



# **“After the Culture War: Shifts and Continuities in the Obama Era and Beyond”**

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Prof. John Dombriak

Criminology, Law & Society UC Irvine

Boisi Center for Religion and the Public

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This presentation will discuss certain key enduring and shifting elements of the American culture war as it moves forward:



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that makes the predictions of  
realignment and hopes for post-  
partisanship weaker

# The purpose of Sin No More

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## Sin outline/2

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Despite conservative rhetoric we argued that the tide was turning on each of these issues, with all moving toward normalization in American society – but not always easily.

We challenged the dominant interpretation of the 2004 election as showing a social conservative America (what Karl Rove has called a “center-right” country).

# I. “Ending the Culture Wars”

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Peter Beinart: “When it comes to culture, Obama doesn’t have a public agenda; he has a public anti-agenda. He wants to remove culture from the political debate...Barack Obama was more successful than John Kerry in reaching out to moderate white evangelicals in part because he struck them as more authentically Christian. That’s the foundation on which Obama now seeks to build ” (01-2009)



# On “Ending the Culture Wars”

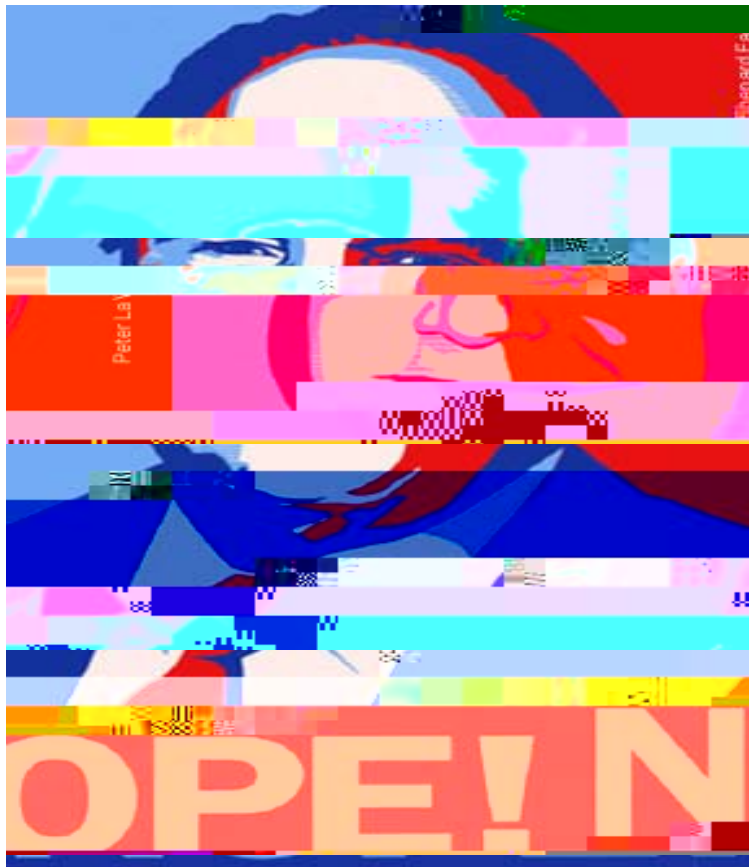
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Ed Kilgore:



# resistance

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But this victory  
was also met with  
resistance









# 2008: realignment?

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Realignment?

Dealignment?





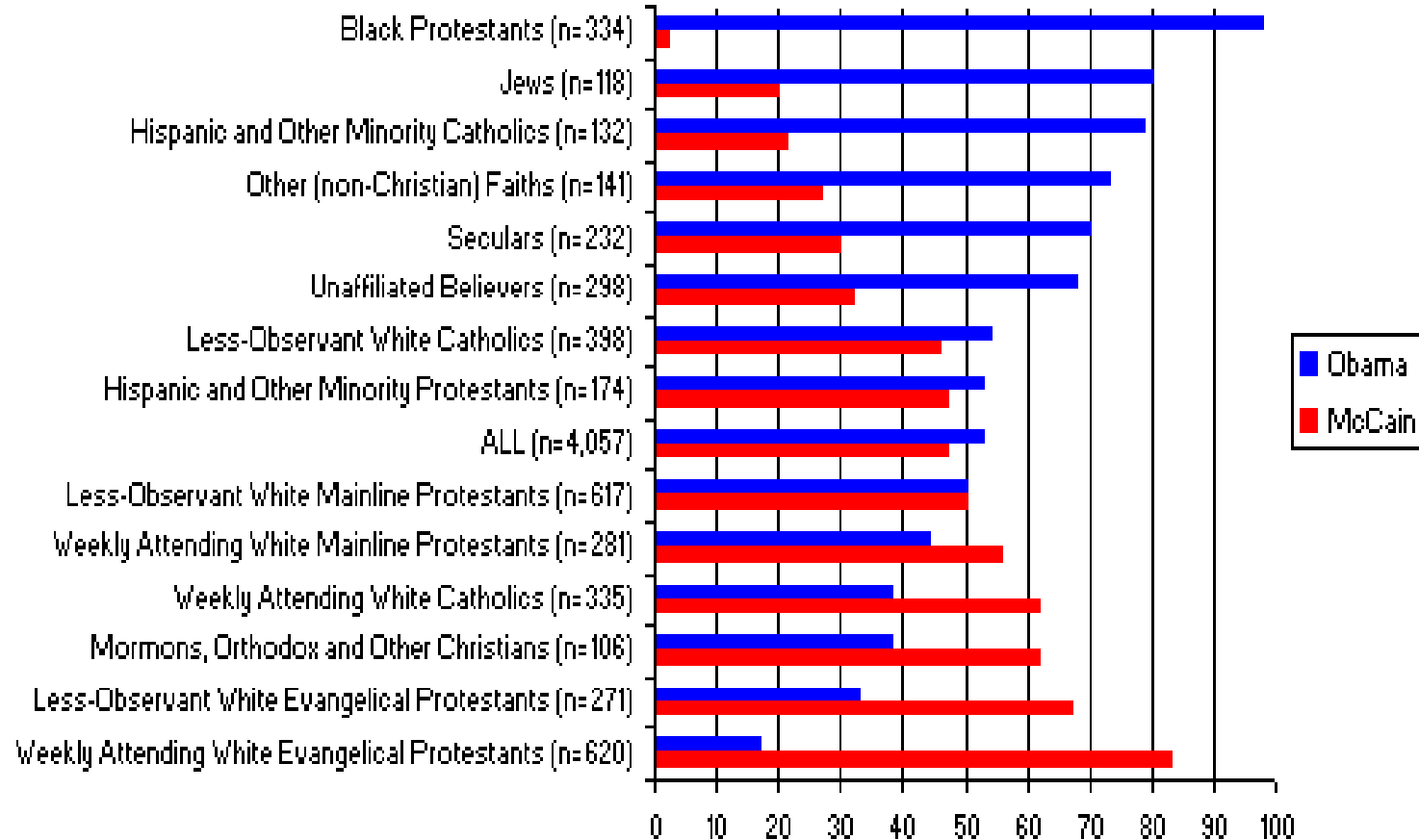


## II. Moderating religion

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“An Obama presidency will force the Religious Right to re-think its strategy and tactics; a process that has been happening over the past few years due to the deaths of

## Religious Groups and the 2008 Presidential Vote





## Presidential Vote by Religious Affiliation and Race

	2000		2004		2008		Dem change 04-08
	<u>Gore</u>	<u>Bush</u>	<u>Kerry</u>	<u>Bush</u>	<u>Obama</u>	<u>McCain</u>	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>+4</b>
Evangelical/Born-again	n/a	n/a	21	79	26	73	+5
Non-evangelical	n/a	n/a	44	56	44	54	0
Catholic	50	47	47	52	54	45	+7
White Catholic	45	52	43	56	47	52	+4
Jewish	79	19	74	25	78	21	+4
Other faiths	62	28	74	23	73	22	-1
Unaffiliated	61	30	67	31	75	23	+8

Note: Throughout the report, "Protestant" refers to people who described themselves as "Protestant," "Mormon" or "other Christian" in exit polls.

Throughout the report, figures may not add to 100, and nested figures may not add to the subtotal indicated, due to rounding.

Source: 2008, 2004 and 2000 national exit polls. 2008 data from MSNBC.com.

# Whither evangelicals?

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When evangelical pastor Rick Warren was chosen to lead a prayer at President Obama's inauguration, it set off a firestorm of critique from left and right





# New Evangelical Partnership

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Cizik, ...describing the efforts of his organization to reorient conservative Christians away from issues such as homosexuality and abortion and toward more

### III. Abortion

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While this wasn't much of a 2008 election issue, it is today, and underlies a lot of the momentum, meaning and context of the culture war

## Of “big tents”

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Democrats evidenced belief in bigger tents for a winning coalition  
2008 Democratic platform signaled willingness to embrace wider views on reproductive rights



# Catholics and 2008 vote

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Obama and Catholics

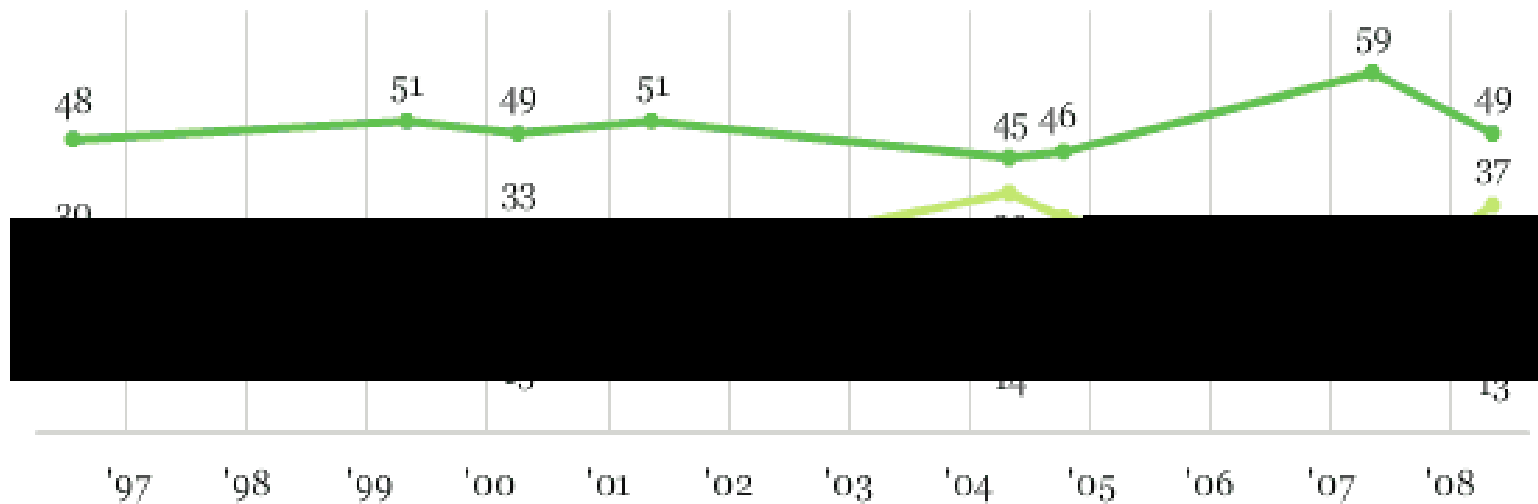
Kmiec

Anti-abortion but  
Pro-Obama

# Abortion/salience

## *Impact of Abortion Issue on Voting for Major Offices*

- % Candidate must share your views
- % Just one of many important factors
- % Not a major issue

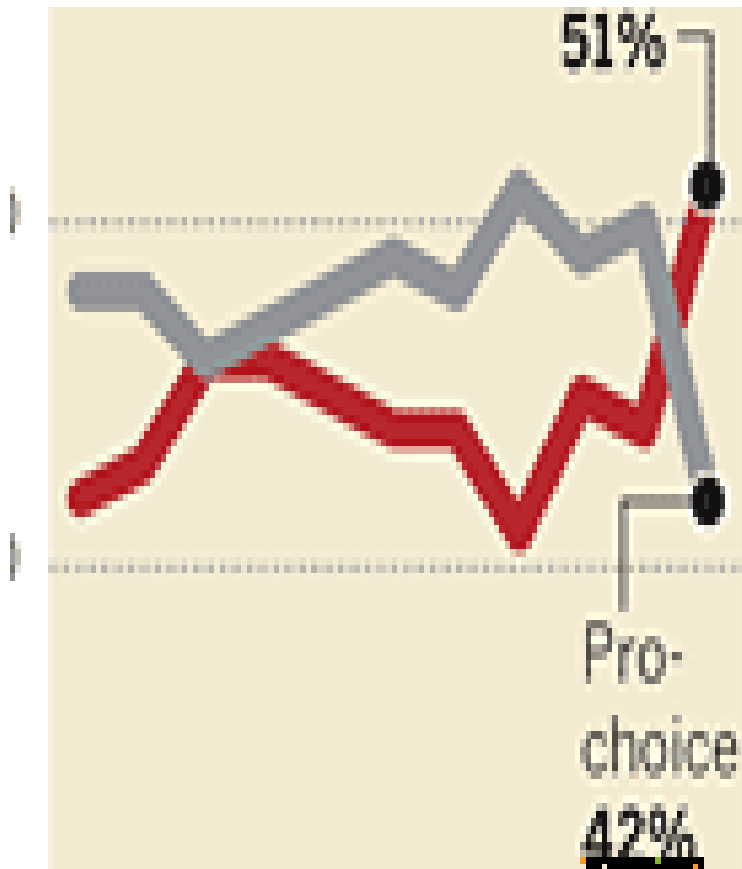


GALLUP POLL



## 2009: Shift in abortion attitudes?

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The Gallup Poll reported May 15 that 51 percent of Americans now call themselves pro-life rather than pro-choice on the issue of abortion

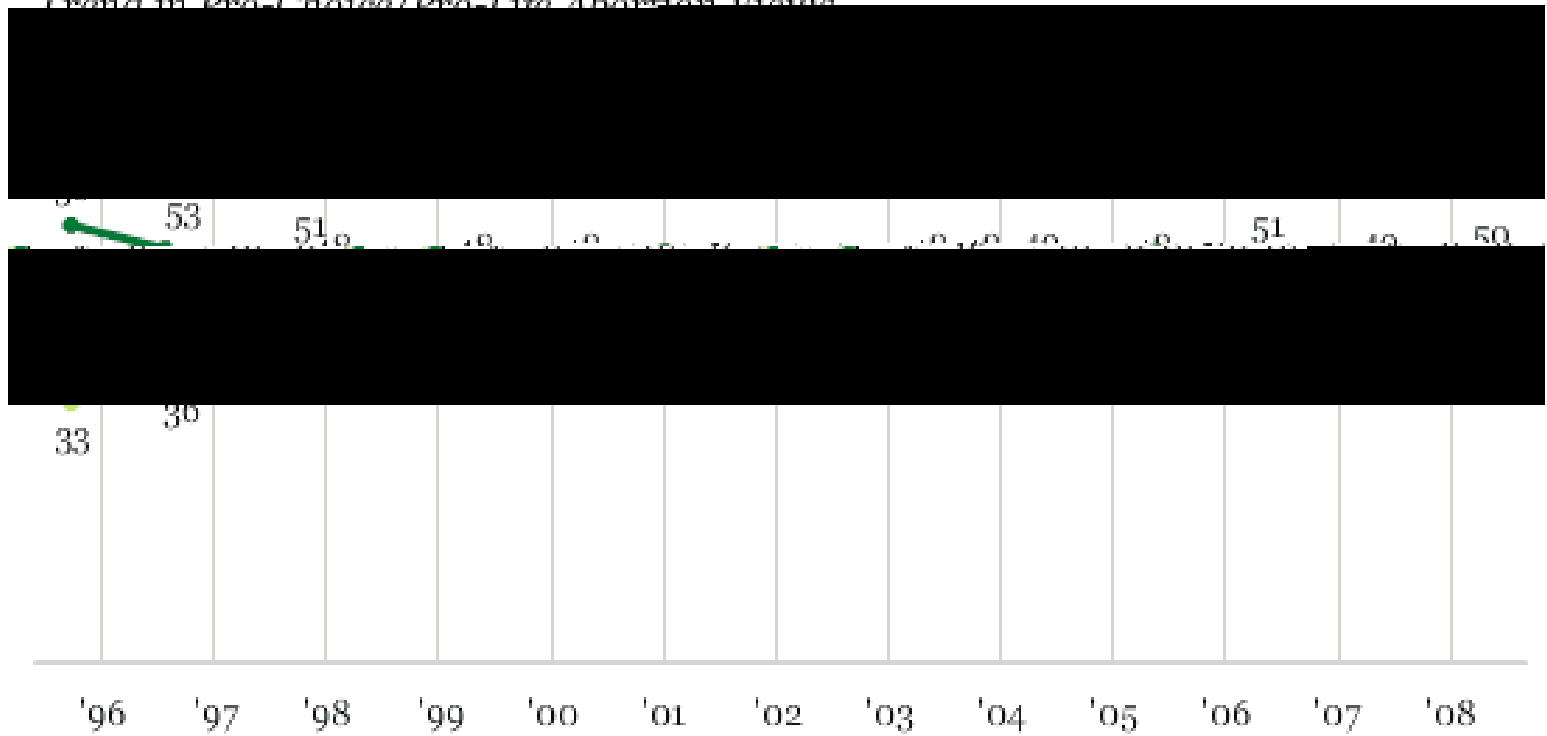


# Abortion support dip 2009

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# Partial birth effect?

Trend in Pro-Choice/Pro-Life Abortion Views

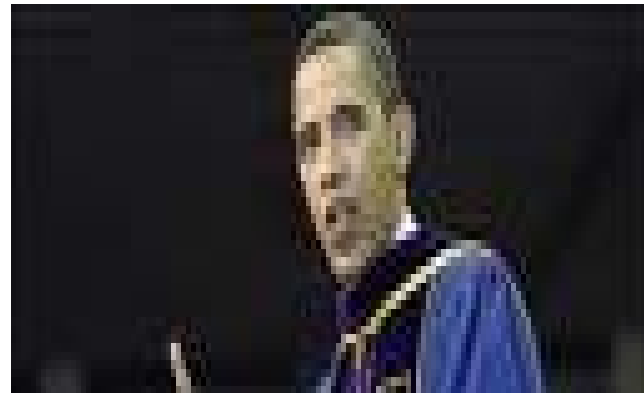


GALLUP POLI

# “common ground” on abortion?

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“Third Way”  
“abortion grays”  
Contraception,  
pregnancy  
prevention



**b**

# American Catholic politicians and the Vatican

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House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and HHS Secretary-designate Kathleen Sebelius  
Attacked for prochoice views  
But former Sen. Robert Dole recommended her as someone who crosses the aisle, and Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kansas) voted for her



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And what if any accommodations should Obama or progressives generally make to neutralized culture-based opposition? (Kilgore 2009)



## Bauer – abortion/young cohorts

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Bauer – (02-10) “It [the Tebow Super Bowl ad] speaks to the core values of our nation’s founding – that all are created equal and endowed by our Creator with



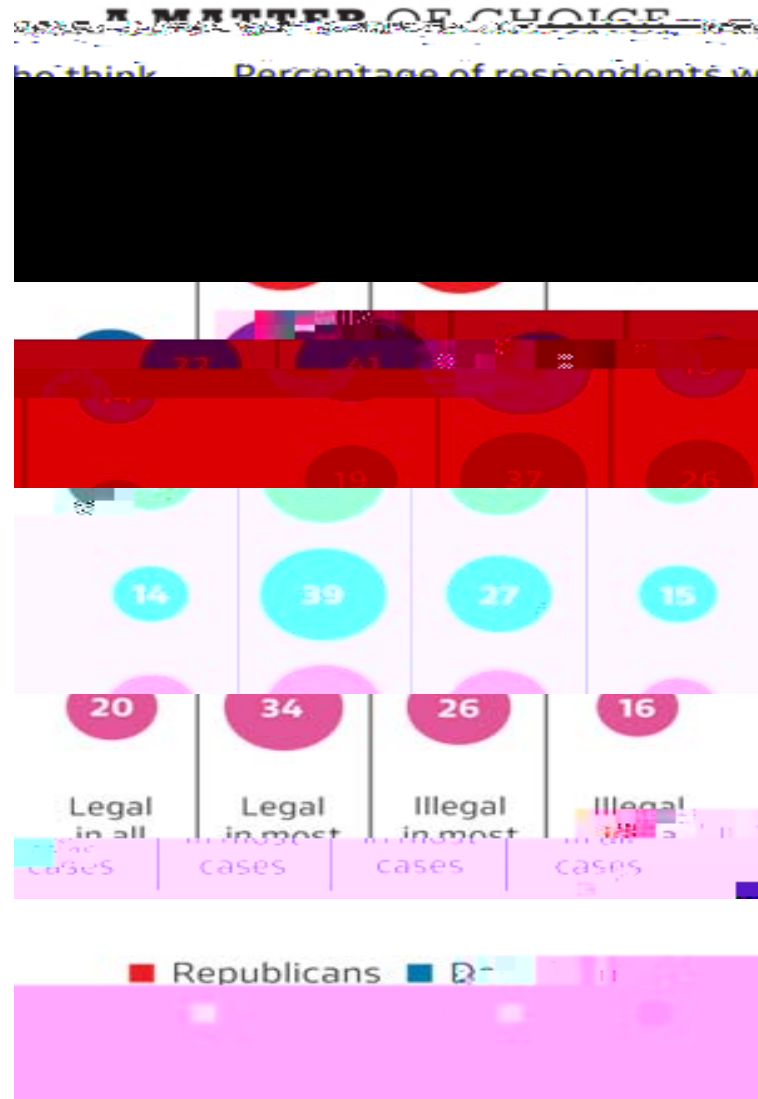
## “The Mysterious Disappearance of Young, Pro-Choice Women” (Dominus)

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“Once strong supporters of unrestricted abortion, women under 30 are suddenly ambivalent. What's behind our change of heart on this crucial women's issue?”



# Abortion

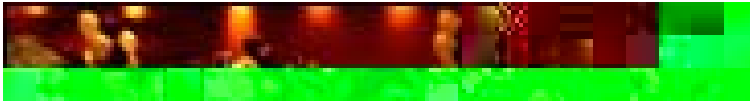


## IV. Gay Rights: Wedding Day in San Francisco

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June 16, 2008

The first couple  
married in San



# Gay Rights 2006

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Sin No More had argued:

Normalization

Fading since 2004

Pew 2006

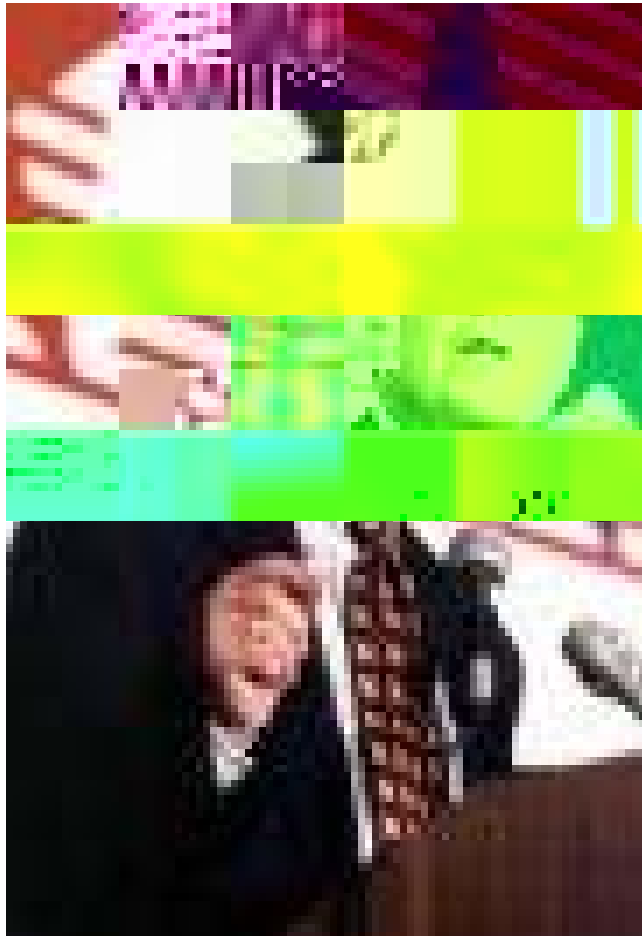
continuing

contestation



## “Bauer: American Values”

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**“Your children and grandchildren will be taught that homosexuality is normal and same-sex unions equally valid to heterosexual marriages. So-called “hate crimes” laws will make sure that anyone who objects is silenced.”**

# Spreading legalization of same-sex marriage in 2009

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In Iowa, a heartland state beyond the blue coasts

# Vermont April 2009

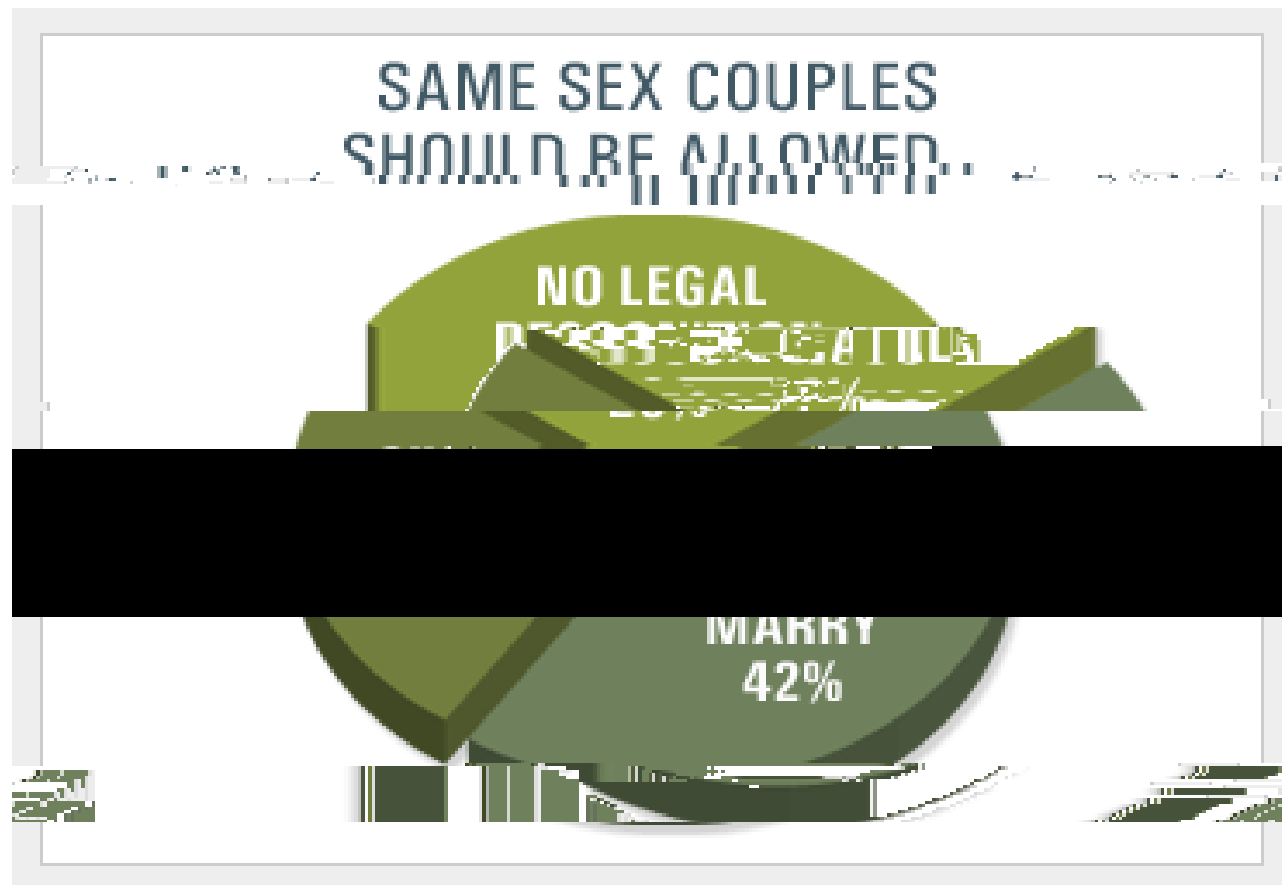
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Not just by courts



# Recent polling (2009)

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# Support for DADT reform

■ **Figure 1: Stable Majority for Change**

For each issue, respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for the current law and whether they would support a change to the law. The chart shows the percentage of respondents who support the current law and the percentage who support a change to the law.





## DADT – military 02-10

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“...devaluing them in that regard is just inconsistent with us as an institution”



# Even red states

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Salt lake City  
passes anti-  
discrimination  
(gay rights) bill,  
with Mormon

© 2009 . . .



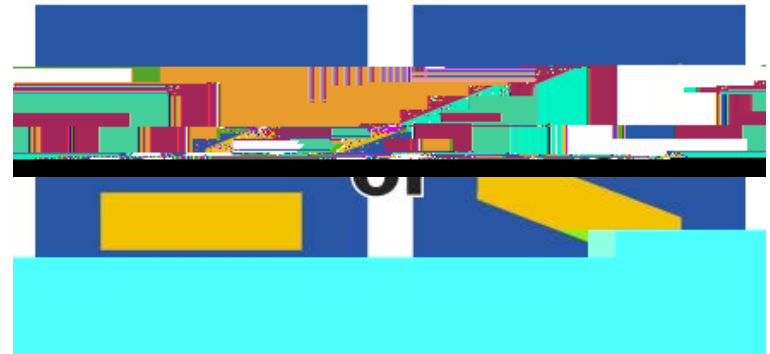
## Last of section

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Generational  
issues and same-  
sex marriage

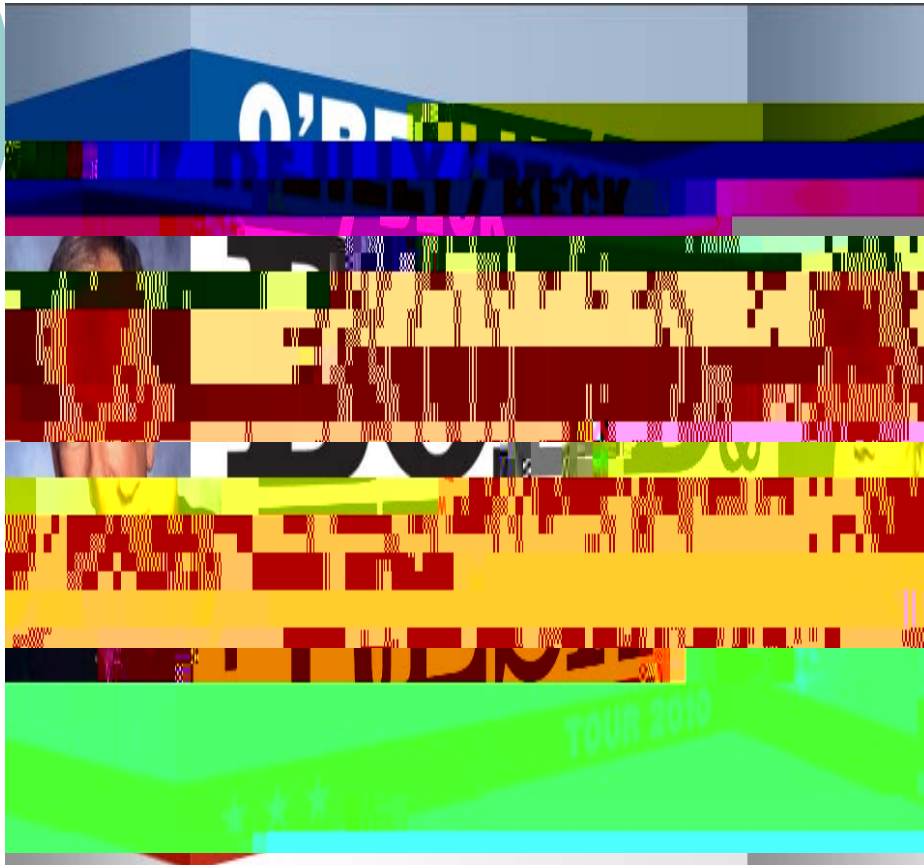
"If I were putting  
money on the  
future of gay  
marriage, I would  
bet on it."

(Douthat, NYT 10-  
09)



## V. Reignited culture war?

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**"Glenn Beck,  
Common Sense  
Leads Latest  
Book Sales" (06-  
09)**



# 2011 – Reagan centennial

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Reagan at 100;  
was a  
transformative  
president – was  
legacy buried too  
fast in 2008?





Gallup – 01-10  
support/non-  
support  
discrepancy for  
Obama highest in  
polling





## David Brooks January 2010

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“The public is not only shifting from left to right. Every single idea associated with the educated class has grown more unpopular over the past year.

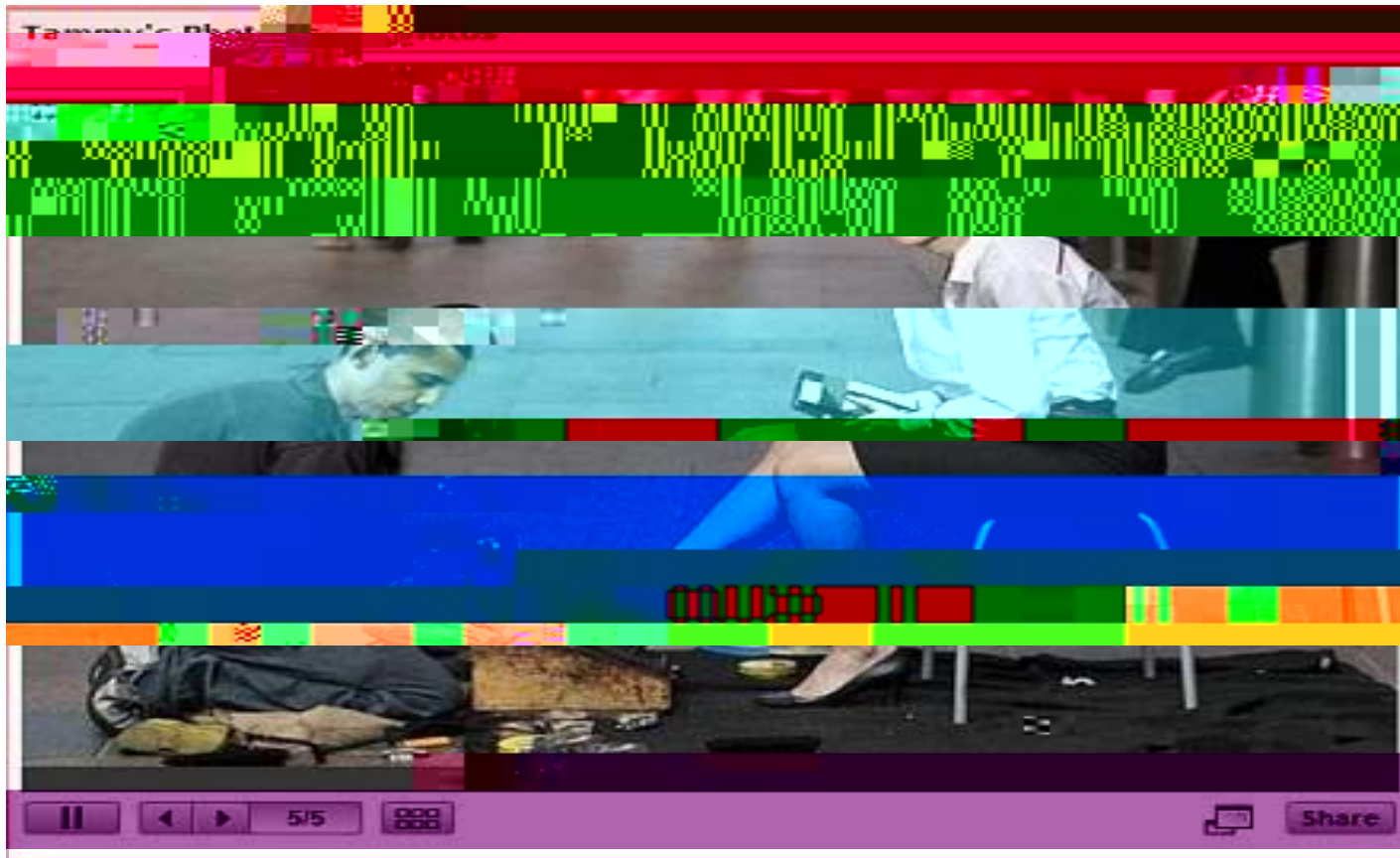
The educated class believes in global warming, so public skepticism about global warming is on the rise. The educated class supports abortion rights, so public opinion is shifting against them. The educated class supports gun control, so opposition to gun control is mounting.”



Michelle Go

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## VI. Conclusion: Through the lens of Massachusetts

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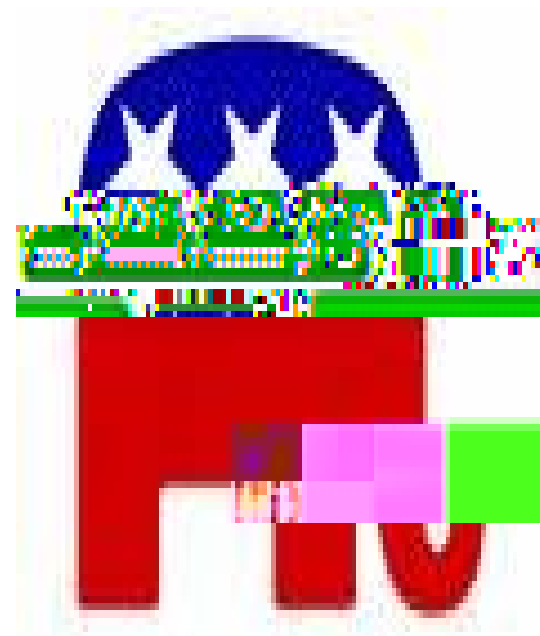
What is the road to re-re-re-alignment?





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“Can a shattered Republican Party reunite in time for 2012, or will its fixation on ideological purity and the histrionics of its leaders prevent it from returning to national power?”  
(Blumenthal 12-14-09)







## Scott Brown and “big tents”

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“Brown said states should be allowed to make their own decisions on marriage rights. He said while he is pro-choice, he is against partial- birth abortions, federal funding of abortions and believes in strong parental consent notification laws.





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On gay marriage, he believes the issue should be left up to the states -- and in Massachusetts, which allows gay marriage, he says the question is "settled." (Eugene Robinson 02-02-10)

