L. Jason Anastasopoulos, Ph.D.

About the Author

Jason is a Democracy Fellow at the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. He completed his Ph.D. in Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley in 2013, holds an M.A. in Statistics from Harvard University and a B.S. in Industrial and Labor Relations from Cornell University. His work has been published in the *Journal of Legal Studies* and he has been the recipient of several prestigious awards from the National Science Foundation. He currently resides in Cambridge, MA.

Proposed Book Title - “Big and Little Sorts: Diversity, Polarization and the Rise of Urban Liberalism.”

Overview

The topic of secession has not entered mainstream political debates in the U.S. since the end of the Civil War in 1865. Recently, however, conservative and mostly rural counties have proposed measures which would allow them to defect from their respective states. In Maryland, rural counties proposed establishing the state of West Maryland, free of influence from liberal Baltimore. Liberal policies on gay marriage and gun control in Colorado drove several rural and conservative counties to propose a split from a state that they feel is concerned only with the preferences of residents in liberal Boulder and Denver. While it may be tempting to dismiss these initiatives as a temporary rise in Tea Party fanaticism, they reflect a growing ideological rift between urban and rural America which began as early as the 1950s.

The relationship between big cities and left-wing politics in the United States has grown strong over the past three decades. Between 1948 and 1976, Democratic vote share for the president in Cook County, Illinois, which includes the City of Chicago and a few surrounding suburbs, has fluctuated between 45% and 55%. Since 1980, Democratic presidential vote share in Cook County has *never* dipped below 50% and reached a 100-year record high of 74% during the 2012 presidential election. In Los Angeles County, which encompasses the entire City of Los Angeles, Democratic vote share rose above the 50% mark in only 3 of 9 presidential elections between 1948 and 1984. Since 1988, however, Democratic vote share for the president has *never* dipped below 50%. In 2012, 70% of Angelinos voted for Barack Obama, the highest vote share of any Democratic president in the city’s history.
This rise in urban liberalism contrasts with voting patterns in rural counties, where Republican vote share has been steadily increasing. For example, Republican vote share in Kern County, CA which is adjacent to Los Angeles County, fluctuated between 41% and 62% between 1948 and 1984. Since 1988, Republican vote share has never dropped below 50% and reached a high of 67% in 2004. Similar patterns of urban/rural ideological divergence can be found in several other medium and large cities across the nation and their surrounding suburbs.

To explain these patterns, political scientists have pointed to “partisan sorting,” the geographic clustering of ideologically like-minded individuals which, some argue, has accelerated over the past 50 years (Bishop 2008). While a great deal of evidence suggests that partisan sorting exists and has become more intense over the past three decades, no convincing theory has been proposed to explain either its causes or different patterns of sorting which are observed in cities across the country.

The MAP Theory

Drawing on theories from economics, political science, demography and sociology, I develop the Migration-Assimilation-Polarization (MAP) Theory which explains how patterns of non-white migration to large metropolitan areas and the conservative white flight that they induced are the primary causes of partisan sorting and the growing urban/rural ideological divide.

Outline of Migration-Assimilation-Polarization (MAP) Theory

The MAP Theory describes a set of processes whose end result is greater ideological liberalism/Democratic voting in urban areas and greater conservatism/Republican voting in rural and suburban areas. First, racially and ethnically diverse groups of migrants or immigrants are drawn to urban centers by various “pull” factors which include economic opportunities, previously established immigrant/migrant communities and natural disasters. Since these migrants are usually poor, they tend to identify with Democratic Party economic values. Thus, cities which attract racially and ethnically diverse migrants, absent other demographic changes, should become more liberal solely as the result of an increase in the proportion Democrat. Migration and immigration themselves, however, cannot possibly account for the very large increases in urban liberalism which have occurred over the past 30 years.

According to the MAP Theory, flight by white conservatives residing in urban areas in response to these migration events accounts for the bulk of partisan sorting and the rise in urban liberalism. This is because conservatives tend to be less tolerant of racial and ethnic diversity in their neighborhoods, a fact which is demonstrated in the book using several recent surveys. As a result of this relative lack of tolerance, when migration events bring large groups of non-white migrants to urban areas, conservatives tend to relocate, often to more rural or suburban areas with lower levels of diversity. This pattern of diverse in-migration and white conservative out-migration results in rising levels of urban liberalism and rural and suburban conservatism. A general outline of the MAP theory is illustrated in the diagram above.

This book will appeal to both academic researchers and a college-educated audience with an interest in American politics, political geography, immigration and political polarization. It will be roughly 200-250 pages and written with a college educated general audience in mind. A brief outline and summary of each of the chapters is presented below. Chapters 1, 2 and 5 are complete and are included as part of this book proposal.
Chapter Outline and Summary

Introduction - A brief introduction connecting current events such as state secession to urban/rural political polarization. A brief review of the literature on polarization and partisan sorting will be included as well.

Chapter 1: The MAP Theory - The Migration-Assimilation-Polarization (MAP) Theory is introduced. A brief description of the Schelling model, tolerance preferences and their connection to political ideology using results from major surveys provide evidence for the theory’s premises.

Chapter 2: Simulating Diversity - Formal/mathematical aspects of the MAP Theory are developed. Agent based models simulating increases in diversity, segregation and partisan sorting are presented to support and better illustrate the MAP Theory discussed in Chapter 1.

Chapter 3: The Great (Big) Migration Sort - The promise of a better life and jobs drew over 6 million Southern-born African-Americans to East Coast, Midwestern and West Coast cities between 1910 and 1970. Here, I use county-level Census migration and election data to assess the impact of the Second Great Migration (1941-1970) on conservative flight, urban liberalism and rural conservatism.

Chapter 4: The (Big) Immigration Sort - After the passage of national origin quotas stipulated by the Immigration Act of 1924, immigration to the United States from all parts of the world decreased dramatically. After repeal of the quotas by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 immigration to the United States from Latin American countries, especially Mexico, exploded. Here, I explore the impact of Mexican immigration between 1965 and 2012 on conservative flight, urban liberalism and rural conservatism in cities receiving Mexican immigrants during this time. Since there are many factors correlated with Mexican immigration to American cities that are also correlated with political outcomes, I use earthquakes in Mexico as an instrumental variable for Mexican immigration to cities across the U.S..

Chapter 5: The (Little) Katrina Sort - Hurricane Katrina made landfall in the southern United States in late August of 2005. While it wreaked havoc on many Gulf Coast cities, New Orleans was hit hardest by far and rendered uninhabitable for several months. As a result, Hurricane Katrina contributed to one of the single largest migrations of African-Americans since the Second Great Migration. In September of 2005, Houston, Texas welcomed over 200,000 African-American Katrina evacuees from New Orleans, nearly doubling the African-American population in Houston over the course of only two months. Using evacuee data from Houston neighborhoods and schools in addition to precinct-level election data, I estimated the impact of African-American Hurricane Katrina migration on conservative white flight and geographic polarization in Houston and Harris county. I found strong evidence that the arrival of African-American Katrina evacuees resulted in conservative white flight, increases in urban liberalism and rural conservatism.

Chapter 6: Migration and Polarization in the House - Here I explore connections between the migration events discussed in chapters 3, 4 and 5 and ideological polarization in the House of Representatives using DW-NOMINATE measures of legislator ideology.

Chapter 7: Conclusions - I provide a brief summary of the previous chapters and discuss avenues for future research on this topic. Specifically, I explore the possibility of modeling urban migration as a diffusion process and discuss the role that social networks play in facilitating migration.
Competitive Titles

In many ways, this book is a response to *The Big Sort* published by journalist Bill Bishop and will be of interest to readers who enjoyed this work and *Bowling Alone* by acclaimed Harvard Kennedy School professor Robert Putnam. In “Big and Little Sorts”, I critique the premise of *The Big Sort* which claims that partisan sorting occurs as the result of partisanship itself. Rather, I argue that partisan sorting is a “side-effect” of demographic changes brought about by migration and immigration of racially and ethnically diverse populations.

Please feel free to contact me by phone or email if you require any further information.

Sincerely,

L. Jason Anastasopoulos