Partisanship, Party Coalitions, and Group Support, 1952-2004

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Recent changes in partisan support suggest the beginning of a new group basis for the party coalitions. For the Republicans, the changes define group support more sharply than has been the case for many years—a combination of southern whites and a strong religious base of Catholics, regular church-goers, and Protestant fundamentalists. For Democrats, the changes are defined in terms of losses—of Catholic, union household, and regular church-going voters—not sufficiently offset by the increased support of women and the growing Hispanic population. The problem for Republicans is to maintain and enhance a heterogeneous coalition, including a fragile religious combination. The problem for Democrats is to find new coalition partners or regain support that the party has lost.

From the beginning of the New Deal to the end of the twentieth century, partisan conflict revolved predominantly around the fight for support among native white southerners, members of labor union and working-class households, African Americans, Jews, and Catholics—the classic elements of the New Deal coalition. By late in the century, however, southern conservatives increasingly aligned their ideology with their voting habits, labor union membership went into a steep decline, blacks began to be outnumbered by Hispanics, religious denomination gave way to church attendance as

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the significant divide, and gender became an important factor. The battle for partisan support began to take on new dimensions with the approach of the new century.

The nature of coalition support was not instantly changed, however, and the extent of the new divide is not altogether clear. The uncertainty surrounding the Hispanic vote in the 2004 presidential election is a prime manifestation of the uncertainty about the shape of party coalitions; data from exit polls and other surveys gave sharply contrasting pictures of the extent of Hispanic support for President Bush (Leal et al. 2005). Widening differences in state-level support for the Republican candidate have also been observed, suggesting changes in Hispanic loyalties (DeSipio and Uhlaner 2005, 14). More generally, the emphasis on moral values was an important factor in the presidential race, yet it threatened to divide both parties—moderate, more secular Republicans from conservative, more religious ones, and socially conservative Democrats from those with consistently liberal beliefs (*Beyond Red vs. Blue* 2005, 20-26). Likewise, concerns with national security, the war on terror, and the war in Iraq cut across groups in the partisan divide (*Beyond Red vs. Blue* 2005, 20-26). Meanwhile, declining employment opportunities for less skilled workers, often blamed on Republican-led free trade pacts, may have revived support for Democrats among union and lower-income households.

Efforts to establish new group appeals have been intensified in light of two extremely close presidential races, continuing battles for control of Congress and state governments, and bitter fights over judicial nominees, tax policies, and moral/religious issues. Even while the competitiveness of individual districts has declined (Macedo et al. 2005, 45-46), the battle for control of legislative branches and dominance of the judiciary continues at full tilt. In many of these elections and in the issue campaigns surrounding them, Republicans have worked especially hard to attract Latinos and to solidify their support among evangelical Christians. Democrats, meanwhile, have largely been in a reactive mode, fighting to retain majority support from Latinos (as well as blacks) and to position themselves as moderates rather than extremists.

The electoral outcomes since 1990 reveal Democratic and Republican gains marked by partisan volatility. The fortunes of the political parties have surged and declined as success, failure, and recovery have characterized both the Republicans and Democrats. In 1991, Republican President George H. W. Bush set historic records in presidential approval; the following year he could not even secure reelection against Bill Clinton, who campaigned as a "New Democrat" and secured the first Democratic presidential victory since 1976. Clinton's presidential win in 1992 was in turn followed by a resounding Republican victory in 1994 when they gained majority control of the House of Representatives for the first time in over forty years. Clinton bounced back to trounce Republican Bob Dole in 1996, but Democrats were unable to retake control of either the House or Senate. Despite presidential impeachment proceedings, the president's party gained House seats in the 1998 midterm elections, the first time this had happened in over a half-century. But two years later, in a context of economic prosperity and peace ordinarily conducive to keeping the incumbent party in power, partisan contests ended in a virtual tie in the presidential vote and composition of the House and Senate, with Republicans (barely) controlling all three. In 2002 Republicans secured small gains

in the House and Senate, a feat repeated in 2004 along with slightly greater presidential voting support.

We look beneath these volatile voting trends and day-to-day partisan battles to examine the support base for each party. We approach the question of partisan trends not by directly analyzing voting patterns, but by considering expressed loyalties underlying support of the political parties—that is, self-reported partisanship. Partisanship serves as a potent voting cue, encapsulating enduring evaluations of parties, candidates, issues, and events; in 2004, as in presidential and congressional elections over the past fifty years, overwhelming majorities of partisans continued to back their party's nominees (Stanley and Niemi 2005, 138). Yet partisanship is no unmoved mover. Party identification can itself be changed by the political currents unleashed by these candidates, issues, and events (Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002). Over this same half-century, partisanship has shown major changes in aggregate support, now inching toward an even divide or showing an oscillating plurality among Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, depending on which poll one observes and what weight one gives to party leaners (Stanley and Niemi 2005, 117-18).

The potential for such changes in partisanship, reflected in the shifting group composition of the party coalitions, motivates this analysis, which updates our over-time analysis of group support, now extending to more than half a century. We are concerned with continuity from past to present, but we are especially interested in the potential for a new group basis for the party coalitions that may signal the start of yet another fundamental change in voters' relations with the parties. Thus, while presenting group partisanship figures for all presidential and almost all midterm elections since the 1950s, we will concentrate our analysis on the changing patterns since 1994, when Republicans captured control of Congress, and in the past few elections, when partisan intensity has reached new heights.

Analyzing Group Support

Group support can mean a number of different, though related things. In the past, we have looked primarily at what is called party identification—that is, which party people say they "generally support" (Stanley and Niemi 1991, 1995, 1999, 2004). Political scientists and pollsters use self-reports of this sort in an effort to assess "enduring" or long-term support for the parties, in contrast to the more short-term support gathered by specific candidates.[1] It is now generally conceded that self-reports of party support are not entirely free of which way the political winds are blowing in response to particular campaigns, partisan scandals, and so on (see, e.g., Niemi and Weisberg

1. Party identification, or partisanship, has been measured regularly since 1952 by both commercial pollsters and academic researchers. The Gallup poll (http://www.gallup.com), for example, regularly reports proportions of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. In political science, there is a long history of research on the meaning and measure of partisanship, both in the United States and abroad. See, for example, Niemi and Weisberg (2001) and Miller and Niemi (2002). For the distribution of partisanship over time, see Stanley and Niemi (2005).

2001, Part V). Nevertheless, party identification, or partisanship, is less transient than individuals' voting behavior. This is especially true when one thinks of presidential voting; the presidential election is so visible that all but the most isolated individuals (who are not likely to vote in any event) have heard or read about and probably exchanged thoughts about both candidates. Hence, presidential preferences fluctuate to a degree that partisanship does not. Therefore, it is useful to consider party support in this "generic," more fundamental sense.

Having decided to rely on self-reports of party leanings, there remains the question of how, statistically, we should assess the support of the various groups for each party. We could simply show the raw partisanship of each group—that is, how many native southern whites, females, blacks, white Protestant fundamentalists, and so on, say they generally support Democrats or Republicans. For some purposes, this approach is exactly what one wants. A problem is that such simple accounts are misleading because the groups are overlapping. For example, about half of blacks are female. Thus, if one finds that blacks and females tend to support Democrats, one is talking largely about the same people. Do both characteristics tend to make people Democratic? And if so, by how much? Trying to answer such questions raises several problems, but one is certainly aided by the use of multivariate statistical procedures (i.e., procedures that incorporate multiple variables "all at once" rather than one at a time). In this article we use multivariate logit analysis.[2] While this technique is complicated, a careful reading of our tables and of the explanations we provide for them should make the results understandable.

The Models

We begin by describing the multivariate models that form the basis of our analysis. In this presentation, we draw on National Election Studies (NES) data from twenty-five presidential and congressional elections since 1952. We define four models of party support that collectively cover the 1952-2004 period.[3] For comparisons over the entire period, it is important to consider all the models, and we have previously done so. For the present analysis, we emphasize the latest model, which can be estimated virtually without change since 1990. That model incorporates the New Deal elements, gender,

2. Logistic regression is an appropriate method when the dependent variable is dichotomous. As we explain below, both of our dependent variables (whether a respondent is Democratic or not, and whether a respondent is Republican or not) are dichotomous, making logit analysis more appropriate than so-called ordinary least squares regression.

3. Ideally we would have a single equation, one that assesses the contribution of every relevant group over the entire period under study. In fact, we need several models because the groups considered relevant change over time. Hispanics, for example, were not a large enough group to be considered politically significant before the 1980s. Religious fundamentalists were a large enough group, but they were not considered a coherent political force until the mid-1970s. As a result, survey questions needed to identify the appropriate groups have not been asked over the entire period. (In addition, how to measure the concept of fundamentalism has been debated widely—see, e.g., Rothenberg and Newport 1984.) And, obviously, groups defined by recent birth dates—such as those born after 1958 or 1970—could not be defined early in the series.

church attendance, income, white Protestant fundamentalists, Hispanic origin, and three birth cohorts: 1943-1958 (baby boomers), 1959-1970 (so-called generation X), and 1971-1986.[4] The primary dependent variables to be explained are Democratic identification and Republican identification.[5]

For several reasons, we use separate models for Democratic and Republican identification. First, to the extent that the New Deal coalition has broken up—a position we advanced in the mid-1990s (Stanley and Niemi 1995)—we want to be certain of the continued validity of that judgment, and a model of Democratic identification is most appropriate for that test. More significantly, we want to see the extent to which formerly Democratic groups have moved over into supporting the Republican party (as opposed to becoming independent), so a model for each party is necessary. Finally, for newer groups, we want to see whether hypothesized connections to the Republicans have taken hold. Our focus here is on the continuing nature of the changes as reflected in the last decade.

Results

The groups of interest are of three kinds. First, some groups have largely retained their traditional levels of allegiance to the Democratic party despite the decline of the New Deal coalition. Two groups have done this: African Americans and Jews. Second, other groups were part of the New Deal coalition but their support declined sharply from what it was in the 1950s: native white southerners,[6] whose political support changed steadily and dramatically, and Catholics, for whom the decline occurred later and less sharply, are two groups of this type. Finally, some groups have become more politically visible in the past ten to fifteen years and represent the greatest possibility of volatile movement or of a slow but systematic shift toward one of the parties. Such groups

4. The results reported here differ slightly from those in some of our earlier articles. In earlier analyses, we included working class (i.e., self-reported social class) among the groups. That variable was not included in the 1996, 1998, or 2002 NES; we opted to exclude it from all earlier years rather than begin yet another model. Examination of the models for all prior years with and without the class variable reveals very small differences for the coefficients of all other variables.

5. The survey question used by the NES to measure partisanship is: "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?" Democrats and Republicans are asked whether they are "strong" or "weak," and Independents are asked whether they lean toward the Democratic or the Republican party. For our analysis, we use respondents' answers to the first question only, on the assumption that the core of the party is better represented by the avowedly partisan respondents. There is considerable debate, however, over the meaning of the "leaner" category—whether leaners are truly "devoid of any psychological sense of belongingness or allegiance to a party" (Miller and Shanks 1996, 127) or are in fact partisans who answer "Independent" for reasons of social desirability. See especially Keith et al. (1992) and Weisberg (1999).

6. The NES surveys in 1998 and 2002 did not include variables identifying where respondents grew up. Consequently, to include the 1998 and 2002 surveys and to enable comparison since 1990, the native southern white variable was replaced by a southern white variable in 1990 and later. Over the years, native southern whites have moved toward the partisan leanings of whites who have migrated into the South, making natives less distinctive in partisan terms. As expected, the southern white group is not only larger but more Republican and less Democratic than native southern whites. In 2000, however, even among native southern whites, the incremental probability of identifying with Democrats was negative, indicating that the result discussed later was not an artifact of changing the definition from native to all southern whites.

include women, those who are well off financially, Hispanics, church-goers in general and Christian fundamentalists in particular, and groups defined by age or "generation."

In examining support coming from these groups, we consider support for each party separately; while support that does not go to one party can go to the other, voters are more independent than they were prior to the 1960s, so one sometimes finds that neither party receives a boost from a particular group. The top half of Table 1 presents the mean predicted probability (based on the results from the logit analysis) that a group member claims Democratic identification.[7] Essentially, these numbers are the proportions of Democrats in each group before imposing any controls for other group memberships.

To begin with, note that in 1994 Democratic partisanship declined for every group except for those born between 1959 and 1970 and in 1971 or later. The changes are often small; but recall that partisanship is generally quite stable in the face of temporary partisan tides. Thus, the force of the Republican tide in 1994 is demonstrated by the fact that virtually all groups were affected. In the case of many of the New Deal groups, this represented the continuation of a change that had been taking place for many years. Note, for example, the continued slide of white southerners, Catholics, and members of union households. The same was true of support from Christian fundamentalists and of baby boomers (born between 1943 and 1958), where support dropped precipitously in 1994.

The movement away from the Democrats did not strengthen and accelerate, however. Virtually every group swung back toward the Democratic party in 1996 (all but union households) and the pattern through 1998 and 2000 was mixed. In this sense, the initial figures about self-reported loyalties in the 1990s conform to the partisan volatility observed in the vote. Yet when one compares the presidential years of 1996 and 2004, every group edged farther away from the Democrats, a move especially strong among union households and baby boomers.

The incremental impact of membership in a particular group, shown in the bottom half of Table 1, gives us a different perspective on group effects. These numbers show how much more likely an individual is to be a Democratic identifier because of membership in a specific group; that is, they consider all of the other group ties of each individual and how likely those other ties are to make the person Democratic. These incremental probabilities show very clearly the continuation of long-term trends. African Americans reported levels of Democratic partisanship—net of other influences—that were as high as or higher than in most previous years. Support for the Democrats among Jews appears to have slipped in the late 1990s but went back up in 2004.[8] Members of union households, reversing a short-term fall, in 2000 expressed Democratic leanings

7. For the forty years from 1952 to 1990, we group years by decade. This makes the tables more readable and, by smoothing out minor fluctuations, makes overall patterns clearer. (We collapse 1952-1960, etc., to coincide with ten-year periods between redistrictings.) Tables showing individual years prior to 1992 can be found in Stanley and Niemi (2004).

8. One should not overinterpret fluctuations for relatively small groups, such as the Jewish population. Figures may change sharply simply because they are based on a small number of cases.

TABLE 1
Mean and Incremental Probabilities of Democratic Identification for Members of Each Group

Group	*1950s*	*1960s*	*1970s*	*1980s*	*1992*	*1994*	*1996*	*1998*	*2000*	*2002*	*2004*
Mean probabilities[a]											
Black	0.50	0.75	0.69	0.68	0.64	0.61	0.65	0.72	0.66	0.69	0.61
Catholic	0.57	0.55	0.49	0.45	0.42	0.39	0.43	0.41	0.36	0.34	0.33
Jewish	0.65	0.57	0.60	0.51	0.63	0.55	0.63	0.56	0.63	0.60	0.60
Female	0.48	0.48	0.43	0.43	0.39	0.37	0.43	0.41	0.41	0.35	0.39
Native southern white[b]	0.74	0.57	0.50	0.43	0.33	0.30	0.36	0.32	0.27	0.24	0.25
Union household	0.55	0.56	0.48	0.48	0.47	0.44	0.44	0.46	0.50	0.42	0.36
Regular church-goer	0.48	0.49	0.42	0.42	0.36	0.33	0.36	0.36	0.35	0.31	0.31
Income: top third	0.43	0.41	0.33	0.33	0.29	0.21	0.26	0.34	0.31	0.29	0.28
White Protestant fundamentalist			0.46	0.40	0.29	0.27	0.32	0.24	0.31	0.25	0.22
Hispanic, non-Cuban			0.56	0.49	0.45	0.43	0.52	0.57	0.43	0.40	0.36
Born 1943-1958			0.39	0.38	0.37	0.30	0.38	0.39	0.40	0.37	0.29
Born 1959-1970			0.32	0.32	0.30	0.31	0.36	0.33	0.32	0.28	0.31
Born 1971-				0.29	0.25	0.29	0.37	0.34	0.32	0.36	0.31
Incremental probabilities[c]											
Black	0.16	0.36	0.40	0.39	0.37	0.36	0.34	0.43	0.35	0.39	0.39
Catholic	0.23	0.17	0.20	0.14	0.14	0.15	0.12	0.07	0.03	0.03	0.07
Jewish	0.30	0.24	0.35	0.24	0.39	0.32	0.31	0.25	0.27	0.26	0.35
Female	0.00	0.02	0.05	0.06	0.05	0.06	0.08	0.04	0.07	0.01	0.13
Native southern white[b]	0.42	0.23	0.18	0.11	0.06	0.04	0.03	0.01	−0.05	−0.06	−0.01
Union household	0.14	0.14	0.11	0.12	0.14	0.13	0.08	0.10	0.16	0.09	0.06
Regular church-goer	−0.04	0.01	0.00	0.00	−0.03	−0.02	−0.07	−0.06	−0.07	−0.08	−0.05
Income: top third	−0.05	−0.08	−0.09	−0.08	−0.11	−0.16	−0.14	−0.01	−0.06	−0.06	−0.03
White Protestant fundamentalist			0.10	0.06	0.01	0.01	0.01	−0.06	0.02	0.01	−0.01
Hispanic, non-Cuban			0.17	0.09	0.11	0.09	0.11	0.25	0.13	0.11	0.10
Born 1943-1958			−0.09	−0.08	−0.06	−0.07	−0.03	−0.08	−0.06	−0.03	−0.11
Born 1959-1970			−0.16	−0.17	−0.15	−0.11	−0.10	−0.16	−0.14	−0.10	−0.11
Born 1971-				−0.22	−0.22	−0.15	−0.12	−0.16	−0.18	−0.07	−0.10

Note: Averaged by decade for 1952-1990 (1952-1960, 1964-1970, 1972-1980, and 1982-1990). Election years 1954 and 1962 are omitted due to missing variables. The four models containing the different variables were evaluated through 2004. However, presentation is greatly simplified by showing only the following: 1952-1970 values are based on the model with eight variables; 1972-1978 values are based on the model with nine variables; 1980-1988 entries are based on the model with twelve variables; 1990-2004 entries are based on the model with thirteen variables. Values that can be estimated with more than one model seldom differ by more than .01 from one model to another. The 1970s figures for Hispanic, non-Cuban; born 1943-1958; and born 1959-1970 reflect a single survey year (1980). The 1980s figure for born 1971- reflects a single survey year (1990).

a. Cells are the mean of the predicted probabilities of Democratic identification for all group members in each year or averaged by decade.

b. Native southern whites, 1952-1988; all southern whites, 1990-2004.

c. Cells are the average of the difference, for each group member, between the individual's predicted probability of Democratic identification (based on all of the other characteristics in the multivariate model) and what the individual's probability would have been without the effect of the group membership.

that matched or exceeded most years since 1952. But in 2004 this group declined again to a new low.

Long-term trends are also evident in the decline—now into its fifth decade—of the Democratic party among white southerners. In 2000, for the first time since these meas-

urements started, such individuals were *less* likely to be Democratic than others with similar characteristics, and this remained true in 2002 and 2004. The increasingly successful Republican candidacies below the presidency as well as the appointment of so many southerners to leadership positions in the George W. Bush White House reflect the rise of the Republican party among white southerners. Yet the depleted Democratic ranks among southern whites may signal that this group is an unlikely source for future Republican gains.

Current politics are also reflected in the sharp decline in Democratic partisanship among Catholics. President George W. Bush's appearances with the Catholic hierarchy, his vocal support of faith-based charities, and his continued opposition to loosening restrictions on stem cell research reflect strong efforts to align the Republican party with this large bloc of voters. We could be seeing, in this shift among political elites combined with the observed movements in the electorate, the most important change in the group basis of party support in many years. Note that until the late 1970s, Catholics had an incremental probability of about .20 of supporting the Democratic party. Support dropped in the 1980s and 1990s, but the increment remained at about .15. As such, it was higher than the push that came from membership in a union household. In the last four elections, however, support of Catholics dropped off again, this time to average .05, a level below that of most other groups. If President Bush is successful, Catholics could become the second group in the old Democratic coalition—native southern whites being the first—to lose their tendency to be Democratic once other group characteristics are taken into account.

Adding significance to the drop in marginal Democratic tendencies of Catholics is the continued movement away from the Democrats of regular church-goers. The magnitude is not yet huge, but the incremental nudge away from the Democrats between 1996 and 2004 contrasts with the very weak, oscillating tendencies of much of the previous fifty years. Interestingly, white Protestant fundamentalists—seen in previous years as a strong bastion of Republican support (e.g., Wilcox 1996)—have not, except for 1998, been pulled away from the Democrats.

The gender gap, which arose in the early 1980s, continued into the new century. Although exit polls showed Bush narrowed the gender gap in the 2004 vote over 2000, our analysis shows that being female registered the strongest Democratic boost in 2004 of the twenty-five elections analyzed. As we noted previously, neither party can afford to limit its appeal to males or females. Nonetheless, Republican support for pro-life policies, their positions on other gender issues (e.g., toward gays and lesbians), and Democratic policies seen as more supportive of women (e.g., with respect to equal pay) are likely to sustain this division. In contrast, what appeared to be a continuing, perhaps growing partisan gap between rich and poor in the first half of the 1990s shriveled in 1998 and later to the low levels of the 1950s.

Republicans have also made concerted, recent efforts to court Hispanic voters. And indeed, judging by mean probability figures, these efforts at least dented Democratic partisanship among Hispanics, except in 1998. But judging by the incremental probability of supporting Democrats, these efforts have yet to pay off. Indeed, Hispanic support for Democrats spiked in 1998, perhaps energized by Republican sponsorship of

restrictionist immigration policies along with Democratic support for more liberal policies (Glastris 1997).

What about the Republican party? As groups increase or decrease their support for the Democrats, is there compensating movement to the other side? Among southern whites, the answer is clearly yes. Indeed, in five of the seven elections since 1992, mean probabilities of partisan identification have been greater for Republicans than Democrats, and incremental probabilities have consistently favored Republicans since 1998 (Table 2). Declining Democratic partisanship among Catholics and regular church-goers was also matched by increasing identification with Republicans. Incremental prob-

TABLE 2
Mean and Incremental Probabilities of Republican Identification for Members of Each Group

Group	*1950s*	*1960s*	*1970s*	*1980s*	*1992*	*1994*	*1996*	*1998*	*2000*	*2002*	*2004*
Mean probabilities[a]											
Black	0.16	0.06	0.06	0.04	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.03	0.04	0.07	0.01
Catholic	0.18	0.16	0.15	0.22	0.19	0.25	0.24	0.25	0.24	0.35	0.29
Jewish	0.08	0.05	0.07	0.14	0.05	0.10	0.07	0.15	0.06	0.14	0.17
Female	0.30	0.25	0.24	0.25	0.23	0.31	0.24	0.25	0.23	0.34	0.27
Native southern white[b]	0.11	0.11	0.16	0.21	0.27	0.38	0.30	0.35	0.35	0.41	0.42
Union household	0.19	0.16	0.14	0.20	0.15	0.22	0.17	0.18	0.19	0.23	0.24
Regular church-goer	0.30	0.25	0.26	0.29	0.31	0.36	0.36	0.32	0.34	0.42	0.35
Income: top third	0.32	0.29	0.29	0.33	0.34	0.43	0.40	0.34	0.33	0.41	0.37
White Protestant fundamentalist			0.19	0.25	0.34	0.41	0.37	0.40	0.35	0.43	0.48
Hispanic, non-Cuban			0.13	0.14	0.14	0.18	0.12	0.13	0.13	0.24	0.22
Born 1943-1958			0.21	0.24	0.27	0.35	0.29	0.26	0.26	0.30	0.32
Born 1959-1970			0.14	0.27	0.24	0.33	0.27	0.29	0.30	0.41	0.30
Born 1971-				0.18	0.19	0.28	0.23	0.32	0.17	0.28	0.24
Incremental probabilities[c]											
Black	−0.25	−0.29	−0.26	−0.31	−0.30	−0.35	−0.30	−0.27	−0.27	−0.29	−0.31
Catholic	−0.24	−0.20	−0.17	−0.13	−0.16	−0.16	−0.12	−0.03	−0.07	−0.01	−0.04
Jewish	−0.32	−0.31	−0.28	−0.24	−0.33	−0.31	−0.26	−0.14	−0.21	−0.17	−0.21
Female	0.03	0.00	0.01	−0.01	−0.05	−0.02	−0.07	−0.03	−0.07	0.01	−0.03
Native southern white[b]	−0.34	−0.27	−0.15	−0.12	−0.10	−0.01	−0.06	0.03	0.04	0.01	0.07
Union household	−0.13	−0.12	−0.13	−0.11	−0.15	−0.11	−0.17	−0.11	−0.09	−0.14	−0.07
Regular church-goer	0.07	0.04	0.06	0.06	0.09	0.07	0.13	0.09	0.14	0.14	0.09
Income: top third	0.04	0.05	0.07	0.08	0.11	0.13	0.13	0.09	0.07	0.11	0.11
White Protestant fundamentalist			−0.08	−0.06	0.00	−0.02	0.00	0.06	−0.01	0.02	0.10
Hispanic, non-Cuban			−0.06	−0.09	−0.08	−0.13	−0.14	−0.18	−0.14	−0.14	−0.12
Born 1943-1958			−0.01	−0.02	0.00	0.04	−0.02	0.01	0.01	−0.01	0.04
Born 1959-1970			−0.06	0.03	0.01	0.06	0.01	0.05	0.05	0.09	0.04
Born 1971-				−0.03	−0.02	0.03	0.00	0.11	−0.03	0.01	0.00

Note: See note to Table 1.

a. Cells are the mean of the predicted probabilities of Republican identification for all group members in each year or averaged by decade.

b. Native southern whites, 1952-1988; all southern whites, 1990-2004.

c. Cells are the average of the difference, for each group member, between the individual's predicted probability of Republican identification (based on all of the other characteristics in the multivariate model) and what the individual's probability would have been without the effect of the group membership.

abilities for Catholics are still negative (meaning that, net of other characteristics, Catholics are less likely than non-Catholics to consider themselves Republican), but they are at their lowest levels ever. Correspondingly, the gap between the parties in mean probabilities has narrowed. Among regular church-goers, small positive incremental probabilities favoring the Republicans have become larger; mean probabilities, which once favored the Democrats by margins approaching 2-1, narrowed to almost a tie in 2000 and actually reversed in 2002 and 2004. This movement among the more religiously active is consistent with Campbell's (2002) research showing that identification with the Republican party has been growing relatively more quickly among religiously committed young people.

At the same time, the difficulty for the Republicans of putting together a new coalition is apparent in the receding identification they received from those in the top third of the income distribution. Incremental probabilities, which had inched upward in the early 1990s, dropped in 1998 and 2000 but then regained the lost ground in 2002 and 2004. Attracting women and even white Protestant fundamentalists also remained a problem. But 2004—a high water mark for incremental Republican probabilities among white Protestant fundamentalists—was an exceptionally bright spot. The prospects of a generational appeal—either to boomers or to subsequent generations—find little support here. The incremental push from particular generations can be described as an anti-Democratic force but as only a weak and inconsistent pro-Republican force. The three age groups in Tables 1 and 2 have consistently high increments in favor of independence (not shown), a reflection of the dealigning forces that have characterized American politics since the mid-1960s. It is worth pointing out that even as levels of party identification change among groups defined by ethnicity, religion, and so on, there has been no systematic change in party leanings in the generational groups. Consistent with arguments about the importance of the years in which one enters adulthood (e.g., Miller and Shanks 1996, Chapter 7), aging by itself has not led to changing party allegiances, in either an absolute (mean probability) or relative (incremental probability) sense.[9]

Difficulties in attracting Hispanic support, noted above, are also evident in the Republican mean and incremental probabilities. In 2000, the attention focused on Elian Gonzales, the Cuban boy rescued in the Caribbean and later returned to Cuba, and protests over bombing on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques served as reminders of the high-risk stakes for parties as they court ethnic groups and seek to retain other supporters. In 2004, Republicans paid even more attention to Hispanics (Ramos 2004). The evidence does not indicate that Hispanics have found increasing favor with Republicans since 1990. The mean probability declined marginally during the 1990s before rising in 2002 and 2004. Yet incremental probabilities have remained negative toward Republicans since 1990.

9. The possible exception could be those born between 1959 and 1970 who became voters during the presidency of Carter or Reagan. For this group, strong negative incremental probabilities of Democratic identification since 1980 are coupled with small but consistently positive incremental probabilities of Republican identification in six of the last eight elections (1990 and later).

Changes in group support over the entire period for which we have data have been dramatic. But it has taken the form of a wearing away of an old coalition—the New Deal coalition—rather than the formation of new, distinct group alliances. The change is best described "negatively"—that a given group is no longer part of, or no longer so heavily a part of, the Democratic or Republican coalition. There has been no genuine group realignment, if one means by that changes in which a group that was at one time highly supportive of one party is now highly supportive of the other (or even that a group that was neutral is now highly supportive of one party). Now, decades after the beginning of the breakup of the old, we may finally be seeing the start of a new, "positive" pattern. For the first time in surveys stretching over a half-century, southern whites in 2000, 2002, and 2004 showed a greater (if still small) affinity with Republicans than with Democrats. Regular church-goers have shown a growing tilt in favor of the Republicans. Catholics show signs of shifting their support as well. African Americans have strongly supported Democrats since the 1960s, but that should not obscure the increased support compared to the 1950s. Women have perhaps supported Democrats in sufficient proportions and for a sufficient length of time to be called a part of their base coalition. Thus, after a long period of breakdown and uncertainty, we may, at last, be seeing the development of a new group profile in party support.

Group Support and the Party Coalitions

So far we have focused on the probability that individuals with a given characteristic identify with one party or the other. Now our attention turns to the party coalitions. In Tables 3 and 4, we show the mean predicted probability of Democratic or Republican identification in the United States and, below that, the percentage of each coalition with a given group characteristic. This breakdown of the coalitions is in terms of overlapping groups. The percentages describing the party coalitions thus add to more than 100, as, for example, a black female church-goer is counted in each of three categories.

The changing group profiles of the parties can be seen in these figures, though with nuances that distinguish coalition composition from the marginal propensities shown earlier. Beginning with the Republicans, it is apparent in Table 4 that Catholics, southern whites, and regular church-goers are now a significant, perhaps dominant part of the party. A quarter to a third of the party supporters each, white southerners and Catholics are now as large a proportion of Republican identifiers as they were of Democratic identifiers in the 1950s. In addition, white Protestant fundamentalists have managed to hold their own at about a fifth of the party adherents. Altogether there is a formidable religious force. In contrast, members of union households, who at one time made up a fifth of the Republican coalition despite their tilt toward the Democrats, make up roughly a tenth of the party supporters. Hispanics make up less than a tenth of the Republican coalition.

Given the current party makeup, the emphasis that President George W. Bush has placed on religious issues and organizations is understandable. Still, religious

TABLE 3
Size and Composition of the Democratic Coalition

Group	*1950s*	*1960s*	*1970s*	*1980s*	*1992*	*1994*	*1996*	*1998*	*2000*	*2002*	*2004*
Predicted probability of Democratic identification in the U.S.[a]	47	47	41	40	37	34	39	38	37	35	32
Percentage of Democratic coalition with a given group characteristic[b]											
Black	9	16	18	23	24	22	23	26	24	22	29
Catholic	27	26	30	29	30	32	30	35	28	28	26
Jewish	5	4	4	2	3	3	3	4	4	5	5
Female	56	57	60	60	57	60	61	60	61	58	65
Native southern white[c]	27	20	21	21	21	25	25	23	19	17	17
Union household	32	30	30	25	23	23	20	19	19	19	20
Regular church-goer	45	42	42	42	41	43	39	39	40	41	34
Income: top third	34	31	27	27	29	20	20	30	26	30	29
White Protestant fundamentalist			17	16	12	13	12	7	11	9	7
Hispanic, non-Cuban			5	8	11	12	12	17	10	8	11
Born 1943-1958			35	35	34	29	30	33	33	36	27
Born 1959-1970			4	14	21	26	24	22	24	22	21
Born 1971-				2	3	5	8	13	14	13	26
Percentage of Democratic identifiers in group continuing to claim Democratic identification after removing Democratic tendency of defining group characteristic[d]											
Black	69	52	42	43	41	41	49	40	48	44	37
Catholic	60	69	60	69	67	61	72	82	92	92	78
Jewish	54	59	42	54	38	43	50	54	57	57	41
Female	100	95	89	87	87	84	83	89	82	98	66
Native southern white[c]	43	62	65	76	82	88	90	98	119	127	102
Union household	76	75	77	75	69	72	82	79	68	79	82
Regular church-goer	108	99	99	100	108	107	118	116	119	125	117
Income: top third	113	119	128	125	137	174	154	104	118	122	110
White Protestant fundamentalist			78	86	95	95	96	123	92	97	105
Hispanic, non-Cuban			69	83	75	79	78	55	70	74	72
Born 1943-1958			122	123	115	123	108	121	114	107	139
Born 1959-1970			150	156	149	135	128	148	144	134	134
Born 1971-				177	187	151	131	145	155	121	133
Relative size (%) of Democratic coalition after removing group characteristic											
Black	97	93	90	87	86	87	88	85	88	88	82
Catholic	89	92	88	91	90	88	92	94	98	98	94
Jewish	98	99	98	99	98	98	98	98	98	98	97
Female	100	97	94	92	93	90	89	93	89	99	78
Native southern white[c]	85	93	92	95	96	97	98	99	104	105	100
Union household	92	92	93	94	93	94	96	96	94	96	97
Regular church-goer	103	100	100	100	104	103	107	106	107	110	106
Income: top third	105	106	108	107	111	115	111	101	105	107	103
White Protestant fundamentalist			96	97	99	99	99	102	99	100	100
Hispanic, non-Cuban			98	99	97	98	97	92	97	98	97
Born 1943-1958			108	108	105	107	102	107	105	103	111
Born 1959-1970			102	108	110	109	107	110	110	107	107
Born 1971-				102	102	103	103	106	108	103	109

Note: See note to Table 1.

a. These estimates, derived from the model, are virtually identical to the actual percentage of Democratic identifiers.

b. Figures derived from taking the mean predicted probability of Democratic identification for a group in a particular year (Table 1) multiplied by that group's number of respondents, and dividing this product by the number of Democratic identifiers. For decade figures, calculations were made for individual years, then averaged.

c. Native southern whites, 1952-1988; all southern whites, 1990-2004.

d. Figures derived by recalculating the probabilities of Democratic identification without the effect of, say, White Protestant fundamentalist identification, then taking the mean of these probabilities for all respondents who were white Protestant fundamentalists. The ratio of this revised mean probability to the mean probability that includes the effect of white Protestant fundamentalism gives the ratio of the hypothetical size to the actual one. For decade figures, calculations were made for individual years, then averaged.

TABLE 4
Size and Composition of the Republican Coalition

Group	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004
Predicted probability of Republican identification in the U.S.[a]											
	28	25	23	26	26	32	28	27	26	34	29
Percentage of Republican coalition with a given group characteristic[b]											
Black	5	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
Catholic	14	14	17	22	19	22	24	30	26	30	25
Jewish	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	2
Female	57	56	60	55	48	53	48	52	50	56	49
Native southern white[c]	7	7	11	16	24	33	30	35	35	31	32
Union household	18	17	16	15	10	12	10	10	10	10	14
Regular church-goer	46	41	46	44	50	49	54	50	56	57	42
Income: top third	41	42	41	42	48	43	43	42	39	44	41
White Protestant fundamentalist			12	16	20	21	19	18	17	15	16
Hispanic, non-Cuban			2	3	5	5	4	6	4	5	7
Born 1943-1958			33	34	35	35	32	30	31	29	33
Born 1959-1970			3	18	24	28	25	27	32	32	22
Born 1971-				2	3	5	7	17	11	11	21

Note: See note to Table 1.
a. These estimates, derived from the model, are virtually identical to the actual percentage of Republican identifiers.
b. Figures derived from taking the mean predicted probability of Republican identification for a group in a particular year (Table 1) multiplied by that group's number of respondents, and dividing this product by the number of Republican identifiers. For decade figures, calculations were made for individual years, then averaged.
c. Native southern whites, 1952-1988; all southern whites, 1990-2004.

heterogeneity is apparent as well; relatively speaking, fundamentalists have lost ground to Catholics, and fundamentalists have not always been happy with their influence on party doctrine, though in the case of stem cell research, it appears to have been Catholic conservatives who were most unforgiving (Goodstein 2001). Bush's support of school vouchers is generally applauded by the right, but they could end up providing a substantial boost to Catholic schools, something the Protestant right is not happy about. Maintaining a coalition in which Protestant fundamentalists and Catholics are major parts will not be easy.

In the Democratic party, the biggest observable shifts are in the increasing proportions of women and Hispanics. Women, always a majority of the party, have now edged up to three fifths of Democratic identifiers. Further growth, if any, is likely to be slow because the group itself is not growing. Hispanics, on the other hand, are an expanding part of the overall population, though Democrats may be having trouble retaining their support. Still, this portion of the Democratic coalition is likely to become larger in the years ahead unless President Bush and his Republicans successors are successful in attempts to draw some of that support to the Republican side.

Democrats continue to be a diverse lot, however. Catholics, for example, continue to make up a substantial fraction of Democratic identifiers, despite the greatly diminished incremental probabilities noted earlier (Table 3). Indeed, because of other changes

in the Democratic coalition—the declining number of white southerners (who are generally Protestant) and the increased presence of Hispanics (who are generally Catholic)—the proportion of Catholics in the party in 2000-2004 resembles the share in the 1950s and 1960s. African Americans, not surprisingly, also are a substantial proportion of Democratic identifiers, though their proportion has remained about the same over the past fifteen years, save for the spike in 2004. And members of union households, while declining among identifiers as union membership falls nationwide, are still about a fifth of the Democratic following.

What would happen to the coalitions if they were to lose the partisan tendency due to each group characteristic? Here we show results only for the Democratic coalition (Table 3, third section).[10] These results reinforce the importance of certain group memberships. Black and Jewish supporters appear the most vulnerable, with Catholics (save 2000 and 2002), Hispanics, and members of union households not far behind; if the Democratic party were to lose its appeal to these groups as such, support from those group members would fall sharply.

Still, because of the diversity of the Democratic coalition, it is relatively resilient, as shown dramatically in the final panel in Table 3. These figures show the effect on the size of the Democratic coalition of removing each group characteristic. In recent years, the numbers dip below 90 percent only for blacks and for women in 1996, 2000, and 2004, suggesting that the party would remain close to its current size even if it lost its specific appeal to any one group. Democratic efforts to appeal to a broad range of groups and to avoid being "captured" by any one of them have lessened their vulnerability to any given group. On the other hand, any systematic loss of support would loom large for the party in its effort to regain control of Congress as well as in its attempt to wrest the presidency from the Republicans at a time when the party balance is as close as it has been since the 2000 election.

Conclusion

From a long-term perspective, changes in the 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century could be viewed simply as a continuation of processes that began decades ago. The movement away from the Democratic party by southern whites, for example, began in the 1960s. Catholics' lesser identification (lower incremental probabilities) with the Democrats began around 1980. The proportion of Democratic identifiers who are members of union households began to fall after the 1970s. And the Hispanic population, and its contribution to the Democratic coalition, has been on the rise for at least twenty years.

Yet the changes that we see in the most recent data might well signal the beginning of a distinct new group basis for the party coalitions. Note, first of all, that several

10. Comparable results for Republicans have a distorting mirror-image aspect. Given the general Democratic tendencies of the group ties, removing the group ties means that the groups' share of Republican identifiers, perhaps tiny to begin with, often swells to greater than 100 percent of its former size.

watershed changes have occurred very recently. Southern whites, perhaps for the first time ever, had an incremental push favorable to the Republicans in 2000; that increment persisted in 2002 and 2004, and in the past four elections they were estimated to be a greater fraction of Republican than of Democratic identifiers. Members of union households, in 1996, sank to just one fifth of all Democratic supporters. Hispanics, while not increasing their marginal support for the Democrats, have more than doubled their share of the Democratic coalition since the early 1980s, while African Americans have stabilized in the size of their contribution.

Significantly, recent changes appear to define group support for the Republican party more sharply than has been the case for many years. Regionally, the party now finds a strong base in the South. The South is no longer just "less Democratic." Southern whites lean more toward the Republicans, and they make up a substantial part of the Republican coalition. This is, of course, apparent at the elite as well as the mass level. Even more noteworthy is the strong religious base of Republican identifiers, as Catholics, regular church-goers, and Protestant fundamentalists have found greater favor with the Republican party. This is also reflected at the elite level, as President Bush seeks religious support by his behavior and by his policies regarding abortion, faith-based initiatives on social policy, and, most recently, on stem cell research.

The Democrats, in contrast, appear to have the problem that the coalition has lost important group support that has not been replaced by the support of significant new groups. For decades, the party weathered the steady erosion of southern support without losing its majority in the House, though the inability to elect more than an occasional president (all of whom since Lyndon Johnson in 1964 were from the South) may be explained by that loss. By 1994, however, the loss of support from other groups along with still-declining support from the South left the Democrats unable to maintain their congressional majority. Not even the increased support of women, which had begun in the early 1980s, and the growing Hispanic population were sufficient to offset the loss of Catholic, union household, and regular church-going voters. Nor has the party been able to establish a firm partisan base among younger cohorts.

Overall, the problem for the Republicans is to maintain and enhance the coalition they have put together, including a fragile religious combination. A larger, more heterogeneous Republican coalition brings its own strains. Both parties vie for greater support among Hispanics. This group's population growth, and its geographic concentration in Electoral College vote-rich states such as California, Florida, and Texas, highlights the desirability of wooing and winning Hispanics. The problem for the Democrats is that they cannot remain content with their current partisan base. To be competitive and position themselves for electoral victory, Democrats must find new coalition partners or regain support that the party has lost. But how? Which group? An attractive prospect would be the youngest generation among the electorate, as neither party has a hold on this group's loyalties. But capturing the attention and the commitment of the young, while tempting, has proven to be a challenging test for partisans. Bringing Catholics or southern whites back into the Democratic fold does not appear promising—and prospects for recapturing union households or regular church-goers appear only a tad more favorable.

If neither party gains a more dominant support coalition, the volatility in outcomes typical since 1990 may continue for some time, with greater voter independence and a close partisan balance characterizing American party politics.

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Appendix

Dependent Variables[a]

Variable	Definition
Democratic	1 if strong or weak Democratic identifier, 0 if Independent, Republican, apolitical, or other
Republican	1 if strong or weak Republican identifier, 0 if Independent, Democratic, apolitical, or other

Independent Variables[b,c]

Variable	Definition
Black	1 if black, 0 otherwise
Female	1 if female, 0 otherwise
Union household	1 if union member in household, 0 otherwise
Native southern white (1952-1988)	1 if white native of South (grew up in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, or Virginia), 0 otherwise
Southern white (1990-2004)	1 if white in South (see states above), 0 otherwise
Catholic	1 if Catholic, 0 otherwise
Jewish	1 if Jewish, 0 otherwise
Frequent church-goer	1 if attends church regularly or as often as "almost every week," 0 otherwise
Income	1 if family income in upper third, 0 otherwise
Fundamentalist	1 if "neo-fundamentalist" white Protestant, 0 otherwise
Hispanic	1 if of non-Cuban Hispanic origin, 0 otherwise
Born 1971-	1 if born in 1971 or later, 0 otherwise
Born 1959-1970	1 if born between 1959 and 1970 inclusive, 0 otherwise
Born 1943-1958	1 if born between 1943 and 1958 inclusive, 0 otherwise

a The results are very similar if one defines partisans to include those leaning toward the parties.

b Whites migrating into the South, education, metropolitan residence, sunbelt residence, rural residence, blue-collar workers, white-collar workers, farmers, Protestant, Irish or Polish descent, and foreign-born parents were incorporated at earlier stages of the analysis but failed to exhibit a consistently significant relationship with partisanship.

c "Otherwise" includes only other valid data codes. Missing data (primarily "not ascertained" cases) were excluded from the analysis.