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Shift in the Suburbs: An Analysis of Changing Vote Patterns in American Suburbs, 2000-2018

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Keywords

suburb, election, midterms, presidential, clinton, trump, education, urban, Political Science, Social Sciences, Marc Meredith, Meredith, Marc

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Shift in the Suburbs

An Analysis of Changing Vote Patterns in American Suburbs,

2000-2018

Jack Weisman

Advisor: Dr. Marc Meredith

Senior Honors Thesis in Political Science

University of Pennsylvania

Spring 2019

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Abstract

In the 2016 Presidential Election, the movement of well-off, highly-educated suburbs towards the Democratic Party was one of the most significant yet undercovered stories. In this paper, I analyze the political changes in suburbs around five major cities (Boston, Charleston (SC), Cleveland, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis) both in 2016 and in elections dating back to 2000. I find that between 2000 and 2014, municipalities close to core cities with high percentages of college graduates became slightly but significantly more Democratic, with much of this movement taking place around 2004 and 2006. Comparing 2016 to previous elections, I find that proximity to urban areas was indeed more significant than it was in the past, but much of the change in suburban areas can simply be traced to college educated voters becoming dramatically more Democratic. Analysis of opinion data from the American National Election Studies (ANES) and the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) suggests that this movement is likely due to a combination of liberalizing attitudes on social issues like abortion and a perception of the Republican Party moving to the right on racial issues. While early analysis of data from the 2018 Midterm Elections points to the durability of the suburban shift, it remains too early to determine whether 2016 really marked the beginning of a long-term political realignment in the suburbs.

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

Fully understanding how and why electoral voting patterns change is instrumental in elucidating why American political actors make the decisions that they do, and by extension, why American politics looks the way it does. In the subfield of American election analysis, many popular recent works, like Thomas Frank's *What's the Matter with Kansas?* and J.D. Vance's *Hillbilly Elegy*, have focused on trying to understand why rural areas are trending Republican as voters seem to vote against their economic interests. While such trends are interesting and very important in understanding the American political sphere, especially given Donald Trump's surprising victory in the 2016 presidential election, there has been far less scholarship on the parallel trends taking place in suburban areas throughout the country. The story of American politics, once

one of Democratic cities surrounded by Republican suburbs and populist-yet-swingy farmland, is no longer what it used to be, and trying to understand the rural voters who went from reliable liberals to die-hard conservatives only tells half of the story. Yet as reporters and scholars alike obsess over the “Obama/Trump” voter and try to understand how so many people got the 2016 election so wrong, there is a risk of overcorrecting and potentially missing pro-Democratic trends that are also taking place in many areas of the country. After all, looking back on the 2018 midterm elections, Democrats were able to win the House by the largest midterm popular vote margin since 1974 by picking up seats that were never competitive before, in suburban areas around cities like Dallas, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Washington. In all of these places, Democrats appear competitive in places that have been voting reliably Republican for decades.

1.2 Literature Review

As discussed above, the existing literature on suburban voting patterns is fairly limited. Between the backlash against President Obama in the 2010 midterm elections that saw many rural, traditionally progressive areas flipping dramatically to the Republican Party, to the success of Donald Trump in the 2016 election in riding a wave of white, rural resentment, much scholarly research on the impact of place on voting patterns has aimed to elucidate why areas outside of major metropolitan areas vote the way that they do. In the last few months, as Democrats were able to win back the House by dominating in well-educated suburban areas, some attention has been paid to suburban areas, but academic research on the subject still remains fairly limited (Skelley 2018). As a result, this thesis will aim to fill a significant gap in the literature by explaining a) what characterizes the suburban voters who have been shifting towards the Democrats and b) whether

there really is something unique about suburbia that has led to the Democratic shift.

Most existing major analyses of suburban politics focus on their unique brand of local politics, rather than their changing political dynamics relative to the national environment. Some present suburban voters as fairly well-engaged, basing their vote choices on issue positions and evaluations of candidates even in relatively low-salience local elections, which could mean that analyses of suburban voters' ideological leanings provide unique insights into their electoral preferences. Because suburbs are smaller than major cities and allow for more intimate community building, voters tend to know candidates personally, especially in smaller suburbs. Engagement is further strengthened by the high rates of homeownership, which tends to create a more lasting sense of community. However, suburban voters are affected by many of the same trends that affect voters elsewhere, including the state of the local and national economy (Oliver and Ha 2007). An alternative view of suburban voters views suburbanization as a threat to local politics, as suburbs are too large and interconnected to build the sense of community common in small towns, while they are too small for voters to feel the large impact of a big city government (Oliver 2001). Many suburbs were formed to be racially, socially, and as a result, politically homogeneous, making politics in suburban areas less contentious, and therefore less engaging. Smaller suburbs tend to have council-manager government structures, which limit the power of a single, elected mayor (if they have them at all), further destroying the political culture of suburbs (Oliver, Ha, and Callen 2012). However, these few studies on suburban politics tend not to delve into the implications of the political culture on state and national electoral patterns, leaving a gap in existing research that should be filled.

Other studies focus on demographic changes in suburbs that could inform vote trends, but don't expand their conclusions into electoral politics. Tam Cho, Gimpel, and Hui (2012)

find that partisanship tends to inform individual relocation patterns, with Democrats moving into urban areas and Republicans moving away from them. People of all partisan leanings tend to move to areas that are whiter, wealthier, and less dense than their origins, resulting in a trend of people moving outward from urban centers. Combined with Republicans' tendency to move towards existing Republican areas, this results in an overall pattern of Democrats moving to suburbs and pushing Republicans further into exurbs. Consistent with this research, Orfield and Luce (2012) find that, in each decade, what they deem the "ring of integration" moves further from inner-ring suburbs into middle suburbs, as the suburbs as a whole become less white, and therefore more Democratic. This integration tends not to be stable, meaning that wealthier, whiter residents then move out of inner-ring suburbs. Taken together, these studies lend credence to the demographic change theory of suburban voting. However, further research is needed to determine the extent to which demographics influenced changing suburban vote patterns, and how demographic changes interact with preference changes.

Looking more specifically at suburban voting patterns, while there is ample existing research, there is no single study that looks at (i) recent voting trends in suburbs (ii) on a level more granular than counties, (iii) while also exploring why suburban voters behave the way they do. One very early study, looking at how suburbs voted in the first wave of American suburbanization, found that suburbs tended to move in ways that mirrored their core cities and states as a whole between 1948 and 1964 (Zikmund 1968). More recently, McKee and Shaw (2003) looked into suburban gains in the 1990s and early 2000s, finding convincing evidence that suburbs clearly became more Democratic relative to the nation as a whole during this time period, in contrast with traditional views that suburban voters made up the Republican base. While they do not look in

depth into causation, they do hypothesize that this trend results from the ideological movement of the parties in the 1980s and 1990s, in which the Republicans moved to the far right and the Democrats moved to the center. Ultimately, they conclude that, while demographic changes were impactful, migration alone cannot account for this change. However, Gainsborough (2005) finds that, even when controlling for demographic and other relevant factors, suburban voters in the early 2000s were significantly more Republican than those in urban centers, lending credence to the idea that place alone matters in politics, an idea which I will aim to explore further here. However, Gainsborough does not make any conclusions regarding how the suburbs are changing long-term, and the voting environment has likely changed significantly in the 14 years since she published her research.

More recently, Scala and Johnson (2017) compare urban, suburban, and rural counties, and find a clear continuum, in that voters consistently become more Republican as they move further from urban cores, a discrepancy which appears to have grown significantly between 2000 and 2016. They note that the classification of a county as “suburban” alone does not predict vote behavior, with the suburbs of larger cities voting much more dramatically towards the Democrats than those of smaller cities. While they discuss the liberal ideological attitudes of large metro suburban voters, they do not really explore what caused the change that they noticed. Additionally, their analysis is exclusively on the county level, which allows for easy analysis of vote patterns all over the country, since all states make county-level vote data readily available, but is not granular enough to distinguish urban cores from inner-ring suburbs, or suburbs and exurbs from rural areas that may be in the same county. Teigen, Shaw, and McKee (2017) analyze both the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections at the ZIP code level, and find a clear relationship among white voters

between population density and vote preference. While this provides clear evidence that suburbs are no longer the bastions of Republicanism that they used to be, they do not really do an in-depth analysis of voters in suburban areas, although their ability to analyze vote trends by ZIP code is encouraging for the further analysis conducted here. Additionally, rerunning analyses like theirs, focusing on race and proximity, on 2016 results should be interesting, given the racial overtones of that election.

Finally, there are some studies that zero in on the 2016 election specifically, which provide insight that could inform why well-educated, relatively diverse suburbs are behaving politically the way they are. However, they don't necessarily focus on place, but rather the demographics that correlate with place. First, Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck (2017) aim to look at the education divide in 2016. Unlike many other studies, they focus on the educational divide from both sides, looking both at the rightward shift of those lacking college degrees and the leftward movement of those with college degrees. They note that, even though white voters moved away from the Democratic Party during the Obama Administration, this shift occurred entirely among non-college educated voters, with college educated white voters moving towards the Democrats. They also find that the education gap in 2016 candidate support disappears when controlling for race. This interaction of education and racial attitude was likely very significant in predicting why suburban areas with high concentrations of college educated voters are becoming more Democratic. Similarly, Schaffner, MacWilliams, and Nteta (2018) investigate the role of racial resentment and sexism on the 2016 election, and find that these factors predicted vote preferences far more than any economic factor. Specifically, they find that a respondent's score on their scales for hostile racism and sexism were incredibly predictive of vote choice, much more so in 2016 than in 2012. They also find that racism

is the strongest predictor of whether one moved from voting Democratic in 2012 to Republican in 2016, even though Barack Obama, as the first Black president, was on the ballot in 2012. Like Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck, they find that controlling for racism and sexism significantly decreases the impact of education. Finally, Mutz (2018) notes that Social Dominance Orientation, a metric by which members of groups in power view their position in society as being threatened, was a very strong predictor of vote choice in 2016, while personal economic status was not. Taken together, these studies suggest that voting patterns have become much more cultural than economic, which could result in people of higher economic status in more diverse suburbs moving towards the Democrats. Overall, this research provides ample evidence of a theory of significant change in voter preferences, and it should be interesting to explore the extent to which 2016 represented an aberration from or a continuation of existing trends.

2 Hypotheses and Empirical Tests

2.1 Hypotheses

In order to paint a complete picture of the changing vote patterns in suburban areas, I will conduct a number of analyses on the voting trends and political preferences among of voters before, in, and after 2016. Despite the role that President Trump may have played in altering party coalitions along regional and educational divides, the Republican Party's movement to the right on non-economic issues was largely accelerated in the early 2000s under George W. Bush. Of course, President Bush wasn't the architect of this new brand of conservatism, as the appeal to the religious right can easily be traced back to the Reagan Revolution in the late 1970s and 1980s

(Kazin 1995). But following the fights over the role of government in the 1990s, in which the Republican Party truly emphasized its fiscally conservative bona fides, the Bush era marked a return to the weaponization of social conservatism for political gains. Bush's fiscal and foreign policies were certainly consistent with conservative orthodoxy, but it was his "compassionate conservatism" and emphasis on personal faith that drove his stances on issues like abortion and gay marriage, cementing the Republican Party's stronghold on white, rural areas in the South and making inroads on similar areas in the Midwest (Conlan and Dinan 2007). But such appeals are unlikely to have had similar effects everywhere, and could have had counterproductive effects on traditionally-Republican college educated suburban voters, whose support for the Republican Party is likely rooted in small-government fiscal policies. For those voters, the Bush Administration's embrace of the religious right, sometimes at the expense of science on issues like stem cell research and teaching evolution in schools, may have been politically toxic (Judis and Teixeira 2003). We should also expect that voters closest to urban cores, which tend to be more diverse and pluralistic, and less non-Black Christian, than exurban and rural areas, would react more negatively to the rightward shift in the Republican Party (Oliver 2001). While it's hard to define what exactly constitutes a suburban voter, I look primarily at voters in municipalities outside of, but relatively close to, the core cities of metropolitan areas, which tend to have high percentages of voters with college degrees. The aforementioned effects should be strongest in the 2000s decade, where Bush pushed social conservatism and Obama inherently made race more salient, but it is possible that the Great Recession and Romney 2012 campaign could've re-emphasized economic issues and reversed some of these trends. Ultimately, while there will be a high correlation between education and proximity to city, I expect that both of these factors, for reasons discussed above, will have predicted shift

towards Democrats. Therefore, I present the following hypotheses:

H1A: In the first few elections of the 21st Century, college educated voters began moving from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party.

H1B: In the first few elections of the 21st Century, suburban voters began moving from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party.

As documented in the literature review, the movement of well-educated voters in 2016 is already well established, but a few questions remain. Most significantly, it is unclear to what extent education on its own predicted the suburban shift towards the Democrats, given that well-educated voters tend to live in suburban areas, or whether there is some inherent importance of place, including diversity of ZIP codes and proximity to urban centers. Furthermore, given that Donald Trump emphasized a wide variety of racial and cultural issues while simultaneously pivoting away from conservative fiscal orthodoxy, it's not entirely clear for which reason such voters would've moved away from the Republicans. In addition, since suburbs in many rapidly-growing cities, especially closer to their principal cities, tend to be diversifying, the effects of changing racial demographics will need to be separated from individual voters simply changing their opinions. Sides, Tesler, and Vavrek's extensive analysis of the 2016 election demonstrated the salience which racial issues had, and as such, we should expect that Trump's rhetoric on race likely pushed college educated suburbanites away from the Republican Party more than his anti-trade protectionism. If this is true, it would make sense that, even though education has been well-established as a predictive factor in 2016, when comparing similarly educated voters in different areas, proximity to urban core is likely very important in predicting movement towards the Democratic Party. This would also suggest that, even though many suburbs are changing demographically, demographic

change alone could not predict 2016's unique patterns. Thus, we arrive at the second hypothesis:

H2: In the 2016 presidential election, proximity to urban centers among suburban, exurban, and rural voters predicted movement towards the Democratic Party.

Finally, while the 2016 election has been extensively analyzed, it needs to be studied whether the patterns that took hold in 2016 continued in 2018, given that midterm elections often framed as a referendum on the President, or whether they began to reverse themselves, given that Trump himself was not on the ballot. Considering the strength that Democrats had across the board in 2018, but especially in suburban areas, the answer to this question likely lies somewhere in the middle. Democrats likely improved upon their 2014 performance more in suburban areas than in rural ones, given the association of the Republican Party with Trump's racialized politics, especially on immigration. At the same time, Trump's appeal to rural voters likely derived from his uniquely bombastic rhetoric, while many suburban Republicans aimed to distance themselves from Trump. It is far too early to tell whether the 2016 election marked the beginning of a long-term paradigm shift in American politics, but anecdotal evidence should suggest that the influence of Trump on the political environment continues even without his name on the ballot. Ultimately, it is likely that:

H3: Suburban voters voted somewhat less strongly for Democrats in 2018 than in 2016 (relative to rural voters), but still significantly more than in 2014.

On the whole, I expect to see that suburban voters, both due to their demographic characteristics, namely college education, and proximity to relatively diverse areas, have been moving away from the Republican Party at least since 2000. However, these trends would have been greatly accelerated by Donald Trump's rise to the Republican nomination and presidency in

2016, and as such, are far more significant today than they were before 2016.

2.2 Empirical Tests

The bulk of my analysis focuses on individual places and county subdivisions (the definitions of which vary depending on the state), the smallest geographic subdivisions for which census data and election results can be aggregated. Since the lack of availability of data and difficulty of processing would make a national municipality-level analysis almost impossible, I focus on five metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) - Boston, Charleston (SC), Cleveland, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis-Saint Paul. These MSAs are fairly geographically diverse, have relatively small principal cities (making municipal-level analyses more meaningful), and are located entirely or almost entirely in states with readily-available election results dating back to 2004 or 2000. I analyze each municipality's absolute and relative margins, the differences between the Democratic candidate's margin of victory in a given municipality and their margin in the entire state, and conduct ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions on changes in relative margins between presidential or gubernatorial elections, looking at the impacts of education, race, and proximity to urban core, the values of which come from American Community Survey (ACS) population estimates. I also run various tests that interact years with various other variables, in order to isolate how those variables change over time. Throughout the regressions in this analysis, year numbers refer to the number of the election cycle, ranging from 2000 as election cycle 1, 2002 as election cycle 2, all the way to 2018 as election cycle 10. Regressions are run for both individual metro areas and the overall sample, with municipalities weighted in the overall sample such that all metro areas are valued equally.

For elections held in 2010 or earlier, I use 2006-2010 five year ACS estimates (as both

census and ACS data prior to this year is significantly more limited), while for elections held in 2011 or later, I use 2013-2017 five year ACS estimates. Given that year-to-year differences in ACS data are likely due to statistical noise, I tried to minimize the number of distinct datasets used. For Ohio, Minnesota, and Massachusetts, data are aggregated by county subdivision (cities, villages, and townships in Ohio and Minnesota, cities and towns in Massachusetts), while for California and South Carolina, data are aggregated by place (cities, villages, and census-designated places). For the sake of simplicity, these county subdivisions and places will be collectively referred to as municipalities. Proximity to the city core is approximated by taking the ZIP code that makes up the largest percentage of each municipality's population, matching ZIP codes to representative coordinates as determined by the Census Bureau, and calculating the distance to the city hall of the metro area's principal city in kilometers (for Minneapolis-Saint Paul, which has two large urban centers, the minimum of the distances to Minneapolis and Saint Paul was used). Because larger cities and metropolitan areas take up more area, and therefore suburbs with identical distances from the city core can be drastically different in different metro areas, these distances are then standardized into proximity ratings (henceforth referred to simply as proximity). Proximity is calculated by subtracting each municipality's distance to the urban core from twice the median distance within its metro area, dividing by twice the median, and rounding up to zero if needed, creating a standardized proximity scale from 0 to 1, with 1 referring to the highest relative proximity to the urban core. (In the case of Minneapolis-Saint Paul, due to the unusually large number of rural counties included in the MSA, 1.4 times the median is used instead of twice the median.)

However, my analysis will not focus solely on election results, which can tell us how certain types of people voted, but not why they voted in certain ways. I begin the first two results

subsections by analyzing nationwide survey data from the American National Election Studies (ANES), in order to establish a broad, national characterization of whether college educated voters, who tend to make up disproportionate portions of suburbs, became more Democratic over the first two decades of the 21st Century. I also look at data from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), a survey of over 50,000 voters conducted before and after every general election in midterm and presidential years, led by researchers at Harvard University and other participating institutions, with polling conducted by YouGov. This study is large enough that I am able to limit my analyses to voters outside of the core city in the target MSAs, in order to determine the relationship between education and location on issue positions, and then between issue positions and vote choice. While these data are less reliable and comprehensive than election results, they should allow for a clearer picture of the impacts ideology, and how they interact with education and location. Vote choices are determined by looking at post-election self-reported votes (and, as such, respondents who did not complete the post-election survey are excluded), and all other demographic characteristics and ideological responses are self-reported and collected pre-election. Proximity to city is approximated by taking a respondent's ZIP code, matching ZIP codes to representative coordinates as determined by the Census Bureau, and calculating distance and proximity in the same manner as that described above.

To analyze the trends in elections up through 2016, I begin by looking at the demographic and ideological predictors of vote patterns in a national sample, using ANES data, to establish a baseline as to which issues become more and less salient over time, and to see how college educated voters as a whole are changing both electorally and ideologically. I then move into analysis of election results, looking at how proximity to city and education impact vote patterns over time,

focusing on whether I can establish a statistically significant change in the impact of “suburban status” between 2000 and 2014, and to see how the impacts of these variables change in 2016. For the 2016 data, knowing that some suburban municipalities saw massive changes that may not be explainable solely through voters changing their preferences, I also investigate the extent to which demographic change was responsible for the shifts in voting patterns in rapidly-growing suburbs. I use ACS population estimates from 2010 and 2017, and zero in on the Los Angeles area because of its known demographic changes, to see whether the demographic change theory holds any water. I then move into analyzing the ideological factors behind the pre-2016 and 2016 suburban shifts. I begin both of these sections with broad overviews of the ideological preferences of suburban voters as a whole, using ACS data. I then focus in on the issue stances associated with both proximity and education in order to try to explain suburban shifts at various points, and look at which issues seem most responsible for the vote preferences of proximal and college educated voters. I also look at whether living in areas with high populations of nonwhite people impacts white suburbanites’ voting patterns, in order to try to isolate the importance of exposure to individuals of different races.

Analysis of post-2016 voting patterns focuses solely on election results, since the 2018 edition of the CCES has yet to be released. However, in order to test the hypothesis that suburban voters are continuing to become somewhat more Democratic, this should be sufficient. I run various linear regressions with the demographic characteristics of municipalities, including educational and racial composition, as well as proximity to urban centers, as the independent variables, and relative margin changes in election results as the dependent variables. I analyze whether the same factors that predicted shifts in presidential voter preferences from 2012 to 2016 also predicted shifts in

gubernatorial voter preferences from 2014 to 2018 (as all states to be analyzed held gubernatorial elections in 2014 and 2018), to see if suburban voters are really moving away from the Republican Party, or just from Trump. I also look at the changes in vote patterns in House of Representative races from 2016 to 2018 to analyze the permanence of any changes that may have occurred in 2016. Finally, I determine whether swing from 2012 to 2016 itself has a statistically significant relationship with the swings from 2014 to 2018 and from 2016 to 2018, in order to see whether the Democrats' gains in 2018 resulted from a continuation or reversal of the patterns that we saw in 2016. While it will be impossible to fully characterize the state of the suburban vote in a post-Trump world, given that midterm elections are often referenda on the President, and that Democrats certainly tried to tie their Republican opponents to the unpopular President, these empirical tests should provide some indication as to whether the future of the Democratic Party is really in the suburbs.

3 Results

3.1 2000-2014: The Suburban Shift Begins

In 1969, political strategist Kevin Phillips published his treatise on *The Emerging Republican Majority*, which argued that Richard Nixon's successful 1968 campaign was a harbinger of an impending era of Republican dominance in presidential politics, a prediction which largely panned out. The book recognized racial and cultural conservatism as a key factor behind Nixon's successes, and argued that if the Republican Party kept going down the Nixonian path, they would continue making progress among traditionally-Democratic rural voters. 35 years later, John Judis and Ruy Teixeira responded with *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, arguing that the Republican

Party’s social conservatism had become so significant that it was beginning to turn away traditional “country club Republicans.” Shortly after Judis and Teixeira published their book, Democrats built a national majority and took back the House of Representatives for the first time in 12 years, but the 2006 midterms and subsequent election of Barack Obama are often framed as victories of a coalition of young and nonwhite voters, with little discussion of changing vote patterns in suburban areas. In this section, I explore the extent to which college educated and suburban voters did or did not shift towards the Democratic Party between 2000 and 2014, and whether their vote patterns and issue preferences line up with Judis and Teixeira’s predictions.

3.1.1 National Demographic Analysis

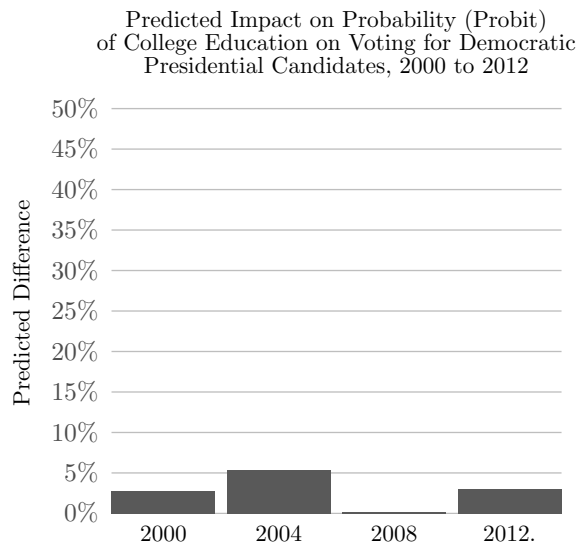
The predictive power of demographic information, including race, gender, age, and education, on political decision-making is well-established. In this section, I analyze the changing relationships between education and vote choice in presidential elections between 2000 and 2012, along with the interactions between demographic data and vote choice, in order to contextualize later analyses that focus directly on proximity to urban centers. These data derive from the pre-election ANES surveys conducted approximately one month before presidential elections, with sample sizes ranging from 1,212 respondents in 2004 to 5,914 in 2012. While later analyses focus exclusively on voters and survey respondents in the five metro areas of interest, because of the comparatively small size of the ANES, all results presented below use data from the full sample of respondents. Because I simply aim to present a broad overview of the demographic and ideological predictors of vote choice, a national analysis should be sufficient.

Looking at top-line demographic characteristics, there does not appear to be significant,

consistent change in party coalitions based on education. Interestingly, college education, which, owing to the high education rates in most suburban areas, is a crucial variable to be examined here, was not at all predictive in any presidential election between 2000 and 2008 (Figure 1), although it does become slightly predictive in 2012, possibly suggesting the emergence of a suburban, college educated, Democratic coalition before 2016. If we look at the percentages of college educated voters who voted Democratic in each of these years (Figure 2), we can see a clear jump between 2000 and 2004, with no large change in 2008 or 2012, while white college educated voters voted Democratic at fairly consistent rates, with 2012 as a possible exception. Ultimately, on a national level, the evidence of a shift among college educated voters is mixed, and if it existed at all, it may be due to the movement of nonwhite college educated voters between 2000 and 2004. Still, this movement of college educated voters in general does line up with later analyses of changing suburban vote patterns.

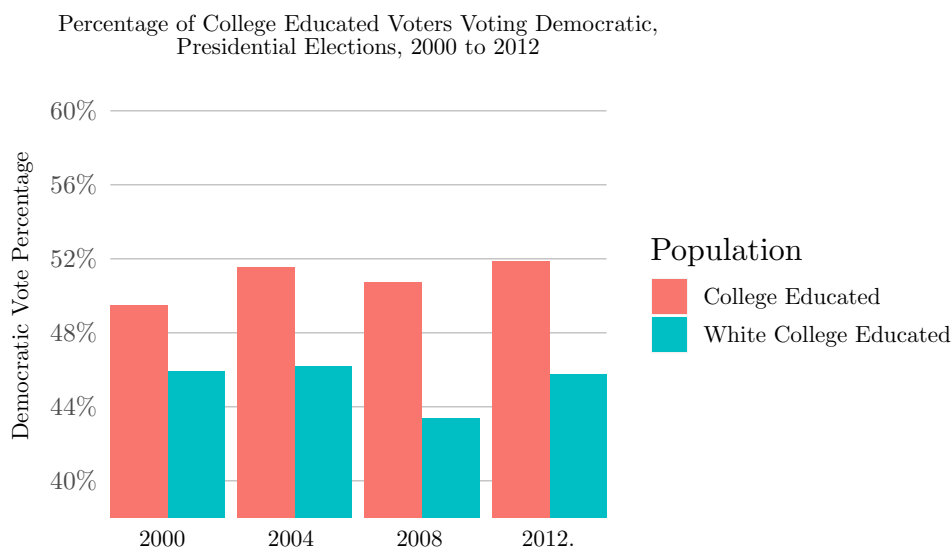
Ultimately, a national-level analysis of ANES data confirms some of what is widely believed about the politics of the 2000s and early 2010s, that younger, nonwhite, came to define the Democratic base, with race becoming even more of a dividing factor in American elections. On the other hand, contrary to popular depictions of the Obama coalition as revolving heavily around well-educated white liberals (Edsall 2011), it doesn't appear that college educated voters moved towards the Democrats at significant rates before 2016. But suburbs are more than just collections of college educated voters - it is distinctly possible that place matters beyond the differences in the demographics of people who live in different places. Therefore, if the analyses below demonstrate that suburban voters seemed to be shifting more towards the Democrats before 2016, we should not think of these effects as simply resulting from changes among the preferences of college educated

Figure 1: In a national sample, education had a minimal impact before 2016.



Mean Marginal Effects of college education on presidential vote (2000-2012), when controlling for gender, race, and age, national sample using ANES data (differences in predicted probability of voting Democratic between individuals with and without college educations). The '.' next to 2012 represents statistical significance at the level $p < 0.1$.

Figure 2: Nationwide, movement among college educated voters was small between 2000 and 2012.



Democratic vote percentage among college educated and white college educated voters in presidential elections (2000-2012), national sample using ANES data.

voters.

3.1.2 Changes in Suburban Vote Patterns

Having established that any changes in suburban vote patterns are not simply due to individuals with stereotypically suburban demographics (i.e. a college education) become more Democratic at the national level, it becomes important to analyze the impact of physical location on voting behavior, and whether there seems to be something inherent about the suburbs that makes a voter more likely to behave in a certain way. Of course, we first run into the difficulty of defining what a suburb actually is. If we consider a suburb to be a place within a metropolitan area outside of the core city, we would include poorer areas close to an urban center that aren't part of the core city (like East Cleveland, Ohio or Compton, California), stereotypically white

and affluent suburban areas (like Newton, Massachusetts or Kiawah Island, South Carolina), and rural townships in counties far from urban areas that are still included in officially-defined MSAs (like those in Sibley and Mille Lacs Counties, Minnesota). The lack of extensive existing literature on suburbs makes it even more difficult to clearly define what they are, although Oliver's (2001) analysis identifies all municipalities within an MSA, excluding the principal cities, as suburban, while recognizing that demographics are important in order to properly analyze what people tend to think of as suburban. As a result, the analyses presented here will consider a mix of proximity to city, race, and education as important factors in determining whether an individual or municipality should be considered relevant.

Looking at election results, we see some evidence of suburban areas becoming more Democratic between 2000 and 2014. Considering individual municipalities within the five metropolitan areas of interest, excluding those with a proximity rating of above 0.95 (thereby removing the six core cities), proximity to city clearly becomes more important over time in both presidential and gubernatorial elections (tables 1 and 2), even when controlling for race, thereby suggesting that, within a metro area, the discrepancy between more suburban and rural areas has been steadily growing at least since the turn of the century. This effect is not entirely constant, and appears to have been declining a bit in 2014 before jumping back up in 2016 and 2018, but a linear regression interacting year with proximity confirms that the effect of proximity on Democratic vote margin increases over time in a statistically significant manner, even when excluding 2016 and 2018, with each additional four-year cycle increasing the impact of proximity on relative margin by 3.0 percentage points in presidential and 3.6 points in gubernatorial elections (table 3). Interestingly, comparing presidential and gubernatorial results, it seems that the strongest effects occurred

sometime between 2002 and 2004, leveling off after the 2006 midterms. The potential reasons for this shift, focusing on the ideological patterns of the Bush Administration, are discussed in a later section.

Table 1: The impact of proximity on vote choice increased rapidly between 2000 and 2004.

	2000	2004	2008	2012
(Intercept)	0.256*** (0.034)	0.187*** (0.030)	0.327*** (0.028)	0.368*** (0.028)
Proximity	0.185*** (0.035)	0.274*** (0.030)	0.252*** (0.028)	0.253*** (0.029)
White Pct	-0.399*** (0.035)	-0.388*** (0.030)	-0.496*** (0.028)	-0.607*** (0.029)
Num. obs.	650	799	801	803

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

OLS regression coefficients for the impact of proximity and race on Democratic presidential vote margin (2000-2012), using election results from non-core municipalities in the five metro areas of interest.

Table 2: The impact of proximity on vote choice increased rapidly between 2002 and 2006.

	2002	2006	2010	2014
(Intercept)	0.200*** (0.038)	-0.003 (0.039)	0.334*** (0.027)	0.349*** (0.036)
Proximity	0.059 (0.039)	0.264*** (0.039)	0.191*** (0.027)	0.071* (0.036)
White Pct	-0.345*** (0.039)	-0.134*** (0.040)	-0.600*** (0.027)	-0.572*** (0.036)
Num. obs.	653	801	801	801

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

OLS regression coefficients for the impact of proximity and race on Democratic gubernatorial vote margin in non-core municipalities (2002-2014), using election results from the five metro areas of interest.

While the magnitude of the impact of proximity varies from metro area to metro area, and 2012 seems to represent a more significant outlier in some metro areas than in others, the effect

Table 3: The impact of proximity increases over time in both presidential and gubernatorial elections.

	Presidential	Gubernatorial
(Intercept)	-0.419*** (0.048)	-0.276** (0.095)
Proximity	0.448*** (0.028)	0.164** (0.058)
Year	-0.009*** (0.002)	-0.009* (0.004)
White Pct	0.023 (0.034)	0.178** (0.065)
Proximity * Year	0.015*** (0.002)	0.018*** (0.004)
White Pct * Year	-0.008*** (0.002)	-0.001 (0.004)
Num. obs.	3145	3160

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

OLS regression coefficients for impact of interactions between year and proximity and race on Democratic presidential and gubernatorial vote margin in non-core municipalities (2000-2014), using election results from the five metro areas of interest.

is largely consistent across the five areas analyzed (table 4). Perhaps most notably, in Charleston, where southern influences could potentially make wealthy, white voters even more conservative than expected, and where the outlying rural areas are much less white than in other parts of the country, the proximity regression coefficient is negative in all four years analyzed. However, since Charleston is the only Southern city analyzed here, we shouldn't make broad conclusions about the South. And even in this case, the regression coefficient tends to increase over time, demonstrating that the changing political winds in the suburbs were still present in less Democratic areas. Countering perceptions of a coastal elite moving towards the Democratic Party, while the middle of the country became more Republican, these analyses suggest that location within a metropolitan area matter much more for changing voting patterns than location in the country.

Table 4: The increase in the correlation between proximity and Democratic vote margin is largely consistent across metro areas.

	2000	2004	2008	2012
Boston	0.362***	0.427***	0.384***	0.458***
Charleston	-0.554*	-0.447*	-0.340.	-0.387.
Cleveland		0.588***	0.548***	0.607***
Los Angeles	0.183***	0.231***	0.299***	-0.138***
Minneapolis	0.210***	0.277***	0.340***	0.339***

OLS regression coefficients for impact of proximity on Democratic vote margin in presidential elections (2000-2012), broken out by year and metro area, in non-core municipalities in the five metro areas of interest. Controls for race were included in the regressions but omitted in the table above.

However, this only demonstrates that suburbs closer to cities were becoming more Democratic than suburbs and rural areas further from cities, not that what we often think of as “suburbs” (predominantly white and highly educated) became more Democratic. Indeed, it is certainly possible that areas with lower percentages of college graduates closer to cities were responsible for this

shift. Still, even when we control for the percentages of residents with a college degree and residents who are white, the effect of proximity appears to be significant and positive in all four presidential (table 5) and gubernatorial (see appendix B) years analyzed, but an actual trend across the years is not immediately clear. If we look at the predictive power of education over time, the effect starts out as negative in 2000, but becomes largely more positive over time. This pattern seems to parallel the role of proximity in the regressions that did not include education, which could suggest that some of the suburban shift is due to college educated voters becoming more Democratic, although clearly proximity plays a role beyond simple demographics. On the whole, even as proximity and college education both fluctuate in importance, the two variables combined suggest that college educated suburbs were becoming more Democratic.

Table 5: In presidential elections between 2000 and 2012, proximal and college educated municipalities tended to become more Democratic.

	2000	2004	2008	2012
(Intercept)	0.059* (0.024)	-0.060** (0.022)	0.154*** (0.020)	0.204*** (0.020)
Proximity	0.563*** (0.030)	0.627*** (0.027)	0.481*** (0.024)	0.555*** (0.024)
College Pct	-0.202*** (0.057)	-0.015 (0.049)	0.108* (0.043)	-0.079 (0.042)
White Pct	-0.257*** (0.032)	-0.276*** (0.027)	-0.437*** (0.024)	-0.518*** (0.025)
Num. obs.	648	796	798	801

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

OLS regression coefficients for the impact of proximity, education, and race on Democratic presidential vote margin in non-core municipalities (2000-2012), using election results from the five metro areas of interest.

Indeed, when including dummy variables for individual municipalities, a regression interacting year with proximity and both demographic characteristics yields a statistically-significant

increase in the predictive power of proximity and education over time, for both presidential and gubernatorial races (table 6). In each additional four-year presidential cycle, a hypothetical suburban municipality with proximity 1 would become 1.6 percentage points more Democratic than an identical municipality with proximity 0, while a municipality with 100% of residents holding college degrees would become 4.2 percentage points more Democratic than an identical municipality with 0% holding degrees. These results do not counter the ANES results, but rather suggest that for college educated voters, a movement towards the Democratic Party was stronger in suburban areas than rural areas, where there are fewer college graduates, and urban areas, where college graduates were already quite liberal. Therefore, even when we look beyond the different demographic compositions of different municipalities, there appears to be a small but significant positive relationship between two key indicators of suburbanization (proximity to city and education) and how likely it is to vote Democratic, even before the drastic suburban shift of 2016, one which tended to increase between 2000 and 2012.

So far, I've modeled relationships between vote choice and proximity and demographics to try to determine how different municipalities shifted politically between 2000 and 2014, and analyzed whether these traits line up with typical conceptions of what a suburb is. But if we look simply at the Democratic vote margins in municipalities that meet a few stereotypically suburban criteria, the story becomes even clearer - the suburbs have been getting more Democratic since at least 2000. And as the results above suggest, this shift is not solely due to well-educated places becoming more Democratic, or places closer to the city center becoming more Democratic, but both education and proximity influencing vote choice in a way that results in a significant suburban shift.

For the sake of the analyses below, I define a proximal municipality as one with a prox-

Table 6: The impacts of both proximity and education increase over time in both presidential and gubernatorial elections.

	Presidential	Gubernatorial
(Intercept)	-0.412*** (0.048)	-0.297** (0.100)
Year	-0.009*** (0.002)	-0.009* (0.004)
Proximity	0.414*** (0.030)	0.184** (0.065)
College Pct	0.048 (0.034)	-0.080 (0.071)
White Pct	0.043 (0.036)	0.231** (0.073)
Proximity * Year	0.008*** (0.002)	0.011* (0.005)
College Pct * Year	0.024*** (0.003)	0.022** (0.007)
White Pct * Year	-0.016*** (0.002)	-0.008 (0.005)
Num. obs.	3121	3140

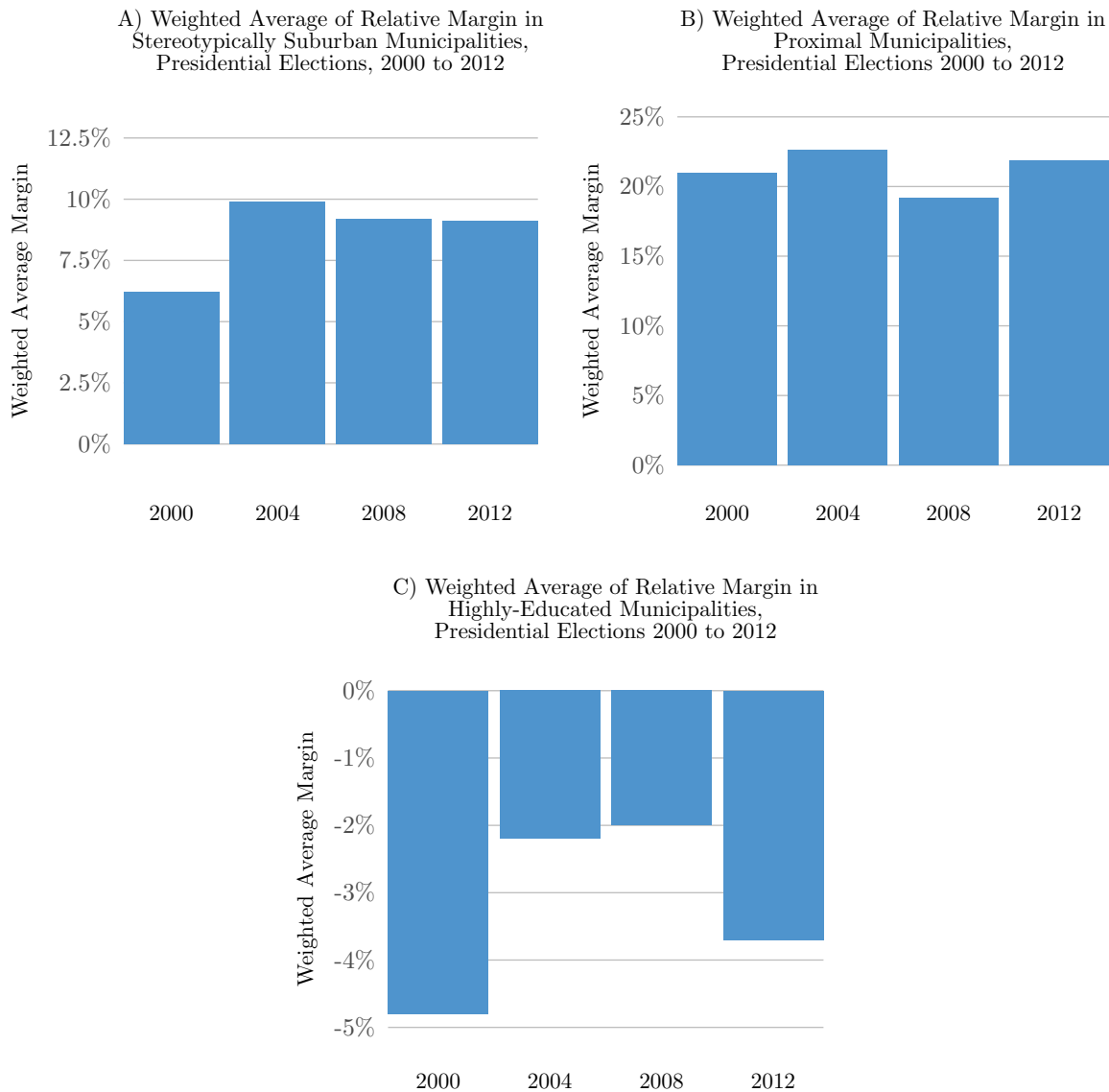
*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

OLS regression coefficients for impact of interactions between year and proximity, education, and race on Democratic presidential and gubernatorial vote margin in non-core municipalities (2000-2014), using election results from the five metro areas of interest. Dummy variables for individual cities were included in regressions but omitted from the output above.

imity value above 0.5, a highly-educated municipality as one with a percentage of residents with a college degree above the median college education percentage for its metropolitan area, and a stereotypically suburban municipality that is both proximal and highly-educated. Taking an average of the relative margins for all of the MSAs among municipalities in each of these three categories, weighted by a municipality's population, reveals a clear trend. As shown in figures 3A-3C, between 2000 and 2012, the Democratic relative margin tends to increase over time among proximal, well-educated, and stereotypically suburban municipalities (see appendix C for breakdowns by MSA). Similarly to what was demonstrated above, this effect is most significant between

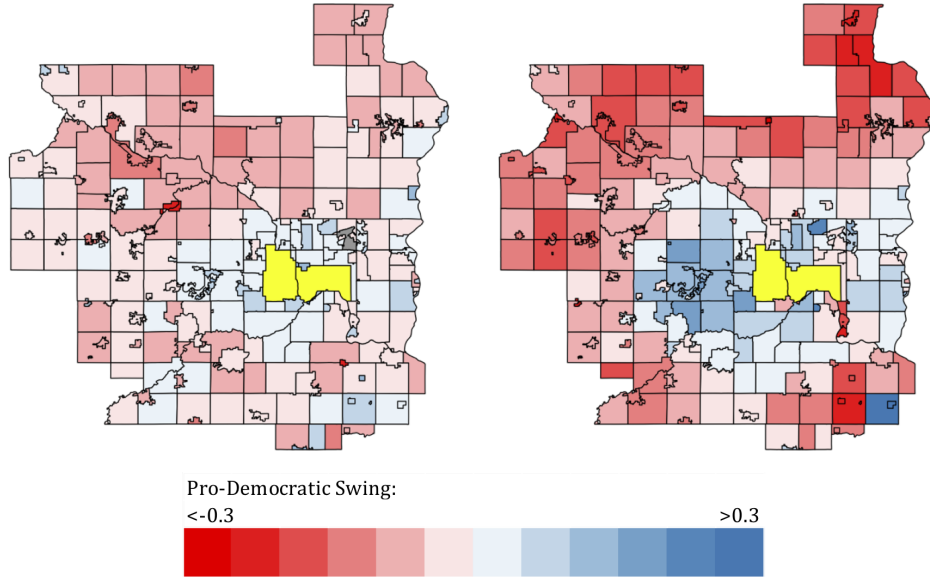
2000 and 2004. (Figure 4 demonstrates that, while the margins of the swings were dramatically different, the municipalities, at least in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area, that became more Democratic between 2012 and 2016 tended to be the same ones that shifted between 2000 and 2004.) And while this trend does not hold in every metropolitan area in every year, the patterns are fairly similar in all of them, hinting at an overall nationwide shift within suburban areas. Perhaps most interestingly, while college educated municipalities appear to be shifting more Democratic between 2000 and 2008, before jumping back significantly in 2012 (as has been demonstrated elsewhere in this analysis), the same trend does not hold for proximal metropolitan areas, which became more Democratic between 2008 and 2012. The net result for stereotypically suburban areas, then, is an incredibly slight decrease in the relative margin between 2008 and 2012.

Figure 3: Proximal, well-educated, and stereotypically suburban municipalities became more Democratic between 2000 and 2012.



Relative Democratic margin in suburban (A), proximal (B), and highly-educated (C) municipalities in presidential elections (2000-2012), using election results from non-core municipalities the five metro areas of interest. Averages for each MSA are calculated by taking an average of each municipality's relative margin, weighted by population, with totals representing an unweighted average of figures across the MSAs.

Figure 4: A map of the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area reveals similar swings between 2000 and 2004 and between 2012 and 2016.



Municipality-level map of Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and surrounding municipalities and counties, displaying the swing in absolute presidential margin between 2000 and 2004 (left) and 2012 and 2016 (right). The core cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul are shown in yellow.

3.1.3 Ideological Changes among Suburban Voters

Having established a clear trend of proximal, well-educated suburbs becoming more Democratic in the first decade and a half of the 21st Century, it's now worth interrogating why exactly this change occurred. As discussed earlier, a potential culprit is the changing platform of the Republican Party, which certainly could have alienated more socially liberal voters, or voters who identified as Republicans for fiscal reasons but felt that the party was no longer placing emphasis on such issues. President George W. Bush was the first Republican president to come into power after the 1990s, a decade that, between the emergence of a new Republican majority and the rise of conservative talk radio, saw the rise of a new brand of Republican politics dominated by moral

outrage towards a culture that was seen as liberalizing (Bolce et. al 2010). Bush himself defined his administration by “compassionate conservatism,” which tended to further empower a growing religious right, intertwining Republican politics with social conservatism even beyond what President Reagan had done in the 1980s (Garretson 2014). The clear suburban shift between 2000 and 2004 seems to provide anecdotal evidence that the Bush approach to politics turned off suburban voters in favor of strengthening the Republican Party’s appeal to rural ancestral Democrats, who peeled off from the Democratic Party throughout the late 20th Century and continued to do so even more rapidly in the 2000s (Brady et al. 2009). But this speculative correlation is insufficient to establish a clear trend, especially considering the changing political environment of the Obama era. Therefore, in this subsection, I seek to analyze the differences between the ideological preferences and priorities of college educated/proximal voters and other voters in the five targeted metro areas, and how ideology may or may not have interacted differently with vote choice over time.

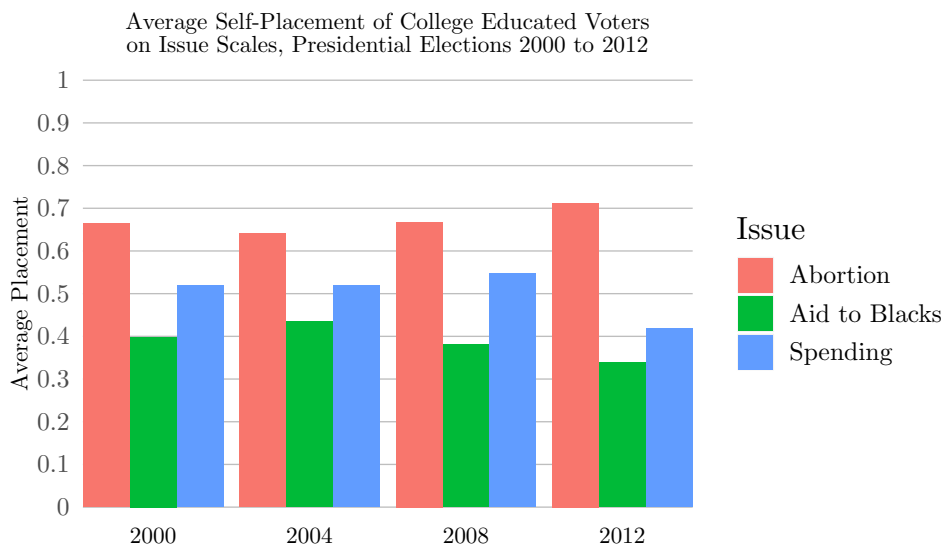
First, I look at national-level ANES data to analyze changes over time in college educated voters’ views on issues of abortion, government spending, and government assistance to Black people (referred to in the ANES as “aid to blacks”), all of which tend to be high salience issues, and can be thought of as proxies for broad views on cultural, fiscal, and racial issues respectively. The questions about government spending and aid to blacks ask respondents to rate themselves on a scale of one to seven, while the question about abortion asks respondents to identify themselves with one of four possible positions, ranging from less to more supportive of legal access to abortion. All of these questions were recoded on a 0 to 1 scale, with 1 representing the most liberal views (support for no restrictions on abortion, 7/7 support for more government services, and 1/7 support for less aid to blacks). The exact question wordings, along with the options offered to respondents

on the abortion question, can be found in Appendix A.

Looking at figure 5, it doesn't appear as if college-educated voters nationally had significant shifts in issue positions over time. There appears to be some slight movement in the liberal direction on abortion, although very small, and this movement doesn't correspond with the shift of college educated voters towards the Democrats between 2000 and 2004. Between those two years, college educated voters did move somewhat in the direction of being more in favor of aid to blacks, but this is also a small movement, and their average rating in 2008 is lower than in 2000. Finally, on spending, there is little movement between 2000 and 2008, but college educated voters do appear to become significantly more fiscally conservative between 2008 and 2012. This corresponds with already-identified movement of college educated voters in the Republican direction, which suggests that, even if they run the risk of losing college educated voters over racial and cultural issues, Republicans are able to win them back when their fiscal positions shift in the conservative direction. Taking a look at table 7, we can see that, while the exact coefficients vary over time, college education, when controlling for other demographics, predicts liberal views on abortion and aid to blacks and conservative views on spending. But overall, the ideological movement of college educated voters between 2000 and 2012 is minimal, suggesting that the suburban shift is more complicated than college educated voters becoming more liberal on various issues.

Instead, looking at how college educated voters evaluate the Republican and Democratic presidential candidates on these issue scales seems more revealing of why they vote in certain ways (figure 6). Looking between 2000 and 2004, there is a clear increase in how conservative college educated respondents believe President Bush to be on abortion, and an even more substantial increase in how conservative he is seen on aid to blacks. Given that education is predictive of

Figure 5: Personal ideological change doesn't explain the suburban shift.

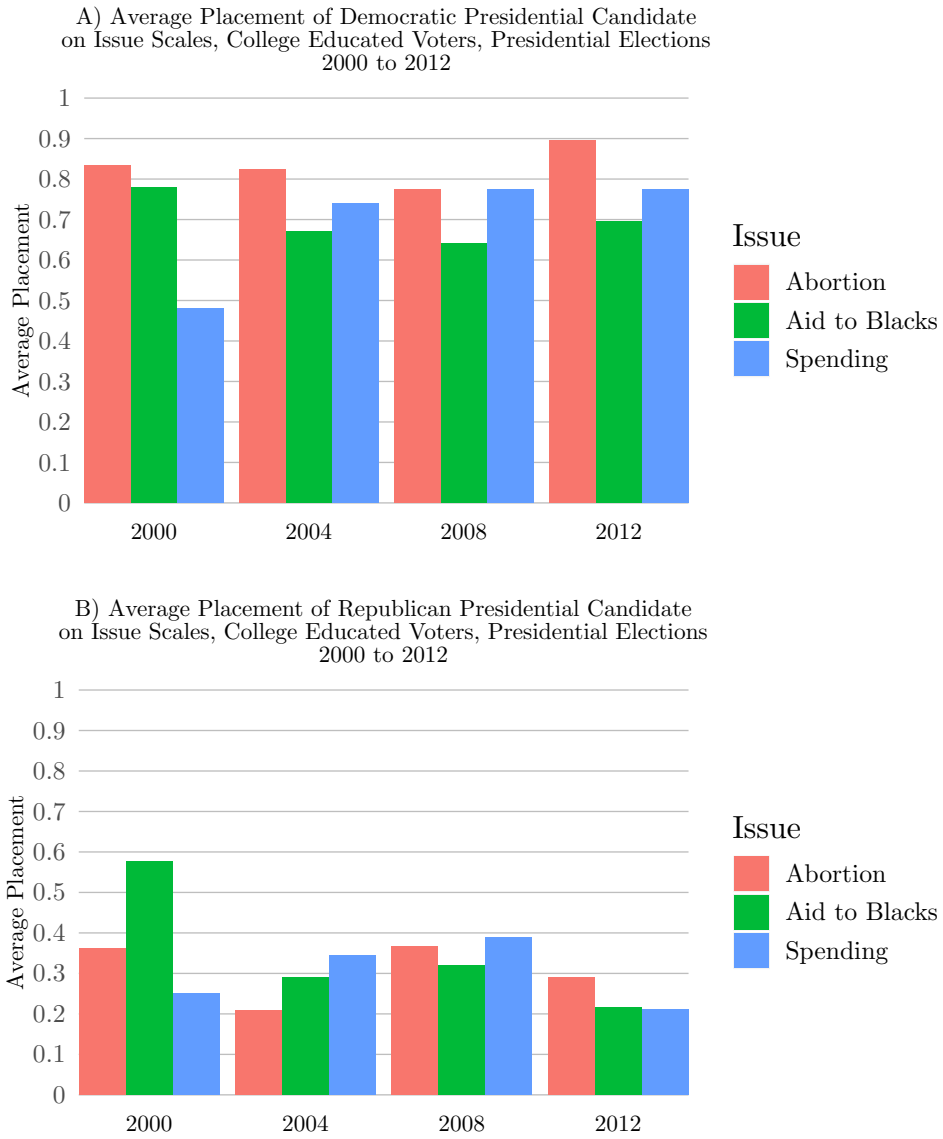


Average self-placement placement on issue scales between 2000 and 2012 among college educated voters, national sample using ANES data.

liberal views on both of these issues, it makes sense that we would see college educated voters move away from the Republican Party. This movement comes even as Democrats are seen as getting much more liberal on government spending (although Republicans are seen as moving in the liberal direction as well), suggesting that the impact of social and cultural issues outweighs that of fiscal issues. At the same time, between 2008 and 2012, when college educated voters move somewhat back towards the Republican Party, they view that party as getting more conservative on spending, again suggesting that Republicans have the potential to win back college educated voters by emphasizing their fiscally conservative bona fides.

Overall, considering regressions that take in education (and other demographic controls) as the independent variables, along with issue positions, with vote choice as the dependent variable, it appears that views on abortion and aid to blacks factor heavily into college educated voters'

Figure 6: Changes in evaluations of Republican conservatism can explain college educated voting patterns.



Average placement of Democratic (A) and Republican (B) presidential candidates on issue scales between 2000 and 2012 among college educated voters, national sample using ANES data.

Table 7: College education is largely predictive of liberal views on abortion and aid to blacks, slightly conservative views on spending.

	2000	2004	2008	2012
(Intercept)	0.617*** (0.035)	0.675*** (0.043)	0.790*** (0.053)	0.615*** (0.026)
College Educated	0.096*** (0.020)	0.088*** (0.024)	0.058* (0.027)	0.095*** (0.011)
Num. obs.	1462	1033	1005	5296
	2000	2004	2008	2012
(Intercept)	0.439*** (0.036)	0.539*** (0.035)	0.603*** (0.034)	0.483*** (0.022)
College Educated	0.063** (0.021)	0.071*** (0.019)	0.028 (0.017)	0.032*** (0.009)
Num. obs.	776	946	1708	4704
	2000	2004	2008	2012
(Intercept)	0.688*** (0.035)	0.632*** (0.028)	0.723*** (0.042)	0.599*** (0.020)
College Educated	-0.048* (0.020)	-0.020 (0.015)	-0.009 (0.021)	-0.037*** (0.008)
Num. obs.	723	927	846	4756

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

OLS regression coefficients of impact of education on voters' views on abortion (top), aid to blacks (middle), and spending (bottom). Controls for age, race, and gender were included in the regressions, but omitted in the output above.

decisions (table 8). While the previously discussed ANES data demonstrated a small, if at all significant role of education on vote preferences, adding in a control for aid to blacks makes that coefficient close to zero in all four years, suggesting that any trend for college educated voters to vote Democratic is due in large part to views on race. And while they don't quite rise to statistical significance, the coefficients for education when controlling for abortion tend to be fairly negative, suggesting that liberal views on abortion are even more responsible for college educated voters voting Democratic. Therefore, it makes sense to conclude that, on a national level, the Republican Party's adoption of intense social conservatism in the 2000s was largely responsible for

an emerging suburban shift.

Table 8: Views on abortion, followed by aid to blacks, are largely responsible for any tendency for college educated voters to vote Democratic.

	2000	2004	2008	2012
College Educated	-0.008 (0.033)	0.015 (0.040)	-0.049 (0.041)	-0.007 (0.019)
Abortion View	0.385*** (0.045)	0.453*** (0.055)	0.323*** (0.052)	0.517*** (0.025)
Num. obs.	1105	799	748	3798
	2000	2004	2008	2012
College Educated	-0.002 (0.045)	0.006 (0.042)	0.001 (0.029)	-0.002 (0.020)
Aid to Blacks View	0.379*** (0.085)	0.713*** (0.078)	0.532*** (0.048)	0.894*** (0.037)
Num. obs.	573	738	1303	3426
	2000	2004	2008	2012
College Educated	0.053 (0.048)	0.103* (0.041)	0.010 (0.044)	0.079*** (0.020)
Spending View	0.965*** (0.105)	1.012*** (0.102)	0.575*** (0.078)	1.285*** (0.045)
Num. obs.	547	739	646	3493

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Mean Marginal Effects of impact of education and various issue positions on voters' likelihood of voting Democratic, national sample using ANES data. Controls for age, race, and gender were included in the regressions, but omitted in the output above.

Next, I use CCES data to look at how proximity and education impact views on issues, and how issue stances correlate with vote preferences among proximal and college educated voters. Beginning with the 2006 CCES survey, we can take advantage of consistently-asked questions on high salience issues, including affirmative action, which can serve as a proxy for broad viewpoints on race and social standing, abortion, which has its own inherent value as well as value in its correlation with other social issues, and government spending, representative of economic and fiscal opinions more broadly. The full question wordings can be found in appendix D, but in order to make up for subtle differences among question wording and formatting from year to year, the variables analyzed here will be binomial versions of all of the issue questions. Therefore, the affirmative action variable represents whether a respondent strongly or somewhat supports affirmative action, the abortion variable represents whether a respondent always supports the ability for a woman to obtain an abortion, and the government spending variable represents whether a respondent prefers cutting defense spending or raising taxes over cutting domestic spending.

Looking at the voters in the CCES sample of the five metro areas of interest, the effects of both proximity and education on issue stances appear to be changing over time, based on the results of probit regressions of year, proximity, and education on the binomial issue variables. While a college education is consistently a strong predictor of one's stance on all three issues, proximity is consistently a strong predictor of fiscal liberalism (table 9). Taken together, along with the ANES data that shows how college educated voters' views on the Republican Party became more conservative between 2000 and 2012 on racial, cultural, and economic issues, we can understand why stereotypically suburban municipalities, full of white college educated voters living relatively close to urban centers, were moving broadly towards the Democrats through 2012 and 2014. Over

time, voters in metro areas also became more liberal on fiscal issues and abortion, and although the interactions between year and education are statistically significant and negative for abortion and fiscal issues (meaning that, over time, college educated voters became relatively more conservative on abortion than to non-college educated voters of the same race and with the same proximity value), as is the coefficient for the interaction between year and race for abortion, these coefficients are smaller than the overall increase in liberalism among voters living in metro areas over this time period. Indeed, if we look only at the subset of suburban, college educated voters, there is a statistically significant movement towards more liberal views on abortion over time, smaller movement on fiscal issues ($p = 0.069$), and virtually no change in affirmative action (table 10).

Table 9: Education consistently predicts liberal views on abortion and aid to blacks, while proximity predicts liberal views on fiscal issues.

	Affirmative Action	Fiscal Liberalism	Abortion Liberalism
Year	0.017 (0.013)	0.054*** (0.011)	0.137*** (0.012)
Proximity	0.146 (0.119)	0.323*** (0.097)	-0.132 (0.106)
College Educated	0.133* (0.062)	0.119* (0.051)	0.216*** (0.054)
White	-0.272*** (0.067)	-0.076 (0.055)	0.215*** (0.058)
Proximity * Year	0.005 (0.018)	-0.026 (0.015)	0.036* (0.016)
College Educated * Year	-0.004 (0.009)	-0.014 (0.008)	-0.020* (0.009)
White * Year	-0.003 (0.010)	-0.002 (0.009)	-0.031** (0.009)
Num. obs.	8418	9096	9110

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Mean Marginal Effects of interactions between year and proximity, education, and race on issue stances, using CCES data between 2006 and 2014, on voters in non-core cities in the five metro areas of interest.

Table 10: Proximal, college educated voters became more liberal on fiscal issues and abortion.

	Affirmative Action	Fiscal Liberalism	Abortion Liberalism
Year	0.005 (0.011)	0.017 (0.009)	0.083*** (0.010)
Num. obs.	1608	1691	1687

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Mean Marginal Effects of year on issue stances, using CCES data between 2006 and 2014, on proximal and college educated voters in non-core cities in the five metro areas of interest.

Finally, I compare the impacts of regressions that consider education, race, proximity, and each of the three issues, in order to see which issues are most responsible for the votes of college educated and proximal voters (table 11). The results are fairly clear - in all years between 2006 and 2014, with the exception of 2010, the coefficient for proximity is smallest when controlling for affirmative action, suggesting that the impact of proximity to city results primarily from more liberal views on race, even when controlling for respondents' own races. And in all years between 2006 and 2014, with no exceptions, the coefficient for education is smallest when controlling for affirmative action. These results are similar to the ANES analysis, which also found views on race to be impactful (but less so than abortion), but suggest that, when looking at the subset of voters in metro areas, racial issues take on a slightly more predictive role. Therefore, we can recognize some inherent and unique factor about location, and how being college educated or close to a city increases one's racial liberalism. This analysis doesn't explain why exactly college educated voters tend to be more liberal on racial issues, or the direction of the causality, but it confirms that for suburban voters, liberal stances on race have the potential to be a powerful wedge issue. Taken together, we see two very important patterns. First, college educated and proximal voters were consistently getting more liberal on abortion, as the Republican Party made such cultural issues

more salient in the 2000s. And secondly, views on race appear to be the single strongest driver of the suburban vote, while the Republican Party moved far to the right of college educated voters as a whole.

One possible explanation for why suburban voters, even controlling for race, are more likely to vote Democratic on racial issues is that, in having gone to college and living near cities, they are more likely than non-college educated or rural voters to be exposed to individuals of different races. Past studies have demonstrated that, looking at white experimental participants, simple exposure to images of people from other races can decrease racial prejudice (Zebrowitz et al 2008), while living in diverse communities decreases the likelihood that white people will reduce members of other races to stereotypes (Pauker et al 2017). As a result, narrowing the CCES subsample to white voters and looking at the percentage of nonwhite residents of a resident's ZIP code could tell us whether racial diversity holds some impact. However, there does not appear to be a strong effect. The impact of ZIP code diversity, when controlling for proximity and education, does increase over time, although it doesn't reach statistical significance until 2012 (table 12). However, the impacts of education and proximity remain significant on their own, and the coefficients don't change much from a regression that excludes the percentage of nonwhite residents. This is not to say that interactions with people of other races don't affect vote choice, since interactions extend beyond simply living in the same ZIP code. However, when it comes to the suburban shift, there is something inherent about education and proximity, and how they impact positions on race, that can't really be accounted for when looking at ZIP code diversity. In the end, while Bush's compassionate conservatism and the early days of the Tea Party movement may have been successful in bringing voters in rural areas towards the Republican Party, the effect on suburban voters seems

Table 11: Views on affirmative action can largely explain suburban voters' tendency to vote Democratic.

	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
Proximity	0.184 (0.096)	0.152* (0.066)	0.164** (0.053)	0.148** (0.050)	0.061 (0.053)
College Educated	-0.114* (0.053)	0.014 (0.037)	0.032 (0.027)	0.020 (0.026)	0.021 (0.027)
White	-0.159* (0.063)	-0.035 (0.048)	0.014 (0.033)	-0.040 (0.033)	-0.054 (0.032)
Affirmative Action View	0.621*** (0.045)	0.598*** (0.025)	0.620*** (0.019)	0.570*** (0.019)	0.512*** (0.022)
Num. obs.	476	1028	1809	1872	1670
	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
Proximity	0.231*** (0.069)	0.093 (0.071)	0.299*** (0.058)	0.149** (0.054)	0.073 (0.053)
College Educated	-0.073 (0.038)	0.021 (0.039)	0.076** (0.029)	0.067* (0.028)	0.101*** (0.027)
White	-0.077 (0.040)	-0.188*** (0.047)	-0.154*** (0.034)	-0.177*** (0.032)	-0.186*** (0.030)
Spending View	0.570*** (0.025)	0.686*** (0.023)	0.707*** (0.017)	0.660*** (0.018)	0.534*** (0.021)
Num. obs.	1097	1026	1792	1860	1665
	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
Proximity	0.329*** (0.062)	0.146* (0.064)	0.261*** (0.051)	0.184*** (0.048)	0.119* (0.051)
College Educated	-0.029 (0.034)	0.024 (0.035)	0.052* (0.026)	0.051* (0.025)	0.071** (0.026)
White	-0.080* (0.035)	-0.192*** (0.042)	-0.200*** (0.029)	-0.192*** (0.028)	-0.202*** (0.029)
Abortion View	-0.053 (0.060)	0.475*** (0.028)	0.463*** (0.021)	0.447*** (0.021)	0.400*** (0.024)
Num. obs.	1103	1025	1796	1864	1654

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Mean Marginal Effects of views proximity, education, race, and views on abortion (a), spending (b), and affirmative action (c), on presidential and gubernatorial vote choice (2006-2014), using CCES data on voters in non-core cities in the five metro areas of interest.

to have been clearly positive for the Democrats.

Table 12: ZIP code diversity does not account for the Democratic vote in the suburbs.

	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
College Educated	-0.078 (0.041)	0.069* (0.035)	0.112*** (0.027)	0.104*** (0.026)	0.129*** (0.028)
Proximity	0.338*** (0.071)	0.184** (0.065)	0.236*** (0.052)	0.226*** (0.051)	0.141* (0.056)
ZIP Nonwhite Pct	-0.204** (0.075)	0.007 (0.073)	0.037 (0.060)	-0.012 (0.058)	0.172** (0.062)
Num. obs.	800	843	1368	1469	1249

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Mean Marginal Effects of education, proximity, and ZIP code diversity, on presidential and gubernatorial vote choice (2006-2014), using CCES data on white voters in non-core cities in the five metro areas of interest.

3.2 The Election of 2016

It is no secret that college educated voters didn't care much for Donald Trump. Certainly Trump himself, who once claimed to "love the poorly educated," recognized the educational divide that his candidacy created. His brand of racial and economic populism was largely designed to appeal to a base of rural, non-college educated white voters, who felt left behind by a system that they saw as favoring people in urban and suburban areas. And given that Trump's strategy succeeded, many analysts and commentators have focused their post-2016 efforts on trying to isolate how Trump won, focusing on places that swung dramatically rightward while ignoring the places that flipped in the opposite direction. In this section, I aim to rectify this oversight, analyzing why the areas that swung towards Hillary Clinton did so - namely, whether such effects can be attributed solely to education or if there's some inherent factor about being located in suburban areas that makes voters more anti-Trump. I also look at the impacts of the issues discussed above,

to see if the swings in the 2016 election resulted from the race being fought on dramatically different ideological grounds than previous elections.

3.2.1 National Demographic Analysis

As discussed in the literature review, the impact of education on vote choice in the 2016 presidential election has been well established. On the county level, education, more so than race or income, predicted a shift towards Hillary Clinton (Silver 2016), and the education gap among white voters was the widest it had been since exit polls began tracking vote preferences by education (Schaffner et al. 2018). And more so than in previous elections, many of the shifts within demographic groups can be traced to ideological and cultural divides between voters, with racism, sexism, and anti-immigrant sentiments all predicting shift towards Donald Trump (Schaffner et al. 2018; Sides et al. 2017; Sides et al, 2018). A simple analysis of ANES data confirms these already well-identified trends (table 13). College education, which didn't predict vote patterns on the national level before 2016, became a significant predictor of vote in 2016, with a college degree increasing a voter's likelihood of voting Democratic by 17.1 percentage points when not controlling for issue preferences, and 11.5 points even when controlling for issues. College educated voters on the national level definitely became more Democratic in 2016, resulting in clear movement within suburban areas.

Table 13: Even when controlling for issue positions, college education predicts vote choice nationwide in 2016.

	2000-2012 avg	2016	2000-2012 avg	2016
Female	0.088*** (0.012)	0.086*** (0.020)	0.039* (0.017)	0.061* (0.027)
Age	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.001*** (0.000)	0.001 (0.001)
College Educated	0.021 (0.013)	0.171*** (0.020)	0.006 (0.018)	0.115*** (0.027)
White	-0.407*** (0.010)	-0.366*** (0.021)	-0.333*** (0.016)	-0.238*** (0.032)
Abortion View			0.458*** (0.025)	0.494*** (0.040)
Spending View			0.923*** (0.039)	0.763*** (0.059)
Aid to Blacks View			0.588*** (0.034)	0.654*** (0.051)
Num. obs.	7291	2563	4955	2122

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Mean Marginal Effects of demographic characteristics and issue positions on presidential vote choice (2000-2012 combined and 2016), national sample using ANES data.

3.2.2 Municipality-Level Analysis: The Impacts of Proximity and Education

Given the well-known link between education and 2016 vote preference, it makes sense that well-educated suburbs located near cities would swing towards Hillary Clinton, but the extent to which education and proximity act independently of each other is not clear. It may be that college educated voters were uniquely turned off by Donald Trump, and as a result, the suburbs in which they tend to live became more Democratic. Alternatively, it could be that white voters in more diverse, liberalizing suburbs voted for Clinton independently of their education, but that the close relationship between education and proximity made education appear to be the deciding factor. Looking at a linear regression of proximity to city, racial composition, and educational

composition of suburban municipalities on relative margin, and comparing the results from 2016 to the average from 2000 to 2012, it appears that proximity and education do both play a role in predicting vote patterns (table 14). When excluding a control for education, the impact of proximity to city is more than twice as strong in 2016 than in 2000 and 2004, and almost twice as strong in 2016 as in 2008 and 2012, with movement from the outer edge of a metro area to the center of the city predicting a shift in the relative Democratic margin by 46 percentage points. Education goes from a strong negative predictor of Democratic support before 2016 to a strong positive predictor, as is consistent with the analysis of election results done earlier. When including the education variable, the predictive power of proximity rises from before 2016 but falls in 2016 (relative to the regressions run without the control), as we would expect given that the education coefficient variable went from positive to negative. Proximity does remain a statistically-significant predictor even when controlling for race and education, but while it's difficult to directly compare these two variables since they are on two different scales, it appears as if education, more so than proximity to city, was responsible for the suburban shift in 2016. Still, what's most immediately clear is that, even if a trend of proximal and well-educated municipalities becoming more Democratic existed before 2016, the changes seen in 2016 are quite significant.

If we dig more deeply into the change in relative margin between 2012 and 2016, the role of education as a predictor becomes even clearer (table 15). When only controlling for race, and not education, proximity strongly predicts an increase in Democratic relative margin (in all metro areas except Los Angeles), as would be expected given the known suburban shift. But when adding in education, the predictive power of proximity starts to vary while education is consistently predictive, suggesting again that much of the movement between 2012 and 2016 was due to the

Table 14: Proximity to city and education both became stronger predictors of Democratic vote in 2016.

	2000-2004	2008-2012	2016	2000-2004	2008-2012	2016
(Intercept)	0.222*** (0.021)	0.188*** (0.020)	0.081** (0.028)	0.217*** (0.020)	0.193*** (0.020)	0.084** (0.028)
Proximity	0.177*** (0.021)	0.243*** (0.020)	0.460*** (0.029)	0.278*** (0.023)	0.324*** (0.022)	0.428*** (0.032)
White Pct	-0.450*** (0.022)	-0.482*** (0.020)	-0.460*** (0.029)	-0.352*** (0.023)	-0.413*** (0.022)	-0.498*** (0.031)
College Pct				-0.334*** (0.032)	-0.262*** (0.030)	0.106* (0.044)
Num. obs.	1487	1658	833	1475	1646	829

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

OLS regression coefficients for the impact of proximity, race, and education on a municipality's relative margin in presidential races, separated by 2000-2004 average, 2008-2012 average, and 2016 alone, using election results from the five metro areas of interest.

impacts of education, as previous studies have demonstrated. The impact of proximity on its own should not be dismissed, especially since the previous analysis demonstrates that, when controlling for education, proximity does become a more powerful predictor of Democratic support in 2016 than it did in the past, demonstrating movement of proximal suburbs towards Democrats. Additionally, without the education control, the percentage of a municipality that is white actually predicts a shift towards Democrats in 2016 (within these five metropolitan areas), further demonstrating the profound movement of white suburbs.

Table 15: The increasing importance of education, relative to proximity, in 2016 is consistent across metro areas.

	BOS	CHA	CLE	LA	MSP
(Intercept)	-0.236*** (0.066)	-0.241*** (0.037)	-0.201** (0.069)	-0.033 (0.019)	-0.350*** (0.049)
Proximity	0.137*** (0.040)	0.189*** (0.040)	0.331*** (0.052)	0.016 (0.026)	0.371*** (0.020)
White Pct	0.222*** (0.066)	0.285*** (0.054)	0.073 (0.063)	0.150*** (0.026)	0.209*** (0.050)
Num. obs.	146	23	150	136	348

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

	BOS	CHA	CLE	LA	MSP
(Intercept)	-0.201*** (0.032)	-0.185*** (0.039)	-0.086** (0.031)	-0.054*** (0.014)	-0.197*** (0.041)
Proximity	-0.045* (0.021)	0.129** (0.043)	0.010 (0.026)	-0.042* (0.020)	0.133*** (0.021)
White Pct	-0.064 (0.034)	0.144 (0.073)	-0.207*** (0.030)	-0.108*** (0.031)	-0.072 (0.044)
College Pct	0.584*** (0.027)	0.198* (0.078)	0.816*** (0.033)	0.384*** (0.036)	0.593*** (0.036)
Num. obs.	146	23	150	136	346

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

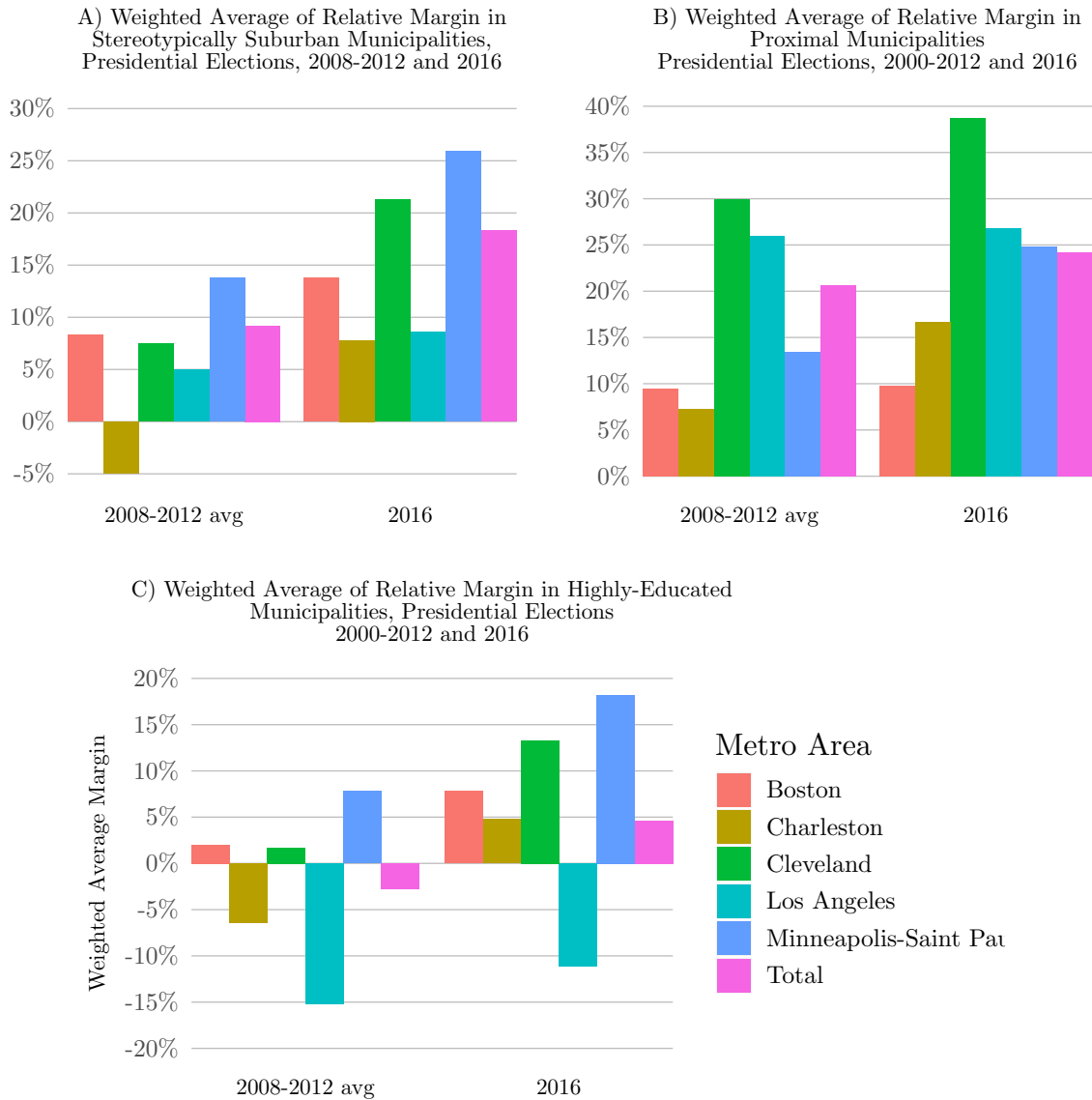
OLS regression coefficients for the impacts of proximity, race, and education on a municipality's relative margin in presidential races in 2016, isolated by metro area, using election results from the five metro areas of interest.

Figures 7A-7C demonstrate the differences between the relative margins in 2008 and 2012 (average) and 2016 in stereotypically suburban, proximal, and well-educated municipalities, broken down by metropolitan area and weighted by each municipality's total population. On the whole, they demonstrate the strong impact which education had on the Democratic shift, but the importance of proximity is made clear as well. On average, the relative margin in proximal municipalities increased by 3.6 percentage points between 2008-2012 and 2016, by 7.4 points in well-educated municipalities, and by 9.1 points in stereotypically suburban municipalities (those

that are both proximal and well-educated). And even though we did see changes in the impacts of education and proximity before 2016, comparing figure 7 to figure 3 reveals that proximal and well-educated suburbs became much more Democratic in 2016 than they had in the past.

These patterns are largely consistent across metro areas, but there are some interesting trends worth noting. In Los Angeles, it appears that only well-educated municipalities shifted significantly in 2016, possibly resulting from the fact that many inner-ring Los Angeles suburbs are more characteristically urban than suburban, while many of the well-educated, wealthier suburbs are located further from the city center in Orange County (which voted Democratic for president in 2016 for the first time since 1936). A similar effect was visible in Boston, where proximal areas barely changed in 2016. On the other hand, the relative margins in the Cleveland and Minneapolis areas increased significantly, in part because much of the rest of Ohio and Minnesota swung dramatically to the right. Ultimately, when looking at education, well-educated suburbs in all five metro areas shifted quite similarly, and quite significantly. The extent to which, whether in Rust Belt Cleveland, old southern Charleston, or traditionally-Republican West Coast Orange County, well-educated voters are reacting similarly to changes in the political environment regardless of location, is made quite clear.

Figure 7: Across MSAs, both proximal and highly-educated municipalities became more Democratic in 2016.



Relative Democratic margin in presidential elections (2008-2012 combined and 2016) in suburban (A), proximal (B), and highly-educated (C) municipalities, broken out by MSA, using election results from non-core municipalities in the five metro areas of interest.

CCES data further confirms that, while proximity to city played a predictive role even

when controlling for education, its impact was not significantly high in 2016. Limiting the CCES sample to college educated voters living within the five metro areas analyzed here, moving from 0 to 1 on the proximity scale would increase a voter’s likelihood of voting for the Democratic presidential candidate by 11.6 percentage points (table 16), but this effect is not statistically significant. The effect of proximity is higher significant in in 2012, at 19.8 percentage points, and even higher in 2008, when the effect was 34.4 percentage points. When we limit our sample to white voters alone, 2016 remains lower than 2008, although proximity does retain statistical significance, lending credence to the idea of a growing suburban-rural divide among white voters. So while there is some evidence of increasing stratification along proximity, this serves as further evidence that this effect is due in large part because of the differences in education rates of those living in different parts of metro areas, and less because of the inherent effects of proximity.

Table 16: Among college educated voters, proximity mattered less as a predictor of vote choice in 2016.

	2008 (All)	2012 (All)	2016 (All)	2008 (White)	2012 (White)	2016 (White)
Proximity	0.344*** (0.095)	0.198** (0.065)	0.116 (0.060)	0.355*** (0.101)	0.200** (0.074)	0.223** (0.072)
Age	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.003* (0.001)	-0.002* (0.001)	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.001)
Female	0.103* (0.050)	0.103** (0.034)	0.103*** (0.030)	0.112* (0.053)	0.092* (0.039)	0.094* (0.037)
White	-0.148* (0.074)	-0.104* (0.040)	-0.107** (0.033)			
Num. obs.	422	854	1061	373	665	748

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Mean Marginal Effects of proximity and demographic controls on presidential vote choice (2008-2016), using CCES data on college educated and white college educated voters in non-core cities in the five metro areas of interest.

3.2.3 Investigating the Demographic Change Hypothesis

Beyond the simple fact that white, college educated, suburban voters have been moving away from the Republican Party for years now, and did so at an accelerating pace in the 2016 Presidential Election, there is an alternative explanation for why some suburbs saw such massive change in 2016 - that of demographic change. While favorable demographic shifts in places like Florida and Texas were unable to deliver the presidency to Hillary Clinton, in some rapidly-growing suburban counties, like Loudoun County, Virginia and Orange County, California, Clinton was able to dramatically outperform previous Democrats, and more so than in many other suburbs. Many observers have chalked this up to demographic change, with the percentage of nonwhite residents skyrocketing in Orange County (Baldassare 2018), or places like Loudoun becoming both more racially diverse and highly-educated (Portnoy 2016). But the role which changes in racial composition played in 2016, in comparison to the overwhelmingly strong role of education among white voters, has not yet been isolated in academic literature.

Looking at municipality-level data, it does appear that in a rapidly-changing metro area like Los Angeles, demographic change did play a major role in shifts in 2016, but this effect does not hold nationwide. Table 17 contains the results of linear regressions on the difference between the Democratic relative margin in 2016 and the average of the 2008 and 2012 relative margins, with the change in a municipality's percentage of residents who are white, the percentage with a college degree, and proximity as independent variables. As expected, when controlling for no other variables, the change in white percentage is inversely related with the relative margin, with a decline in the white percentage by 10 percentage points boosting the Democratic relative margin by 1.87 points. When factoring in college education, this effect declines to 1.26 points, but remains

statistically significant. However, when also including proximity, the change in white population is not significant at all, suggesting that the changing impact of proximity to city and education are more significant than demographic change. But if we look solely at the Los Angeles metro area, these results look quite different. The impact of demographic change is much stronger in Los Angeles suburbs, and it remains significant even when controlling for college education and proximity, seeming to outweigh those effects. In that sense, the demographic change story is clearly not as simple as nonwhite, likely Democratic voters moving into traditionally-Republican areas, making them more Democratic, although that certainly plays a role. Instead, it seems that in rapidly-diversifying metro areas, like Los Angeles, significant demographic change that has a fundamental impact on a municipality's composition can bring about political change. In that sense, it makes sense for Democrats to see a political future in places like Orange County, not only because the old residents have changing political views, but because the new ones are reshaping the larger political environment.

Table 17: The impact of change in the percentage of population that is white is statistically significant in Los Angeles, but not nationwide.

	Total	Total	Total	LA	LA	LA
(Intercept)	0.002 (0.005)	-0.135*** (0.006)	-0.173*** (0.007)	0.014* (0.007)	-0.023* (0.010)	-0.057*** (0.015)
Change in White Pct	-0.187** (0.070)	-0.126* (0.058)	-0.070 (0.053)	-0.538*** (0.120)	-0.413*** (0.115)	-0.471*** (0.113)
College Pct		0.380*** (0.015)	0.317*** (0.015)		0.112*** (0.024)	0.130*** (0.024)
Proximity			0.145*** (0.011)			0.056** (0.018)
Num. obs.	801	799	799	136	136	136

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

OLS regression coefficients for impact of change in the percentage of a municipality’s population that is white, with controls for education and proximity, on the difference in 2008-2012 average Democratic relative margin and the 2016 relative margin, using election results from non-core cities in the five metro areas of interest and the Los Angeles area alone.

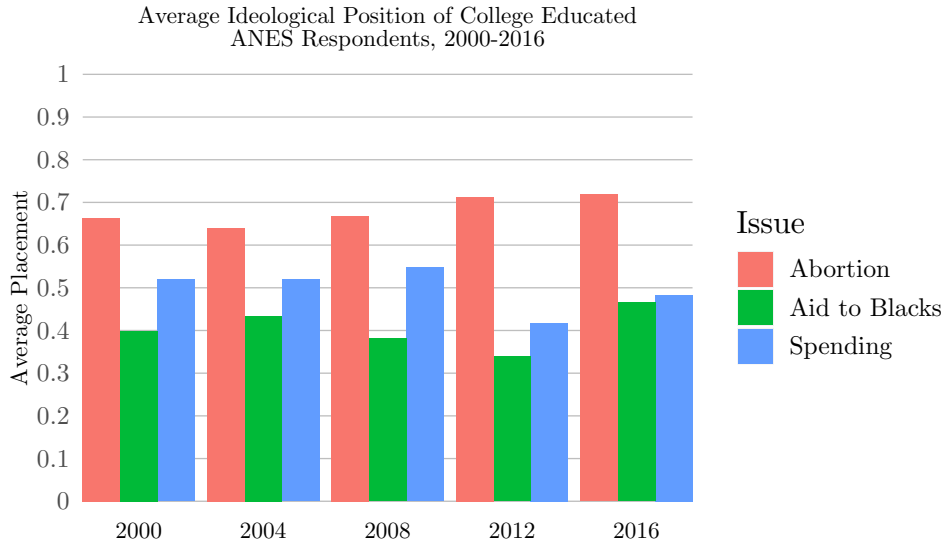
3.2.4 Ideological Predictors of the Suburban Vote

While it’s well-established that college educated voters became more Democratic in 2016, there has been less investigation as to why. Much of the analysis of the shift among college educated voters has revolved around Donald Trump’s rhetoric on race and immigration, and how people with college educations are more likely to be exposed to racial and ethnic diversity, although the direction of causality is not entirely clear (Silver 2016). In fact, Sides, Tesler, and Vavrek (2018) find that, when including controls for views on black people and illegal immigrants, the difference in vote preference between college educated and non-college educated white voters virtually disappears. But a few questions need to be answered - namely, the extent to which Trump actually prompted movement in ideology, as opposed to simply making different ideological viewpoints more salient, and how these trends differ from past years. Additionally, expanding on the analyses that have already been done, I look into the ideological patterns of suburban voters as a whole, rather than

just white college educated voters. Overall, it appears as if white suburban and college educated voters did shift their opinions and placed priority on different issues than in previous years, but not to the drastic extent that some may expect.

An analysis of ANES data demonstrates some movement of college educated voters towards more liberal issue positions. Looking at the average placement of college educated ANES respondents on 0 to 1 scales for abortion, aid to blacks, and government spending, we can see ways in which 2016 deviated from past trends. As shown in figure 8, white college educated respondents became slightly more liberal on abortion, although this change is small and consistent with a longer-term trend of liberalization on cultural issues. On government spending, these respondents became noticeably more liberal than in 2012, increasing their average score by about 0.07 points. This is somewhat unexpected, given that Donald Trump's economic promises during the campaign were more populist than traditional Republicans, and therefore less likely to appeal to white college educated voters. However, it should be noted that the spending scores are still lower than in 2000, 2004, and 2008, and seem to represent a reversion to the mean from an unusually conservative economic position in 2012. Finally, on aid to blacks, the impacts of Trump seem the most significant, with Trump's rhetoric on race prompting a clear backlash among college educated voters. Following a gradual decline in the average placement of these respondents on the aid to blacks scale between 2004 and 2012, this figure moved 0.12 points in the liberal direction in 2016, the largest change between years of any issue in any pair of elections. While it's not possible using these data to explicitly attribute these effects to Trump, the increased salience of racial issues in 2016, combined with the known relationship between education and racial acceptance, suggests that college educated voters didn't just change their votes in 2016, but were actually pushed ideologically.

Figure 8: College educated voters became much more liberal on aid to blacks, continued becoming slightly more liberal on abortion in 2016.



Average self-placement of college educated voters on 0 to 1 ideological scale for abortion, aid to blacks, and spending, national sample using ANES data.

An analysis of CCES data among white respondents in the five metro areas of interest confirms Sides, Tesler, and Vavrek’s main findings, while exposing some other interesting information about the role of proximity, education, and ideology. Unfortunately, the 2016 CCES did not ask respondents about affirmative action, instead using a variety of new questions on racial resentment to gauge respondents’ opinions on minorities. So while a direct comparison between the role of racial resentment pre-2016 and in 2016 is not possible, I use the results of one question, whether “white people in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin” as the closest analogue to the question about affirmative action. This variable is recoded as a binary variable, with respondents who strongly or somewhat agree coded as 1, and those who strongly or somewhat disagree coded as 0. The results below demonstrate that, among voters in metro areas, belief in racial inequality does indeed diminish the impact of education to statistical insignificance,

just as it did in previous elections (table 18). Comparing the coefficients for proximity and education in the regressions that control for each of the demographic positions, we see that belief in racial inequality is by far the issue that is most responsible for proximal and college educated voters' positions. This, combined with the fact that college educated voters became more liberal on racial issues between 2012 and 2016, suggests that the larger suburban shift in 2016 was due to the higher salience of racial issues. However, proximity to city still holds a statistically significant impact on vote choice in 2016 even when controlling for both education and views on race, suggesting that there is something unique about the way in which suburban voters vote, even going beyond positions about other races.

Looking at the roles of abortion and government spending, the trends look roughly in line with expectations (table 18). Views on abortion are slightly more predictive of white voters' issue stances in 2016 than in 2008 and 2012, which makes sense given the culture war framing of the 2016 election, but not significantly so, as race and immigration were much more salient in 2016 than issues like abortion or gay marriage. On the other hand, the predictive power of views on spending dropped significantly, in line with the fact that Trump did not heavily emphasize conservative economic policies, and won over many traditionally Democratic white voters who remain somewhat liberal on fiscal issues. Overall, the 2016 presidential election did not represent a massive deviation from past races, with proximity to city and education serving as strong predictors of Democratic support among white voters, and cultural and racial issues rising in importance as fiscal issues decline. Ultimately, before 2016, racial issues appear to have been pushing proximal and college educated voters out of the Republican Party, so the heightened salience of racial issues in 2016 likely accelerated their movement.

Table 18: Views on racial inequality are the most significant factors as to why proximal and college educated voters voted Democratic in 2016.

	2008-12	2008-12	2008-12	2016	2016	2016
Proximity	0.164*** (0.039)	0.140*** (0.040)	0.120** (0.043)	0.154*** (0.045)	0.111* (0.050)	0.176*** (0.046)
College Educated	0.049* (0.020)	0.028 (0.021)	0.059** (0.023)	0.129*** (0.023)	0.049 (0.026)	0.116*** (0.023)
Age	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.003*** (0.001)	-0.003*** (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.002* (0.001)
Female	0.056** (0.020)	0.062** (0.021)	0.069** (0.022)	0.073** (0.023)	0.051 (0.026)	0.052* (0.023)
White	-0.178*** (0.024)	-0.009 (0.028)	-0.155*** (0.027)	-0.159*** (0.026)	-0.081** (0.029)	-0.156*** (0.026)
Abortion View	0.450*** (0.017)			0.457*** (0.020)		
Affirmative Action View		0.581*** (0.015)				
Spending View			0.664*** (0.014)			0.492*** (0.019)
Racial Inequality View					0.604*** (0.020)	
Num. obs.	2889	2900	2886	2245	1914	2224

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Mean Marginal Effects of proximity, demographics, and issue positions on presidential vote choice (2008-2012 combined and 2016 alone), using CCES data on voters in non-core cities in the five metro areas of interest.

Of course, the primary, explicit focus of Donald Trump’s campaign wasn’t simply on heightening negative sentiments from white voters towards other races in general; Trump emphasized another, largely racially-charged issue in immigration. Unfortunately, with the exception of one question in 2006 about a specific immigration proposal, the CCES didn’t ask about immigration until 2010, making a full exploration of pre-2016 immigration attitudes difficult. But since 2010, respondents were asked whether they would support a policy to “grant legal status to all illegal immigrants who have held jobs and paid taxes for at least 3 years, and not been convicted of any

felony crimes,” which will be used here as a general proxy for feelings on immigration. Running the same empirical tests as conducted above, looking at whether proximity and education correlate with views on immigration stronger than in past years, and whether immigration can explain the movement of proximal and college educated voters, I attempt to isolate whether immigration as a specific issue can explain the suburban shift.

Somewhat unexpectedly, immigration appears to be a much less significant factor in explaining the suburban vote than views on advantages held by white people. Despite the heightened salience of immigration issues in the 2016 election, education, proximity, and race are all less predictive of respondents’ views on immigration than they were in past years, at least within these five MSAs (table 19). Additionally, relative to past years and other issues, immigration doesn’t appear to have weighed heavily on voters’ preferences, with proximity and education still unusually strong predictors of voting patterns when factoring in controls for views on immigration, while immigration itself was actually a weaker predictor of top-of-ticket voting in 2016 than it was in any of the three previous election cycles (table 20). So while racial issues, like they were before Trump came along, were clearly partially responsible for the suburban shift, the story is not as simple as Donald Trump propagating divisive rhetoric on immigration, creating a suburban-rural divide on immigration issues. Rather, it is more likely that, in creating a campaign that made overall racial issues more salient, Donald Trump was able to activate voters along their previously-held views on the positions of white people in society, an issue broader than immigration itself.

Table 19: Education, proximity, and race are weaker predictors of immigration viewpoints in 2016 than in previous years.

	2010	2012	2014	2016
Proximity	0.134** (0.041)	0.199*** (0.043)	0.161*** (0.040)	0.086* (0.039)
College Educated	0.090*** (0.021)	0.064** (0.022)	0.103*** (0.020)	0.042* (0.020)
White	-0.118*** (0.023)	-0.143*** (0.025)	-0.124*** (0.022)	-0.051* (0.022)
Num. obs.	2235	2103	2431	2589
Log Likelihood	-1493.019	-1423.893	-1646.784	-1773.848
AIC	2994.037	2855.786	3301.568	3555.695

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Mean Marginal Effects of education, proximity, and race on views on immigration, using CCES data on voters in non-core cities in the five metro areas of interest.

Table 20: Education and proximity are still strong predictors of vote choice in 2016, even when considering views on immigration.

	2010	2012	2014	2016
Proximity	0.263*** (0.052)	0.143** (0.050)	0.069 (0.052)	0.178*** (0.044)
College Educated	0.065* (0.027)	0.074** (0.025)	0.036 (0.027)	0.105*** (0.023)
Age	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.002* (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)
Female	0.118*** (0.026)	0.091*** (0.026)	0.097*** (0.027)	0.076*** (0.023)
White	-0.137*** (0.031)	-0.119*** (0.031)	-0.150*** (0.030)	-0.146*** (0.026)
Immigration View	0.523*** (0.021)	0.495*** (0.020)	0.433*** (0.023)	0.422*** (0.020)
Num. obs.	1810	1876	1674	2251
Log Likelihood	-955.300	-1002.944	-952.045	-1290.733
AIC	1924.601	2019.889	1918.089	2595.467

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Mean Marginal Effects of proximity, demographics, and position on immigration on vote choice (presidential and gubernatorial), using CCES data on voters in non-core cities in the five metro areas of interest.

3.3 The Elections of 2018: A Permanent Suburban Shift?

If suburbs were the under-covered story of the 2016 election, the same cannot be said of the 2018 midterms, in which Democrats capitalized on suburbanites' disdain for President Trump to gain 40 seats in the House of Representatives and win a majority for the first time since 2008. One article in CNN, written about a month before Election Day, blames Republicans' suburban weaknesses on many of the unique controversies that plagued the Trump Administration, including the President's controversial and often racist language, the controversy over sexual assault allegations against Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh, and the looming threat of the Special Counsel investigation into President Trump and his campaign's alleged collusion with the Russian government (Brownstein 2018). A piece published in Vox, written about two months after Election Day, focuses more on the issues at the heart of the midterms, and argues that suburban voters prioritized funding for healthcare and education, a sign of an actual ideological shift in traditionally-conservative suburbs, while being turned off by President Trump's immigration policies. Additionally, the article points out that, in New York, New Jersey, and California, which together accounted for 14 of the House seats gained by Democrats, new caps on the State and Local Tax (SALT) deduction in the Republican Tax Bill passed in late 2017 may have further turned away suburban voters (Scott 2018).

Whatever the reason, it's impossible to argue that the suburban shift wasn't responsible for Democratic successes in 2018. An analysis from Geoffrey Skelley at FiveThirtyEight demonstrates that Democratic House pickups were heavily concentrated in sparse suburban and dense suburban districts, which combined for 28 of the Democrats' 40 net gains (Skelley 2018). Past political leanings of the districts seemed to make little impact, with a full 33% of Democratic gains

(as of the article's publication on November 8, 2018) coming in suburban or partially-suburban districts won by both Mitt Romney in 2012 and Donald Trump in 2016, outpacing the number of seats picked up in Romney-Clinton districts. And while the margins varied, Democratic gains in suburban seats ran the gamut from seats like Virginia's 10th Congressional District, a Washington, DC-area seat that has voted Democratic for President since 2008, to semi-urban and suburban districts around smaller cities, like South Carolina's 1st and Oklahoma's 5th, which never voted for Obama or Clinton yet still swung massively against Trump and the Republicans in 2018. In the analyses below, I look further at suburban municipalities to determine which characteristics led them to vote Democratic in 2018, whether the places that swung the most dramatically in 2016 stayed as strongly Democratic in 2018, and what the results from 2018 may mean for Democratic futures in the suburbs.

3.3.1 Predictors of Vote Patterns in 2018

Comparing the roles of proximity, education, and race in the 2018 gubernatorial elections to those in past years reveals a clear pattern, that proximal areas were becoming more Democratic in 2018 just as they were in 2016 (table 20). Without controls for education, the increase in a municipality's Democratic relative margin resulting from moving closer to the city center nearly doubles from 2010 and 2014 to 2018, and goes up by over a factor of 3.5 from 2002 and 2006 to 2018. This all occurs while the negative role of a municipality's percentage of residents who are white declines, suggesting that white, proximal municipalities are becoming more Democratic, even in gubernatorial races that are less tied to the national political environment. Like what we saw with presidential election results, when factoring in controls for education, the predictive

power of proximity increases before 2018 but declines slightly in 2018 (relative to the regression conducted without the education controls), again suggesting that this change in the suburban vote is due in large part to movement of college educated voters, but still demonstrating an inherent impact of proximity. Education itself is a strongly negative predictor of Democratic relative margin before 2018, but in 2018 did not have a statistically significant relationship with the margin, again showing the dramatic movement of college educated voters in suburban areas around major cities. This likely suggests some influence of President Trump’s brand on views of the Republican Party as a whole, continuing to turn off suburban voters even when his name isn’t on the ballot. However, whether this effect would hold after Trump is out of office cannot yet be determined.

Table 21: In 2018, proximal and highly-educated municipalities both moved towards the Democrats.

	2002-2006	2010-2014	2018	2002-2006	2010-2014	2018
(Intercept)	0.222*** (0.022)	0.169*** (0.022)	0.046 (0.032)	0.218*** (0.022)	0.179*** (0.022)	0.050 (0.032)
Proximity	0.095*** (0.023)	0.180*** (0.023)	0.357*** (0.033)	0.183*** (0.024)	0.260*** (0.025)	0.349*** (0.037)
White Pct	-0.384*** (0.023)	-0.395*** (0.023)	-0.285*** (0.033)	-0.297*** (0.025)	-0.327*** (0.025)	-0.299*** (0.036)
College Pct				-0.293*** (0.035)	-0.256*** (0.034)	0.026 (0.050)
Num. obs.	1494	1666	833	1482	1658	829

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

OLS regression coefficients for the impact of proximity, race, and education on relative Democratic margin in gubernatorial elections (2002-2006 average, 2010-2014 average, and 2018 alone), using election results in non-core municipalities in the five metro areas of interest.

In order to determine whether 2018 represented a continuation, acceleration, or reversion of the effects seen in 2016, I now analyze the demographic predictors of movement in 2018 congressional and gubernatorial votes, in comparison with 2014 and 2016. (Note that, in the regressions

below that involve congressional vote, along with all further analyses of congressional vote, all municipalities in the Boston area and some municipalities in the Los Angeles area are excluded because their congressional races were either uncontested or involved two Democrats in either 2016 or 2018.) In some regards, these data do make 2018 look like a continuation, or even acceleration, of the trends seen in 2016 (table 22). As expected, proximity and education have large, fairly significant impacts on a municipality's movement between 2014 and 2018, demonstrating the impact which the changing national environment had on the 2018 midterms, especially in the suburbs. Additionally, when comparing the 2016 congressional vote to the 2018 congressional vote, proximity and education have similarly large impacts, although highly-educated districts swung more heavily than proximal ones, suggesting that suburbs further from cities may have been more willing to split tickets in 2016. This is consistent with the larger trend of congressional districts won in 2016 by both Hillary Clinton and Republican congressional candidates ousting their Republican representatives in 2018, with the number of such Clinton/Republican districts dropping from 23 to 3 after the 2018 elections. As shown in figure 9 (and in the full MSA breakdown in appendix E), 2018 clearly represented positive movement for the Democrats in congressional races in suburban and highly-educated areas, especially in the Los Angeles, Charleston, and Minneapolis metro areas, all of which contained at least one House seat flipped by Democrats in 2018. However, not all data point to the permanence of the suburban shift. If we compare the 2016 relative presidential margins to the 2018 relative gubernatorial margins, it appears that 2018 actually represented some reversion to the mean, with both proximity and education predicting movement towards the Republican Party, albeit not enough to completely reverse the changes seen in 2016. The 2018 midterms certainly demonstrate additional movement of suburban voters towards the Democratic

Party, but without Trump himself on the ballot, a small subset of suburbanites may be moving back.

Table 22: In 2018, proximal and highly-educated municipalities became more Democratic relative to 2014 and 2016 congressional results, but not relative to 2016 presidential results.

	2014-2018 Relative Gov	2016-2018 Congress	2016 Relative Pres-2018 Relative Gov
(Intercept)	-0.091*** (0.012)	-0.110*** (0.016)	-0.036 (0.026)
Proximity	0.126*** (0.014)	0.112*** (0.018)	-0.081** (0.030)
White Pct	-0.047*** (0.014)	0.102*** (0.018)	0.212*** (0.029)
College Pct	0.212*** (0.019)	0.248*** (0.027)	-0.087* (0.041)
Num. obs.	801	624	801

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

OLS regression coefficients for impact of proximity, race, and education on the differences between the relative Democratic gubernatorial margins in 2014 and 2018, the congressional margins in 2016 and 2018, and the relative presidential margin in 2016 and the relative gubernatorial margin in 2018, using election results from non-core municipalities in the five metro areas of interest.

Regressions involving congressional races exclude all Boston area and some Los Angeles area municipalities.

Figure 9: Well-educated, suburban, and proximal municipalities all became more Democratic between 2014 and 2018.



Relative margins in suburban (A), proximal (B), and well-educated (C) municipalities in 2014 gubernatorial, 2016 presidential and congressional, and 2018 gubernatorial and congressional elections, using election results from non-core municipalities in the five metro areas of interest. Totals are calculated by taking an average of the relative margins in all relevant municipalities, excluding all in Boston and some in Los Angeles, and taking the mean of all MSA-wise averages.

A few additional analyses further confirm that 2018 seemed to lie somewhere between 2014 and 2016 in terms of Democratic strength in the suburbs. Running a simple linear regression that looks at the 2014-2018 relative gubernatorial margin change, the 2016-2018 congressional margin change, and the 2016-2018 relative margin change (comparing presidential and gubernatorial relative margins), with the 2012-2016 relative margin change as the independent variable, along with controls for individual municipalities, we are able to determine how 2018 fits in with the trends seen in 2016. As shown in figure 23, a municipality's 2014-2018 swing is roughly 4.5 percentage points plus 65.3% of its 2012-2016 swing, while its 2016-2018 congressional swing is about 13 percentage points plus 87.0% of its 2012-2016 change, both of which are statistically-significant figures. Therefore, we can see that 2018 represents both a projection of 2016 presidential trends onto both gubernatorial and congressional races, with those down-ballot races that hadn't previously been affected by Donald Trump also slipping away from Republicans in suburban areas. However, a municipality's 2012-2016 relative margin change corresponds with a shift in the opposite direction between the 2016 presidential and 2018 gubernatorial races, further demonstrating how 2016 may have been an unusually strong year for Democrats in the suburbs. Figure 10, which looks at the average relative margins between 2014 and 2018, specifically among places that had fairly high 2012-2016 relative margin swings (above 6 percentage points), further confirms this. Places that swung most strongly towards the Democrats tended to be somewhat Republican in 2014 and become fairly Democratic in 2016, before becoming slightly less strongly Democratic in 2018.

Without significant opinion survey data, it's hard to isolate exactly why suburbanites remained so strongly Democratic in 2018. Some pre-election polling data, which asked voters about specific issues in addition to their congressional preferences, can provide insight, even if they

Table 23: Municipalities that became more Democratic in 2016 became more Democratic, relative to 2014 gubernatorial and 2016 congressional races, in 2018.

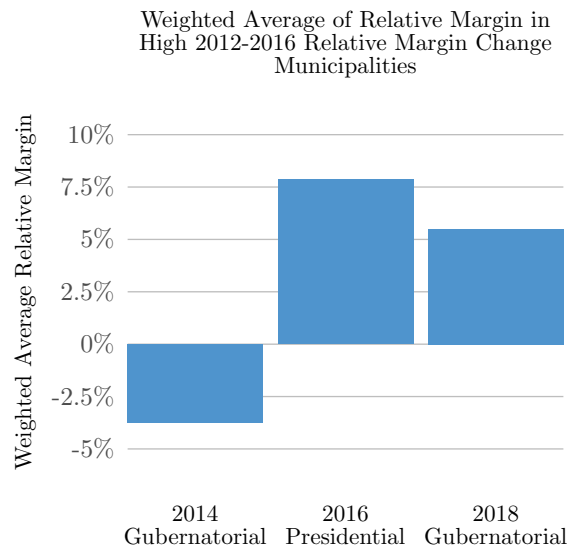
	2014-2018 Relative Gov	2016-2018 Cong	2016 Relative Pres-2018 Relative Gov
(Intercept)	0.045 (0.064)	0.130 (0.084)	0.434* (0.209)
Relative Margin Change, 2012-16	0.653*** (0.121)	0.870** (0.218)	-1.236** (0.395)
Num. obs.	803	626	803

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

OLS regression coefficients for the impact of 2012-2016 relative margin change on the differences between the relative Democratic gubernatorial margins in 2014 and 2018, the congressional margins in 2016 and 2018, and the relative presidential margin in 2016 and the relative gubernatorial margin in 2018, using election results from non-core municipalities in the five metro areas of interest. Regressions involving congressional races exclude all Boston area and some Los Angeles area municipalities.

don't break out voters by education and geography. In one poll of voters in 69 House battleground districts, conducted by the Washington Post about a month before Election Day, voters' divides on economic and other issues could reveal which issues drove electoral decisions (Clement and Balz 2018). The poll found that 77% of voters in these districts would rate the economy as excellent or good, but only 36% thought that the country was moving in the right direction, when asked to consider issues other than the economy. When looking at these "other" issues that voters may have been considering, voters identified the Supreme Court, Donald Trump himself, and healthcare as more important than the economy, with immigration only slightly less important. For voters in these largely-suburban battleground districts, cultural and racial issues, like Brett Kavanaugh's sexual assault allegations and President Trump's hardline stance on immigration, seemed to drive negative perceptions of the Republican Party as a whole, hurting the party's electoral chances in the suburbs. Additionally, a Pew Research survey from May 2018 identifies growing divides between suburban and rural voters on some key issues (Parker et al. 2018). While suburban voters had

Figure 10: Municipalities that swung the most between 2012 and 2016 tended to stay Democratic in 2018.



Relative margins in 2014 gubernatorial, 2016 presidential, and 2018 gubernatorial elections in municipalities that swung the most between 2012 and 2016, using election results from non-core municipalities in the five metro areas of interest. Totals are calculated by taking an average of the relative margins in all relevant municipalities and taking the mean of all MSA-wise averages.

only slightly more liberal views than rural voters on the role of the government in helping to “solve problems,” their views were much closer to urban voters on issues of immigration, racial equality, and Donald Trump himself. Alternatively, in some of the metro areas analyzed here that shifted strongly towards the Democrats in 2018, including Los Angeles and Charleston, some unique local factors may have come into play - the SALT deduction controversy likely hurt Republicans among the very wealthy Orange County voters who flipped four congressional seats to the Democrats, while the defeat of anti-Trump Republican Mark Sanford in the Republican Primary in South Carolina’s 1st district, located in and around Charleston, may have pushed enough suburban Republicans to stay home or vote Democratic in November. Ultimately, it appears as if the 2018 midterms represented a perfect storm for Democrats in suburban areas; Trump’s focus on immigration, his

defense of Brett Kavanaugh, and his failure to make the economy more salient could have allowed Democrats to pick up voters who may have voted Republican down-ballot in 2016, but who would rather have a Congress that stood up to Trump than one that supported him.

4 Discussion

Returning to my original hypotheses, it appears that my speculations about college educated and suburban voters were largely correct, but some caveats are needed. On the national level, college educated voters seemed to get more Democratic between 2000 and 2012, but this trend is not as simple as the percentage of college graduates voting Democratic increasing year-over-year. Indeed, this trend seems largely due to movement between 2000 and 2004, and almost entirely among nonwhite college graduates, although the statistical insignificance of college education as a predictor of vote choice until 2012 does suggest some gradual sorting along educational lines. As my deeper analyses of suburban municipalities show, the biggest shifts between 2000 and 2012 came not in municipalities that are largely college educated or largely suburban, but in municipalities that are both close to cities and have high percentages of college graduates. Given the gradual liberalizing of college educated voters on abortion, the large extent to which racial issues seemed to factor into voters' decision-making, and the growing fiscal liberalism of white college educated voters living near cities, along with the perception of the Republican Party moving to the right on cultural and racial issues, we can understand why college educated suburban voters would have felt more drawn to the Democrats. Taken together, we can conclude that, for a multitude of possible reasons, college educated suburban voters certainly became more Democratic between 2000 and the rise of Donald Trump.

My second hypothesis, in which I posited that proximity was an important factor in the 2016 elections, is also largely true. Proximal municipalities within metropolitan areas became more Democratic than non-proximal ones, and the shift among proximal and well-educated municipalities was higher than it was in well-educated municipalities as a whole, demonstrating some unique impact to proximity. Additionally, proximal municipalities became more Democratic, relative to 2008 and 2012, than they did in any election between 2000 and 2012. However, the effect of proximity was clearly dwarfed by college education, with proximity being a far less important factor in the vote choices of college educated voters than it was in past years. Ultimately, proximity clearly drove voters to prefer Democratic candidates, but the change in the impact of proximity was much smaller than the change in the impact of education. In that sense, 2016 represented both evolution and revolution in the suburbs - slight movement towards the Democrats in the broad category of suburbs as a whole, with much more significant movement in the stereotypical highly-educated suburbs. Such trends appear to be due to more than just demographic changes, although rising nonwhite populations in some areas certainly made a difference. In 2016, college educated voters became much more liberal on racial issues, while viewing the Republican Party as much more conservative on such issues, although college educated (and, to a lesser extent, proximal) voters seemed to move towards the Democratic Party for reasons other than ideology.

Finally, I hypothesized that suburban voters would be more Democratic in 2018 than in 2014, but less so than in 2016, and this appears to be the case. The same patterns that predicted movement towards the Democratic Party between 2012 and 2016 in suburban areas, namely proximity and education, both predicted pro-Democratic movement between the 2014 and 2018 gubernatorial elections. However, when we compare 2018 gubernatorial margins to 2016 presiden-

tial margins, the suburbs shifted in the Republican direction, relative to the other municipalities in their states, suggesting some reversion to pre-2016 means in suburban areas, rural areas, or (in all likelihood) both. However, when we compare congressional margins in 2016 and 2018, suburban areas seemed to continue to move in the Democratic direction, which could suggest that, on some level, the suburban shift seen at the presidential level in 2016 may be extending down ballot.

So what does this all mean for the future of American politics? As of right now, it's hard to determine whether the future of the Democratic Party is really in the suburbs. On the one hand, the significant suburban shift that occurred between 2000 and 2004 largely stayed in place in 2008 and 2012, which bodes well for the durability of the 2012-2016 swing. Looking at the roles that cultural issues and perceptions of President Bush played on moving suburban voters away from the Republican Party, it's telling that college educated and proximal voters stayed Democratic even without Bush on the ballot. In that context, we may expect post-Trump voting coalitions to look a lot like current ones, at least until some outside force comes in and shakes up the political environment the way that Trump did. But the shift between 2000 and 2004, while significant, pales in comparison to the shift between 2012 and 2016, so it could be much harder for the Democrats to hang onto all of their new suburban voters. Furthermore, given the extent to which the heightened salience of racial issues and the declined importance of fiscal issues affected suburban voters in 2016, there seems to be an opportunity for Republicans, who could hypothetically win back these voters by putting forward a candidate more like Mitt Romney than Donald Trump.

Whether such a candidate exists and would have support among a Republican primary electorate, however, remains a different story. As anti-Trump suburban Republicans move towards the Democratic Party, Trump himself continues to be popular among the Republican base, surpass-

ing even Ronald Reagan and post-9/11 George W. Bush in first-term popularity (Enten 2018). And President Trump himself doesn't appear to recognize any need to change. After the 2018 midterms, he doubled down on the anti-immigrant sentiment that arguably cost his party the House, going so far as to shut down the government for 35 days and declare a State of Emergency in an attempt to secure funding for a wall on the Mexican border. While the Republican-controlled Senate's rebuke of the State of Emergency seems like a rejection of Trumpist policies, many Republican senators up for reelection in 2020 who had previously rebuked Trump's immigration agenda, including Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and Thom Thillis of North Carolina, voted to uphold the President's declaration. While it's hard to ascribe motive to any single vote, it's not much of a leap to conclude that President Trump's immigration agenda has taken hold among the Republican Party base (see Gross and Sides 2019 for polling on the partisan polarization of the immigration issue). Thus, even if the Republican Party has the capacity to win back suburban voters who reject President Trump's stances on racial issues, questions remain as to whether it will even try.

This is not to say that the Democratic Party is a natural home for dissatisfied, ex-Republican suburban voters, even if they voted for Democrats in 2016 and 2018. Analysis of 2016 data demonstrates that suburban and college educated voters didn't become more Democratic because their views on economic issues aligned with the party, but rather because economic issues likely became less of a deciding factor in vote choices. We certainly don't have enough data on vote preferences in 2018 to determine whether a Democratic Party that is moving to the left on economic issues might turn away suburban voters, but it's certainly possible that they run the risk of doing so. Of course, some aforementioned polling does counter this conventional wisdom that suburbanites are more conservative on economic issues (Scott 2018). In the end, with limited

data from Trump-era midterms and no data from any post-Trump elections, it's hard to say how suburbanites are reacting to changes that are occurring in both parties.

Ultimately, the lack of detailed opinion data from 2018 makes it difficult to speculate how suburbanites vote without Trump on the ballot. Many suburban voters who split their tickets and voted Republican for congress in 2016 voted Democratic in 2018, but there are two plausible explanations for this pattern that portend vastly different views on suburban voting as a whole. If, as some speculated, these voters expected that Hillary Clinton would win in 2016 and wanted a Republican Congress to check her liberal policies, but in 2018 wanted a Democratic Congress to check Trump's populist policies, it's possible that these voters may not be Democrats as much as traditional Republicans who were dissatisfied with Trump. But if these voters truly shifted from being split-ticket moderates to straight-ticket Democrats, they may be more likely to stick with the Democratic Party going forward.

Given the way that the 2016 and 2018 elections worked out, it's easy to see a world in which the suburbs continue to move Democratic relative to rural areas because both parties decide that this pattern is electorally ideal. After all, even as Democrats won back the House on their strength in suburban areas, Republicans were able to gain seats in the Senate by continuing to make inroads in rural areas in states like North Dakota and Missouri. And with the way that the 2020 election will likely come down to states like Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin, all of which saw Democrats win statewide in 2018 by doing better in suburbs than in previous midterm elections, it's possible that both parties will make the electoral calculation to let the suburbs go Democratic. In the end, though, the suburbs will be worth watching in the next few years, especially once President Trump is out of office, to see if we're really in the midst of a long-term change in

party coalitions.

5 Conclusion

The suburban shift of 2016, while more dramatic than in past elections, was not a new phenomenon, building on top of an existing movement of college educated voters living close to cities that has existed since at least 2004. In that context alone, given that a significant shift of suburban voters back towards the Republican Party has not occurred, it makes sense to believe that Democrats are not likely to lose their emerging suburban coalition any time soon. As long as the Republican Party continues to emphasize a brand of cultural and racial conservatism that clearly pushes away those living in suburban areas, there's little reason to believe that they will be able to win back college educated and proximal voters, especially given that their pursuit of conservative economic policy in the first two years of the Trump Administration failed to bring back many anti-Trump voters into the party fold. But the nature of the American political system makes it difficult to assess what such a shift really means for party majorities. If we assume that Democrats are solidifying a coalition of nonwhite and suburban white voters, can that win them a country whose political system is set up to give disproportionate representation to whiter, more rural areas? And can that coalition really power the "emerging Democratic majority" that Judis and Teixeira promised 15 years ago? It's certainly possible, but it may be too early to tell.

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8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A: ANES Question Wordings

Issue	Question	Response Options
Abortion	<p>There has been some discussion about abortion during recent years. I am going to read you a short list of opinions. Please tell me which one of the opinions best agrees with your view? You can just tell me the number of the opinion you choose.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By law, abortion should never be permitted. 2. The law should permit abortion only in case of rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger. 3. The law should permit abortion for reasons other than rape, incest, or danger to the woman's life, but only after the need for the abortion has been clearly established. 4. By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice.
Aid to Blacks	<p>Some people feel that the government in Washington should make every effort to improve the social and economic position of blacks. (Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1.) Others feel that the government should not make any special effort to help blacks because they should help themselves. (Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7.) And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2,3,4,5, or 6.</p>	<p>Scale from 1 ("Government should help blacks") to 7 ("Blacks should help themselves")</p>
Spending	<p>Some people think the government should provide fewer services even in areas such as health and education in order to reduce spending. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Other people feel it is important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2,3,4,5 or 6.</p>	<p>Scale from 1 ("Government should provide many fewer services") to 7 ("Government should provide many more services")</p>

8.2 Appendix B: Gubernatorial Results by Proximity, Race, and Education (2002-2014)

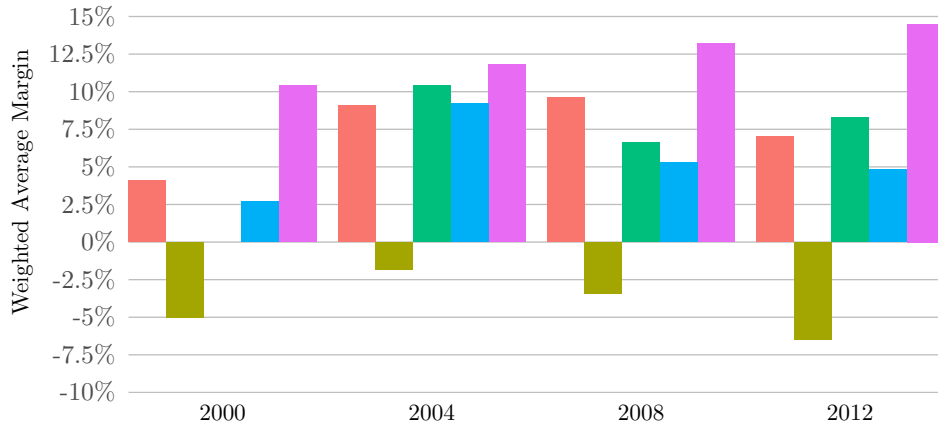
	2002	2006	2010	2014
(Intercept)	0.044 (0.028)	-0.233*** (0.028)	0.088*** (0.020)	0.177*** (0.027)
Proximity	0.347*** (0.034)	0.747*** (0.035)	0.557*** (0.024)	0.319*** (0.033)
College Pct	-0.243*** (0.065)	-0.561*** (0.062)	-0.077 (0.043)	-0.091 (0.057)
White Pct	-0.249*** (0.037)	0.073* (0.034)	-0.500*** (0.024)	-0.462*** (0.034)
Num. obs.	651	798	798	801

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

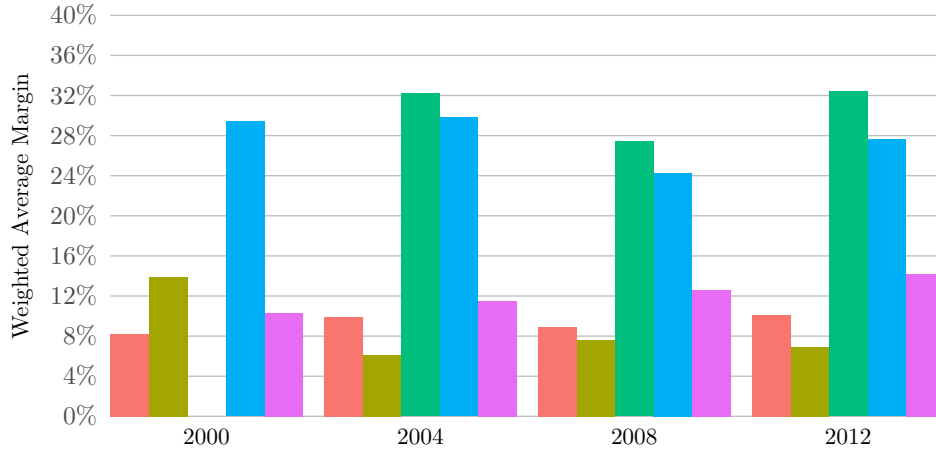
OLS regression coefficients for the impact of proximity, education, and race on Democratic gubernatorial vote margin in non-core municipalities (2002-2014), using election results from the five metro areas of interest.

8.3 Appendix C: Presidential Results in Suburban, Proximal, and Well-Educated Municipalities, Broken Out by MSA

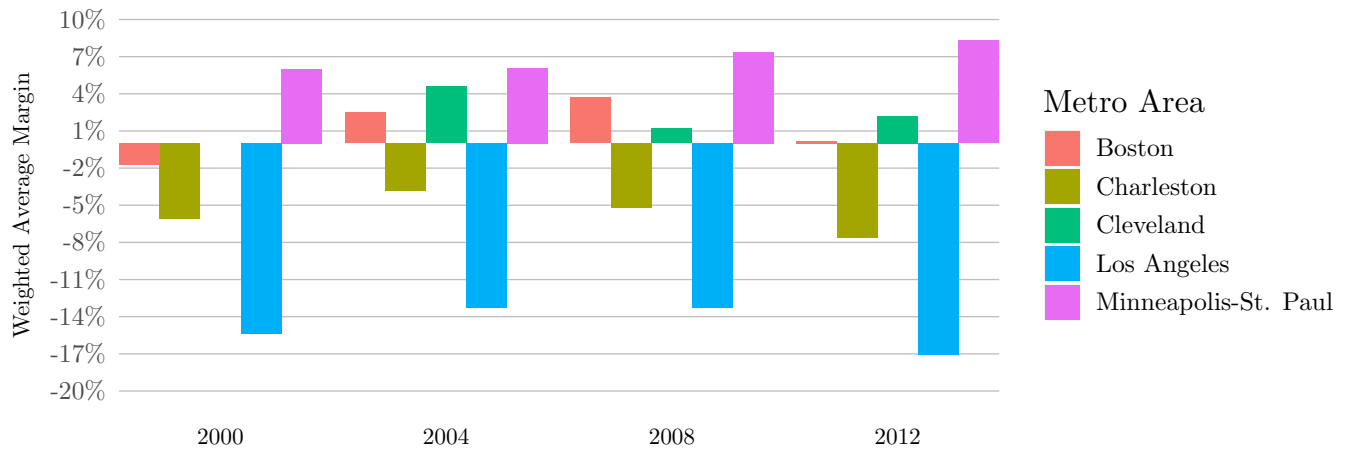
A) Weighted Average of Relative Margin in Stereotypically Suburban Municipalities, Presidential Elections 2000 to 2012



B) Weighted Average of Relative Margin in Proximal Municipalities, Presidential Elections 2000 to 2012



C) Weighted Average of Relative Margin in Highly-Educated Municipalities, Presidential Elections 2000 to 2012



Relative Democratic margin in suburban (A), proximal (B), and highly-educated (C) municipalities in presidential elections (2000-2012), using election results from non-core municipalities the five metro areas of interest.

8.4 Appendix D: CCES Question Wordings

Issue	Question	Response Options
Abortion	There has been some discussion about abortion during recent years. Which one of the opinions on this page best agrees with your view on this issue?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By law, abortion should never be permitted 2. The law should permit abortion only in case of rape, incest or when the woman's life is in danger 3. The law should permit abortion for reasons other than rape, incest, or danger to the woman's life, but only after the need for the abortion has been clearly established 4. By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice
Affirmative Action	Some people think that if a company has a history of discriminating against blacks when making hiring decisions, then they should be required to have an affirmative action program that gives blacks preference in hiring. What do you think? Should companies that have discriminated against blacks have to have an affirmative action program?	Scale from 1 (Strongly Support Affirmative Action) to 7 (Strongly Oppose Affirmative Action)
Spending	The federal budget is currently running a \$300 billion deficit. If the Congress were to balance the budget it would have to consider cutting defense spending, cutting domestic spending, raising taxes, or borrowing money to cover the deficit. What would you most prefer that Congress do - cut domestic spending, cut military spending, raise taxes, or borrow funds?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cut Domestic Spending 2. Cut Defense Spending 3. Raise Taxes 4. Borrow

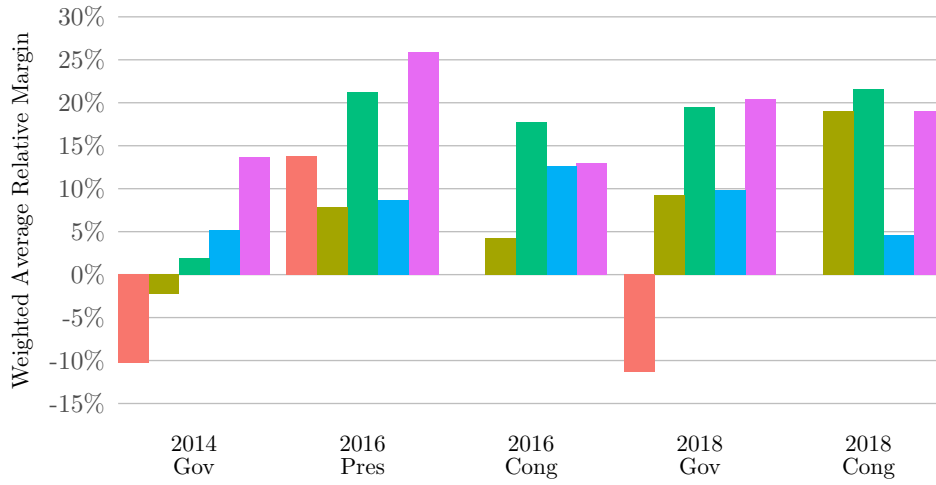
2008-2014

Issue	Question	Response Options
Abortion	Which one of the opinions on this page best agrees with your view on this issue?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By law, abortion should never be permitted 2. The law should permit abortion only in case of rape, incest or when the woman's life is in danger 3. The law should permit abortion for reasons other than rape, incest, or danger to the woman's life, but only after the need for the abortion has been clearly established 4. By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice
Affirmative Action	Affirmative action programs give preference to racial minorities in employment and college admissions in order to correct for past discrimination. Do you support or oppose affirmative action?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly support 2. Somewhat support 3. Somewhat oppose 4. Strongly oppose
Spending	The federal budget is currently running a [figure varies] deficit. If the Congress were to balance the budget it would have to consider cutting defense spending, cutting domestic spending (such as Medicare and Social Security), or raising taxes, to cover the deficit. What would you most prefer that Congress do - cut domestic spending, cut military spending, or raise taxes?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cut Domestic Spending 2. Cut Defense Spending 3. Raise Taxes

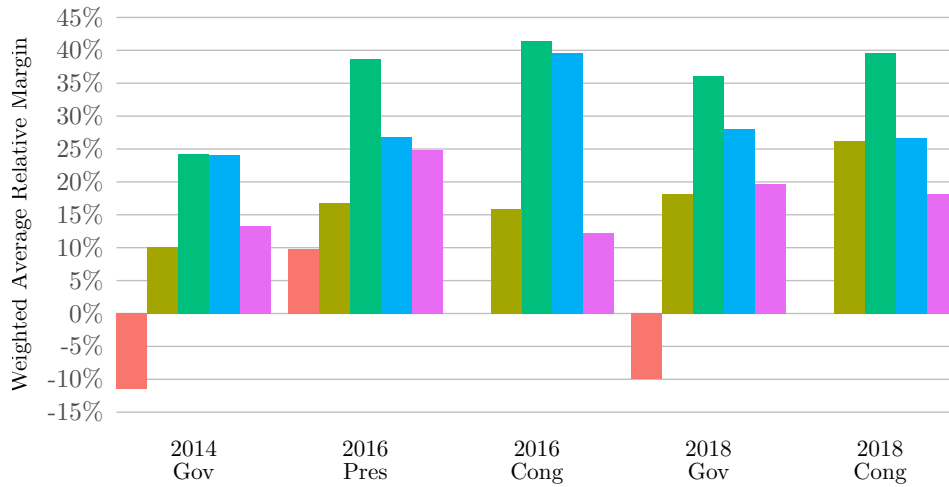
Issue	Question	Response Options
Abortion	Do you support or oppose each of the following proposals? Always allow a woman to obtain an abortion as a matter of choice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support 2. Oppose
Racial Inequality	White people in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Somewhat disagree 5. Strongly disagree
Spending	The federal deficit is approximately \$1 trillion this year. If the Congress were to balance the budget it would have to consider cutting defense spending, cutting domestic spending (such as Medicare and Social Security), or raising taxes, to cover the deficit. What would you most prefer that Congress do?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cut Domestic Spending 2. Cut Defense Spending 3. Raise Taxes

8.5 Appendix E: 2014-2018 Relative Margins, Broken Out by MSA

A) Weighted Average of Relative Margin in Suburban Municipalities



B) Weighted Average of Relative Margin in Proximal Municipalities



C) Weighted Average of Relative Margin in Well-Educated Municipalities

