age groups. Still, the 18-29 years old is continuing to be the age group who interacts and uses social media the most in regard to be connected and stay up to date with political figures. One of the most important factors for voters choosing to follow politicians on social media is in the case of a breaking news story. In fact, 41% of registered voters state that receiving political news before others is a key reason for why they follow political figures on social media – in 2010, this number was 22% of the voters (Anderson, 2015). This also indicates a shift in people's perception of traditional news media. Some of the voters who follow political figures on social media state that they follow these figures exactly to circumvent traditional news media. They do so because they find the information they get from a politician's social media profile more reliable than what they receive from traditional news media. Another major reason for why voters follow a politician on social media is because they feel more personally connected to a political individual or group in this way. As many as 35% of the registered voters who use

social media state that this is the reason for why they follow a person on social media (Anderson, 2015).

There is no evidence projecting that there is partisan difference in how voters participate in digital campaigns – both Republicans and Democrats use social media to connect with politicians at a similar rate. Though, Republicans have a higher share, with a small margin, of voters who follow them compared to Democrats. However, for Republican social media users, there is a greater desire to be the first to receive breaking news from the politician's own channels than from traditional news media (Smith, 2014). This might be related to a higher rate of skepticism toward news media among Republican voters.

6.4. Young voters

As discussed in Chapter 4, young voters are an extremely important demographic group for the Democratic Party. Young voters have given the majority of their votes to the Democrats in recent years and especially in the 2008 presidential election, young voters played a significant role. They were part of the reason for Barack Obama's success and this was due to him being very tech-savvy and knowing how to engage and attract young voters. The young voters were the age group providing most Obama supporters in 2008 and as many as 66% of those under age 30 voted for Obama. This number represents the largest disparity between young voters and other age groups in any presidential election since polling began in 1972 (Pew Research Center, 2008). The research conducted by Pew Research Center suggested that a significant generational shift in allegiance toward a political party had occurred. The shift had been underway for a long time but was highlighted in the 2008 presidential election. One of the results was a large gap between voters who affiliate themselves with the Democratic Party and the voters who affiliate themselves with the Republican Party. Among voters age 18-29 years old, 45% affiliated themselves with the Democrats and only 26% with Republicans. Just 8 years earlier, in 2000, party affiliation was split almost evenly among young voters. The reason for the generational shift that has happened is that young voters are more diverse than older generations on an array of parameters. These include greater diversity racially, ethnically and being more secular in their religious orientation. These characteristics are making young voters more inclined to lean toward the Democratic Party (Ibid.).

Besides being one of the most important demographic groups in the election of Barack Obama, the younger voters' strong support for the Democratic Party was also reflected in how unusually active and involved they were in the campaign. According to another Pew Research Center voter survey, 28% of young voters in swing states had attended a campaign event, which was a number much higher than for any other age group. They were, however, less likely to have donated money to the campaign. The energy, which the young voters put in the Obama campaign in 2008, was a result of the efforts that the campaign had made to mobilize exactly this group of voters. In some states, the younger voters were more likely to have been contacted than older voters, which also indicates a significant generational shift. Moreover, in key states, young voters were much more likely to be contacted by the Obama campaign than by the McCain campaign, which was also a result of the strong efforts put in the online campaign that Obama ran. On a national level, 25% of voters aged 18-29 years old, said that someone contacted them in person or by phone on behalf of the Obama campaign and only 13% were contacted by the McCain campaign. In some key swing states, the disparity between the numbers of voters contacted by the two competing campaigns were much larger, which further proves that contacting young voters and reaching out to them for their support was a huge advantage for the Democratic Party (Ibid.).

6.5. Discussion

This chapter has covered the aspects of talk radio, television networks and social media in the 2008 presidential campaign. Talk radio and cable news, specifically The Rush Limbaugh Show and Fox News Channel, have been highly influential in shaping the views and opinions of their conservative audiences. However, research shows that the programs may not have altered the opinion of the audiences if they were already leaning Republican, but they did affect voter turnout – particularly in the 2000 presidential election. The shows, which have aired on radio, have had an effect on a political scale as well, influencing politicians to steer in a more conservative direction than if their popularity and election results would not be affected by the influence of talk radio hosts and their support by faithful listeners. The Republican Party, however, has not been as successful in using social media to attract new voters – and voters from other demographic groups than their usual voter base – than the Democratic Party. They have instead relied on cable network television and talk radio, which has proved successful for them in the way that it has reinforced belief in the party in people who were Republican

leaning, pure independents and Republican voters (Hopkins & Ladd, 2012; Hopkins, How the rise of Fox News helped Republican candidates, 2013).

The Democratic Party, on the other hand, has relied solidly on reaching out to new voters by the use of social media. Especially in the 2008 presidential election when the Obama campaign engaged the Democratic voter base as well as attracted new voters on a scale not previously seen. The Obama campaign was active on many social networking sites, which were used to engage young voters, and otherwise unenthusiastic voters who would not have been concerned with politics and the political campaign if these particular outlets had not existed. Furthermore, social media is becoming a larger part of people's daily lives and therefore it is crucial for the Republican Party to also focus on a social media campaign in the upcoming 2016 presidential election. However, as there have been large developments in social media since just four years ago, the Republican Party cannot avoid using social media as a campaign strategy and as can be seen today, it has been incorporated in both Hillary Clinton's and Donald Trump's political campaigns. Social media will continue to have a huge impact on the political landscape and how the electorate is able to connect and interact with politicians, which has already been embraced by the two political candidates.

The argument that Republicans have been reliant on talk radio and Fox News is supported by how the shows affect their audiences and how the audience cast their votes in elections afterwards, as well as how the viewers and listeners are affected in general by the conservative values that the programs favor. The impression has also been that Republicans have not used social media as much as Democrats. Demographics play a key role in this. The fact is that young voters tend to favor the Democratic Party and they interact on social media significantly more than the older generation. The older generation tends to be more conservative in their worldview and therefore favors the Republican Party. This also explains why older, Republican voters are more inclined to watch Fox News and listen to talk radio compared to younger Americans who are more likely to engage in politics through social media.

7. Conclusion

In this thesis, the changing demographics in the US, the ideological path the Republican Party has taken and the role of traditional and social media have been examined in order to answer the research question: *Is the Republican Party facing insurmountable challenges?*

Based on the findings of the thesis, it can be concluded that the Republican Party is indeed facing great challenges and the most devastating ones are demographic changes and internal ideological issues. These are the two major reasons for the problems the party is facing today. Whether the problems are insurmountable or not, only time can tell. However, the current shape of the political landscape and the surge of populist conservatism give reason to believe that the Republican Party has to regroup in order to survive as a major political party and as an equal counterpart to the Democratic Party. In order to reach this conclusion, it has been necessary to discuss the possible reasons and factors, and weigh these against each other. In the process of this, it has become apparent that some factors play a more significant role than others in being challenges or advantages for the Republican Party.

As stated above, it remains to be seen if the Republican Party can face these challenges and successfully overcome them. The upcoming 2016 presidential election will without a doubt cause a stir to the core of the party, and has already done so since the commencement of the campaign and especially since Donald Trump entered the race for the party's nomination. The successful campaign Trump has run so far has posed a new set of problems for the Republican Party. Not only do they have to consider demographic changes, and how to attract new voters, but the conservative branches that have been created over time within the party have also caused severe damage, which they need to get under control. These branches include the Goldwater movement as well as the Tea Party movement. The Goldwater movement was the beginning of the conservative era the Republican Party entered in the 1960s. Since then, some Republican constituencies have continued to grow more conservative.

One of the reasons for the increasing level of conservatism – and more extreme conservatism – has been the influence of evangelical Christians and the Tea Party. Since the evangelical Christians started to vote Republican, this group of voters has become a large and important part of the party's voter base. With them making up a substantial part of the voter base, and

having an increasing level of influence through movements, such as the Tea Party, the Republican Party has been pulled in an even more rightward direction ideologically. Thus, meaning that the party now has to continue satisfying this particular group of voters because otherwise they would not receive the number of votes that they need to be able to win elections. Furthermore, the Tea Party's role on a national scale has proven to become, paradoxically, both an advantage and a disadvantage to the Republicans. On one hand, the Tea Party has successfully garnered the support from many right-wing voters and therefore the party has a solid voter base. On the other hand, the Tea Party is hindering moderate, progressive Republicans within the party to cater to moderate, progressive voters and therefore the party continues to be pulled in a conservative direction.

What many political scientists and pundits did not foresee, however, was the rise of Donald Trump. As he entered the race for becoming the Republican Party's presidential candidate, it was widely considered to be a short lasting phenomenon. Contrary to this general belief, he has had a great impact on the Republican Party and the political landscape in general. Populist conservatism, which is what Trump preaches, is gaining more ground, not only in the US but also worldwide. The fear of terror is a particularly sensitive topic as it has been incorporated in the back of the mind of people since 9/11 and is a fear that in some ways alter people's rationale – e.g. when it comes to Muslims. Therefore, a great number of people are persuaded by Trump's campaign and his slogan, "Make America Great Again". The supporters of the populist conservative see his arguments for banning Muslims from entering the US and building a wall on the border of Mexico as necessary steps in providing safety for American citizens, as well as securing jobs and the economy domestically. These extremist views are not representative of the Republican Party and therefore the "establishment" has distanced itself and tried to distance the party from Trump.

Moreover, media has played a large role in the relationship between the Republicans and their supporters. Especially, Fox News and The Rush Limbaugh Show have had an impact on people's opinion and voting behavior. However, the findings in this thesis show that the voters who were already leaning Republican have been more likely to engage in politics and support the party after tuning in to the cable news channel and talk radio program. Social media has become a substantial part of campaigning and political interaction. As this thesis

proves, the Democratic Party and President Obama, in particular, has been frontrunners when it comes to using social media as a means of getting the attention from young voters and creating mutual relationships that benefit the party in the long-term. This, however, has not been the case for the Republican Party as the party has struggled to attract new groups of voters by mainly catering to the needs of their already established voter base and the conservative voters.

The internal divide Trump has created in the Republican Party shows that the party would have to regroup and collect itself again in order to compete with the Democratic Party and the external challenges facing them in the form of demographic changes. Based on the findings of this thesis, it can be concluded that the Republican Party is a major party in decline and faces a future with great challenges ahead. Finally, after having examined the possible underlying reasons for the Republican Party's challenges, and having looked at how harmful these problems are for the party by using a structuralist theoretical framework, I have reached the conclusion that the party is in fact facing insurmountable challenges. However, if the problems are insurmountable can so far only be answered with an estimated "yes", as the upcoming 2016 presidential election in November, and a possible win for the Democratic candidate, Hillary Clinton, will have a damaging effect on the Republican Party and the party's structure and identity.

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