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Reformulating the Party Coalitions: The "Christian Democratic" Republicans

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Publication Date
1998-08-01

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August, 1998

This paper was prepared for delivery at the 1998 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, The Boston Marriot Copley Place Hotel, September 3-6. The data used in this analysis were supplied through the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research. Neither the Consortium nor the principal investigators are responsible for the analysis and conclusions presented herein.

Abstract

The party coalitions that emerged from the New Deal realignment were defined by race, nationality and ethnicity, religion, region, and social class. In the last decade, the "religious impulse" has become an increasingly important aspect of the party coalitions as Republican and Democratic identifiers have become increasingly distinct in terms of their religiosity and religious practice. The paper traces the increasing importance of religiosity and social class as correlates of party identification and argues that the contemporary GOP has a support base that is highly similar to that of conventional Christian Democratic parties. It further suggests that the pattern of issue politics between the parties today is a result of this new cleavage structure.

The party coalitions that emerged from the New Deal realignment were largely defined, in order of their statistical and political significance, by region, religion, national origin, race, and social class. These particular cleavages were not novel. Similar social differences distinguished party supporters in comparable west European party systems (Converse, 1970), and the developing party systems of Eastern Europe have begun to develop social bases that reflects these same social cleavages (see Miller, et. al., forthcoming; Evans and Whitefield, 1993). There was also nothing unusual in the *way* demographic differences correlated with party allegiance (Knoke, 1978, has extensive data on this also). The more conservative GOP was linked to higher status segments of the society (Protestants, the middle and upper class) or segments seen as supportive of the traditional values of American society (small town residents). Democrats were the political home of minorities (African-Americans, Jews, Catholics) and the less well-off (the working class, union members).

The distinctiveness of the American parties was in the weakness with which these differences correlated with party preference. It showed up in two ways. The first was in the social heterogeneity of the supporters of the parties. While most parties in other societies drew support from only a few groups, the Democrats and Republicans commanded loyalty throughout the society. None of these socio-demographic differences – even the most discriminating of them – predicted a Democratic or Republican preference very well. Secondly, some of the centerpiece cleavages of contemporary mass party systems were absent. Despite the prominence of *religious preference* as a party cleavage, there was no *religious* dimension to party support. Protestants tended to be much less Democratic than Catholics or Jews, but neither party embraced the "religious impulse." Further, the class basis of the party system was extremely weak. The Democratic party was associated with "average" Americans while the GOP was linked to the wealthy and big business, but the difference was poorly reflected in the support base of the parties

where party identification correlated poorly with measures of social status.

These previously missing social cleavages in American party politics have become prominent within the last twenty years. The religious impulse, expressed in the concern of Republican politicians and activists with moral, ethical, and religion-based issues, has become an increasingly important aspect of interparty debate. Simultaneously, social class has become one of the strongest correlates of party preference: Republican and Democratic identifiers have become increasingly distinct in their religiosity and social class.

This paper traces the increasing importance of religiosity and social class as a correlate of party identification. It demonstrates that the GOP has acquired a "Christian Democratic" support profile. However, the coalitional change has not made the support base of the parties less diverse coalitions. It may have increased the elaborateness of the coalitions. The transformation did not alter the centrifugal issue conflicts that characterize coalitional parties like the Democrats and Republicans. The diverse New Deal party coalitions, especially the Democrats, were constructed with groups which had incompatible policy agendas – a fact which subsequently made the Democrats susceptible to election defections and the loss of important support elements to the Republicans. Both of the contemporary party coalitions contain groups with incompatible preferences – a condition which makes the Democrats *and* Republicans susceptible to defections and permanent losses of support to the other.

The analysis begins by outlining the ubiquitous social group structure of mass parties. It explains how this structure affects the party issue agenda, and how it creates vulnerabilities. The second part of the paper examines the New Deal and contemporary party coalitions from this perspective. This second part examines the prominence of religiosity and social class as contemporary party cleavages and how they have affected the programmatic diversity of the parties, especially the GOP.

Social Cleavages and Party Systems

In almost every society, party divisions correlate with social characteristics (Alford, 1963; LaPalombara and Weiner, 1966; Bartolini and Mair, 1990; Benson, 1961; Rokkan, 1970; Lipset, 1960, 1970; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Rose, 1974; Rose and Urwin, 1969, 1970; Converse, 1974; Lijphart, 1977, 1979, 1989; Hays, 1975; Kelley, 1979; Maguire, 1983; Powell, 1984; Ware, 1996). The key to this connection between groups and parties is the influence of social characteristics and their associated structures on the perceptions, beliefs, and interests of citizens. Social characteristics place us within networks of common experiences that buttress our already powerful tendency to develop social identities (see Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Sidanius and Prato, In press). We think of ourselves as (for example) Irish Catholics, African-American, Jewish, upwardly mobile, or an average working man. We look at the world through this identity, and others are inclined to see us in these terms and vary their behavior accordingly. Experiences linked to these social characteristics and identities help to create a relatively homogeneous milieu for similarly situated individuals. A group's members experience similar advantages and disadvantages and such common experiences lead to ever more distinctive beliefs.

The salience of the social identity will vary with the distinctiveness of these experiences, and the degree of inter-group competition will depend upon the magnitude of the real and perceived wins and losses that they experience with each other. But the existence of the social identities is a virtual constant. Minimal group experiments in social psychology established long ago the ease and rapidity with which subjects adopt a group identity from a wholly contrived distinction. This apparently central feature of human personality when placed within a milieu of (real and imagined) material and symbolic wins and losses virtually assures that groups will organize and oppose each other. Political parties express this group-based competition by organizing (in highly variable ways – see below) the opposing sides of the conflicts.

Social Groups and the Party Alignment

Party systems differ in the social exclusiveness of their support base in response to the number, salience, and centrality of the group differences. In some societies the group differences are sharp and the parties have vastly different constituencies (Belgium or Austria). In others the social differences between party supporters are relatively mild (the United States). In a very few there seems to be no party-social group differentiation (Japan). These social group differences among party supporters constitute the *group alignment* of the party system.

Of the many sources of alignment variability few seem to be as important as the degree of *cross-cutting* between social characteristics, where cross-cutting is understood as the extent to which differences *do not* reinforce each other, e.g., ethnic groups have different languages, different religions, substantially different levels of wealth, or live in different areas. Cross-cutting tends to dampen the salience of a social characteristic and reduce the chance that it will become a meaningful social identity because of the divergent and even competing interests that the social differences represent (see Lipset, 1983 for a discussion of the effect of coincident social cleavages on political cleavages and radicalism). The result of such cross-cutting is a mixture of beliefs and predispositions which create shared interests that dampen the conflicts that emerge from competing interests. As differences are cross-cut rather than reinforced, their salience is weaker, something which, *ceteris paribus*, increases collaboration among groups and the heterogeneity of the party coalitions.

The Cleavage Alignment and Issues

The party-group alignment will dictate the issue concerns and policy prescriptions of a party. The linkage is completely recursive: groups support a party because of the policies it promotes; the party promotes certain policies because it draws supporters, activists, and candidates from particular groups. Tangible economic interests are behind some of the competition, as when managers and employees are locked into disputes over wages and terms of employment. Some of the conflicts are quasi-economic: blacks and whites are often divided by policies designed to

equalize their social and economic conditions. At other times the conflict is largely symbolic: ethnic self-esteem and cultural beliefs are at issue. Indeed there are probably as many symbolic conflicts as there are material ones in modern societies – and the intensity can be at least as great. A party's candidates and leaders may offer policy proposals as public goods in which all will share, but party proposals have their origins in the values and interests of their supporters. Not surprisingly, therefore, a party's vision of the "common good" is often unshared or even opposed by those outside the party. While party leaders and candidates may proffer many proposals about generally recognized social problems (crime, traffic congestion, economic difficulties, etc.), they also have ideas about matters which are not necessarily acknowledged to be problems. These latter issues tend to arise from the concerns of groups associated with the party. Democrats, for example, reflecting the prominence of African-Americans and other ethnic minorities among their supporters, commonly see serious racial discrimination problems in need of attention by the government. Republicans, with few supporters from minority ethnic groups, tend not to see a racial discrimination as a particularly pressing. Their attention is much more likely to be drawn to government spending and taxes, reflecting the values and interests of the upscale and business interests that are overrepresented among contemporary GOP supporters.

The specificity of the party's position on any issue will depend on the diversity of the party's constituency. A party with a support base that is specific to a small number of groups has, *ceteris paribus*, a greater likelihood of adopting highly specific and detailed positions on issues because there is only a small chance that the position will be internally divisive. A diverse coalitional party, by contrast, has a greater likelihood of alienating important coalitional segments with any given (but not all) issue position because of the greater probability that one or more of the groups in the coalition are opposed. Their positions on issues are often more general, or even nonexistent. Indeed, both parties can broadly agree about a matter as a result of the large presence of the affected group in both parties. In the case of the diverse "big tent" Democrats and Republicans, for

example, issue specificity if often low, issue differences between the parties is comparatively small, and the issue space – defined as a range of support and opposition within each party for any given issue – can be relatively large.

The Cleavage Structure, Elections, and Realignments

The diversity of a party issue space determines its susceptibility to cross cutting issues which yield partisan defection, electoral oscillation, and (in the longer term) realignments. The issue homogeneity of highly aligned parties reduces intraparty issue differences relative to those that divide them from supporters of opposing parties. Defection is relatively rare and election results are stable. Aggregate changes in the party vote and realignments should be rare.

Coalitional parties, such as the Democrats and Republicans, are more susceptible to issue strains. The social group diversity of the coalition virtually ensures that the issue concerns and policy preferences of some groups will be opposed by other groups in the coalition. The issue agenda that is common to the supporters of a coalition party may be small relative to the diversity of the concerns of all coalition members, and their unshared issue concerns and preferences can produce defections and realignments. Issue revolving around race were an example of this kind of cross-cutting issue in the New Deal party system. The major division between New Deal Democrats and Republicans involved the responsibility of government for the social welfare of the population and the proper level of government regulation of the economy (Ladd, 1970; Sundquist, 1983). The Democratic agenda of "governmental nationalism" commanded majority support from southern whites, blacks, Jews, the northern urban working class, and ethnic Catholics. But as foreign policy, race relations, and social issues became prominent in the late-1960s, they divided groups within the parties (especially the Democrats), weakened party loyalty, and precipitated conversions which finally realigned the groups (Petrocik, 1981, 1987; Carmines and Stimson, 1989).

Social Divisions and Partisanship in America

The crosscutting appeals associated with social groups minimized the link between social divisions and the parties in the United States (for more on this see Kelly, 1979).[1] Region confounded class and religious divisions; tension between Catholics and Protestants confounded class; national origin created conflict among co-religionists and made it difficult to develop or sustain class loyalties. National origin loyalties were especially important sources of ethnic voting that disrupted potential religious coalitions (see Wolfinger, 1965). The result was a muted and confused social base in the American parties. Particularly striking, compared to most countries, was the weak political party significance of social class and religion or religiosity. Neither variable - and the social groups they might define – was a powerful predictors of party affiliation or voting in the United States (see Miller's classic 1958 analysis).[2] The only variable which seemed less significant was the size of place in which the person resided (see Table 1).

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics and Party Identification:
1950s through the 1990s

	1950 – 1960	1962 – 1970	1972 - 1978	1980 - 1988	1992 - 1996
Region	.22	.16	.19	.10	.07
Religion	.15	.14	.15	.11	.14
Union	.13	.12	.12	.12	.10
Socio-Economic Status	.09	.13	.15	.16	.19
Race	.06	.16	.20	.23	.27
Religious Observance	.04	.01	.03	.10	.16
Size of place of residence	.02	.03	.02	.04	.03

Note: Table entries are correlation ratios.

Religion and Social Class as Party Cleavages

The dynamics that gave rise to church-linked parties in Western Europe was largely absent in the United States. Many things were different. Neither churches nor religion were viewed as defenders of a social order to which large groups were opposed, and socialist or labor parties

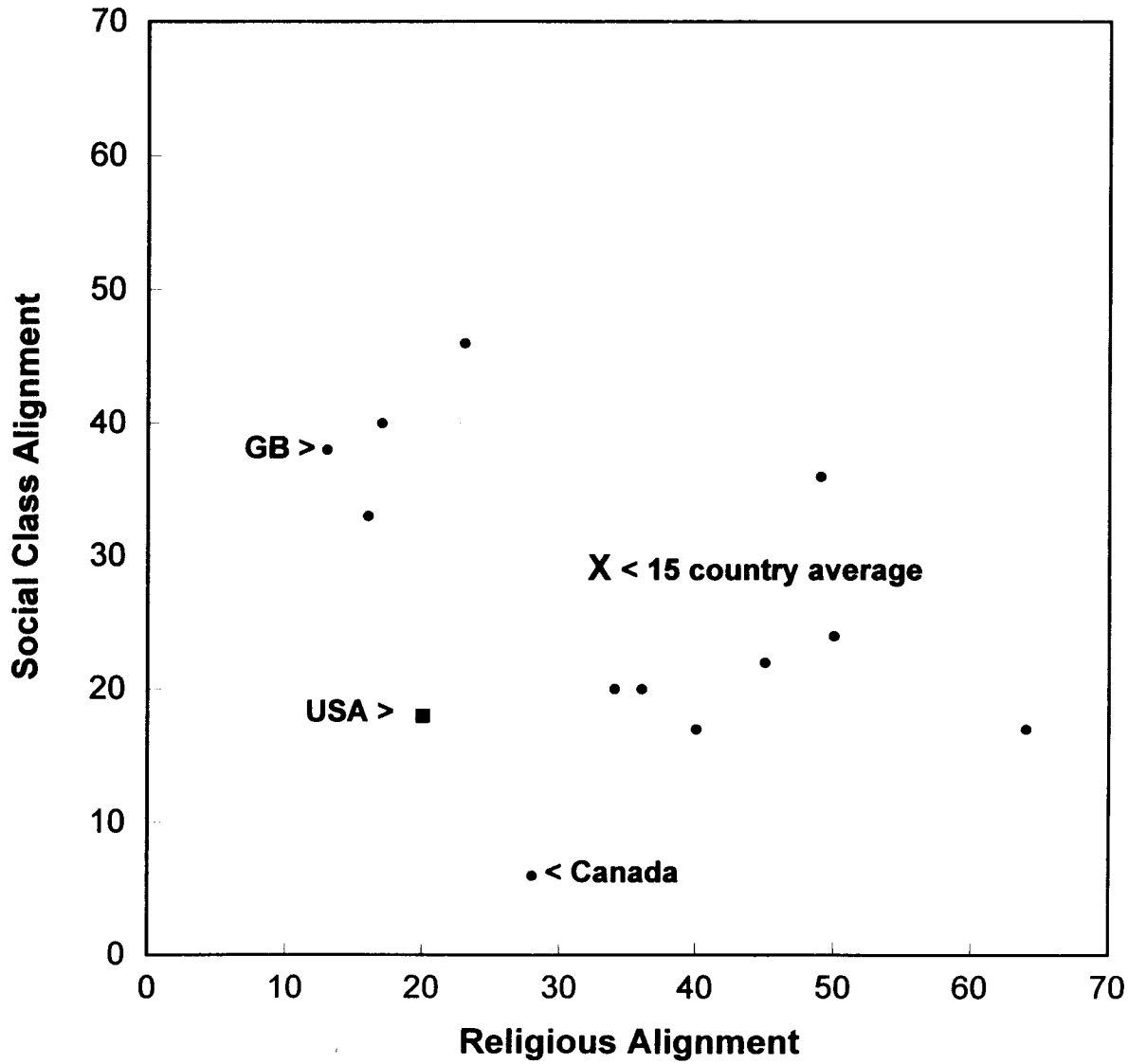
never developed enough traction with the American electorate to make them successful (Lipset's, 1983, analysis of this is especially compelling). Religious sentiment was fairly strong throughout the society and what seemed to matter more to Americans was the competing religious traditions between Catholics and Protestants (and among Protestant denominations as well). The connection between Catholicism and immigrants whose cultural traditions set them apart from the "mainstream" Americans of the period also dampened a sense of solidarity between religious Catholics and Protestants. National origin rivalries among American Catholics also suppressed a politicization of religion (see Benson, 1961; Kleppner, 1970; Kelly, 1979,).

Religiosity was substantially uncorrelated with party identification, and never identified as a distinction between supporters of the Democrats and the Republicans. The weak empirical link between party and religious creed was largely a marker for ethnicity differences (see Lenski, 1961, for a thorough assessment of the link between religious creed and the parties). Catholics and Jews who observed the customs of their religion were more likely to prefer the Democrats, but religious observance was meaningful only within the context of a religion: the most religiously observant Catholics and Jews were the most Democratic. Religious observance marked the person's involvement in the social context associated with being Catholic or Jewish and, therefore, Democrat. It indexed their community or group identification (Berelson, et. al. 1954: 72); it served as a marker for a strong affirmation of a common minority identity (Lazarsfeld, et. al., 1952: 23); it might also have marked informal social relations which helped to intensify an individual's observance of group norms - political and otherwise (Berelson, et. al. 1954: 73). It did not have an effect on party preference and voting independent of the religious group, and, as a result, no model of the coalitional structure of the parties included religiosity as a party-relevant distinction among voters (see: Lipset, 1960, 1970; Lubell, 1952, Larzarsfeld, et. al., 1944, Berleson, et al., 1954, Campbell, et al., 1954, 1960).

Social class effects were an equally marginal feature of the New Deal coalitions. It is conventional to think of the GOP as the party of big business (or business generally) and the middle and upper classes. At the same time, it is equally well understood that social class differences played a distinctly modest role in American partisanship despite this history. In the 1950s electorate, citizens in the top half of the SES distribution were only slightly less Democratic (at 53 percent Democrat compared to 39 percent Republican) than those in the bottom half (who were 58 percent Democratic and 33 percent Republican). And the failure of social class to discriminate party preference was not a result of the masking effect of other social characteristics such as race, region, or labor union ties. There was no SES difference to note between union household and nonunion households overall, or within regions, religions, or races. The small party-class differences that did show up among blacks and Jews were insignificant and had effects contrary to any hypothesis that might explain the weakness of class effects. Blacks in union households had a higher status score, but it had no effect on the party bias. Non-union Jewish households had a higher status than union Jewish households, but both groups were equal in their commitment to the Democrats.

The insignificance of religion and class for the party divisions set the United States apart from the norm – a difference which is apparent in Figure 1, which plots coordinates of Alford scores (Alford, 1963) for the association between party and religion and party and social class for the United States and 15 reasonably comparable west European countries for the period around 1960 (Powell, 1984: table 5.3). It also plots the average of the two measures. Canada excepted, the United States had a less aligned party system than any of the other countries in the sample. Other countries had roughly similar levels of religious or class cleavages in the party system, but only the US and Canada were comparably low on *both* dimensions. The four countries most like the United States with regard to the prominence of class in the party division (Italy, France, Switzerland, and the Netherlands) had a score of almost 46 on the relig-

Figure 1
Social Class and Religion as a Basis of Party Alignment



ious cleavage compared to an American score of 20. The four countries nearest the United States with regard to the religious division (Australia, Sweden, The United Kingdom, and Norway) had a class cleavage score of approximately 40 compared to the US score of 18. Overall, the US stood apart from the norm for western party systems.

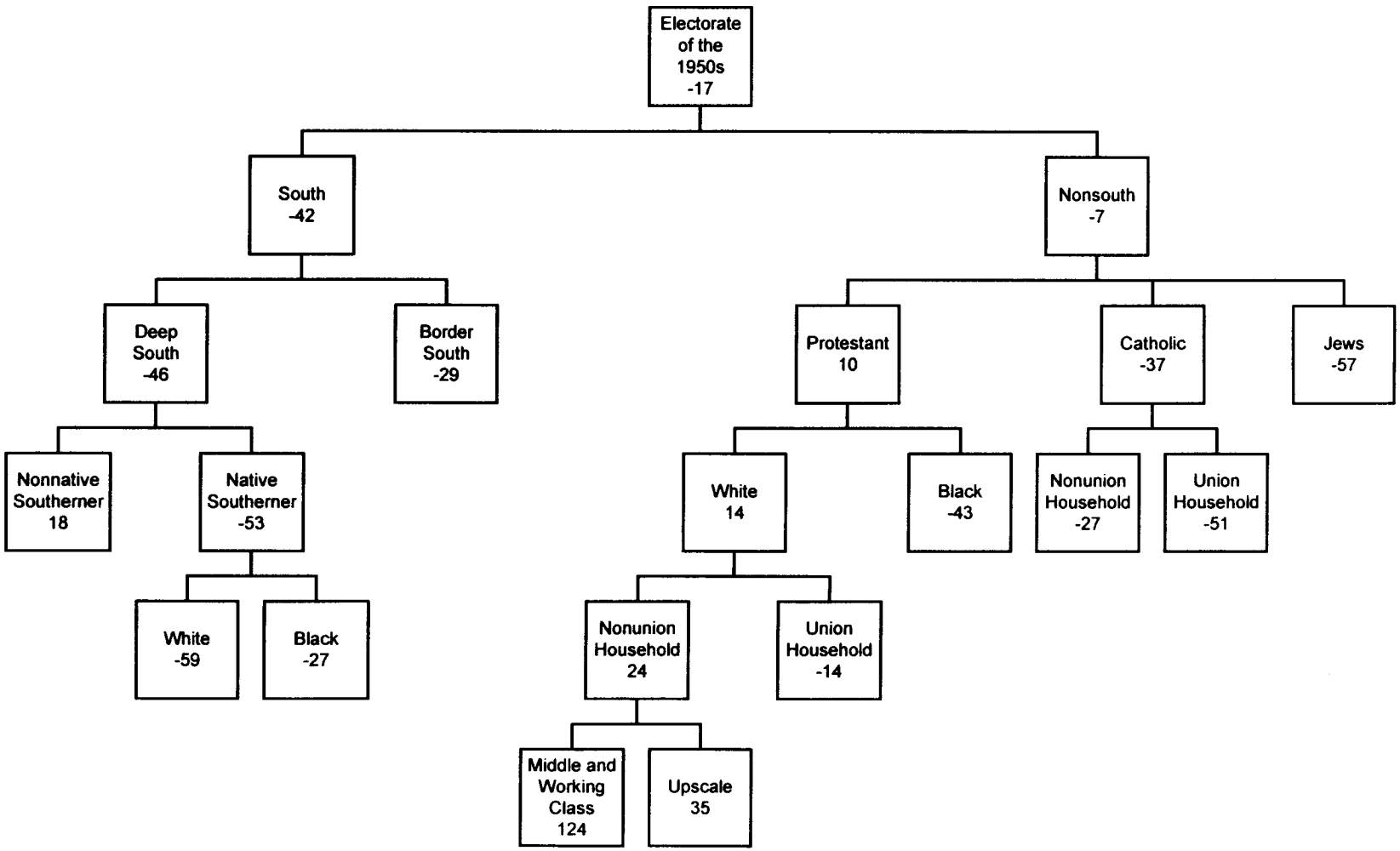
The Social Groups Correlates of Party Support

The religious and class divisions that marked most western party systems were replaced in America with regional and racial-ethnic divisions that were rooted in a century old civil war and persistent debates and struggles over the effects of immigration on the nation's cultural and political character. Figure 2 reports the pattern of relationships among social characteristics that defined the groups in the party coalitions.[3] The pattern in the figure resulted from an asymmetric analysis of variance of party preference with the variables reported in Table 1 (Sonquist, Baker, and Morgan, 1973). The technique, commonly used by marketers, attempts to identify the combinations of social characteristics that best explain the variance in the dependent variable - party identification in this case. Its underlying model is similar to that of a stepwise regression in that each prospective independent variable is selected in the order by which the variable accounts for the variance in the dependent variable. But unlike regression analysis, the statistical model does not assume additivity or linearity. It is sensitive to the notion that social groups are defined by "lumpy" cluster of social differences and the technique's analysis of variance accepts non-linear and interactive variable combinations in predicting to the dependent variable. The statistical model does not expect every combination of the values of the independent variables to be relevant. In predicting party preference it may find (as it does) that union membership and social class further specify the partisanship of white Protestants, but has no effect on the partisanship of Jews and Blacks.

The analysis begins with a sequential partitioning of each prospective independent variable into the dichotomy that gives the lowest within-group sum of squared deviations for the dependent variable. The algo-

Figure 2

The New Deal Pary Coalitions of the 1950s



rithm then selects the two groups identified in this first partitioning as the segments of the population to be further examined in terms of the other variables. At each step, the segment with the largest within group sum of squared deviations is identified as the candidate for further partitioning (following the logic that segments with the most variance are the most worthy of further analysis). The algorithm continues to attempt to partition population segments identified at a prior iteration of the program by finding the variable in the analysis set which best reduces the WSS of the segment identified in some previous iteration. This splitting continues as long as the WSS of any group is reduced by a specified amount, and the resulting number of cases in the group does not fall below a specified minimum. While the algorithm operates by dichotomizing each independent variable in order to calculate its effect on the dependent variable, the results are not constrained to only produce dichotomies. A polytomous categorical variable (such as religion or race) can have every category of the variable identified as a significant group if each category has significantly different values on the categorical variable. The t-test and correlation ratio statistics upon which segmentation occurs is not affected by the character of the dependent variable (as, for example, OLS is by a binary dependent variable).[4]

The New Deal Party Coalitions

Region was the dominant distinction between Democrats and Republicans in the New Deal party system of the 1950s (as Table 1 indicates). The regional difference was not a mask for race, religion, or any other social characteristic. Individuals otherwise identical by religion or social class, etc. were significantly more likely to be Democrats if they lived in the states of the Deep South or a Border South State.[5] Southern White Protestants, for example, were vastly more Democratic than Northern White Protestants, so much so that the party difference between Catholics and Protestants increased almost 66 percent when the comparison of religious effects is limited to Northerners. The south was not completely homogeneous in their partisanship. Border South residents were significantly less Democratic, and whether the person was a native

southerner also mattered. Southerners raised elsewhere were more Republican by 18 percentage points, while native were 53 points more Democratic than Republican (a net difference between the two of 71 points). The only further distinction was shaped by race. Among native southerners, whites were significantly more likely to be Democrats than blacks, in both a substantive (see the numbers in the figure) and statistical sense. Few other social characteristics made a difference in southern partisanship. Union households in the region were noticeably more Democratic, but the difference never reached statistical significance. Moreover, the effect of union membership was to increase only slightly the probability of a Democratic preference among a group whose base probability of being Democratic was 70 percent (see Burner, 1968, for an assessment of the New Deal coalitons).

Outside of the south, religious preference was the major influence on party preference. Catholics and Jews were significantly more Democratic than Protestants, and Jews were measurably more Democratic than Catholics. Social class had virtually no effect on the Democratic preference of either group. Ethnic loyalties and socialization made their Democratic allegiance "sticky" and resistant through the 1950s to crosscutting class pressures. The only factor which significantly affected the partisanship of these groups to any degree was union membership. Catholics and Jews who lived in union households were more Democratic than those who lived in nonunion households. The effect was larger for Catholics largely because Jews were so Democratic that the influences of union membership were held down by something of a “ceiling effect.”

Northern Protestants were the most politically heterogeneous, and divided by social differences. Race mattered; blacks were 43 points more Democratic than Republican, while whites had a 14 point Republican bias. Union membership had a big an effect on the party identification of white northern Protestants (“WASPs” hereafter. Social class influence was the least important influence on party preference, but it made a difference among some WASPs. Upscale WASPs were 35 percentage points more Republican than Democratic; less well-off WASP had a party bias

that was about 12 points more Republican. The party bias of blacks was hardly influenced at all by social class.

Table 2
The New Deal Party Coalitions as of the 1950s

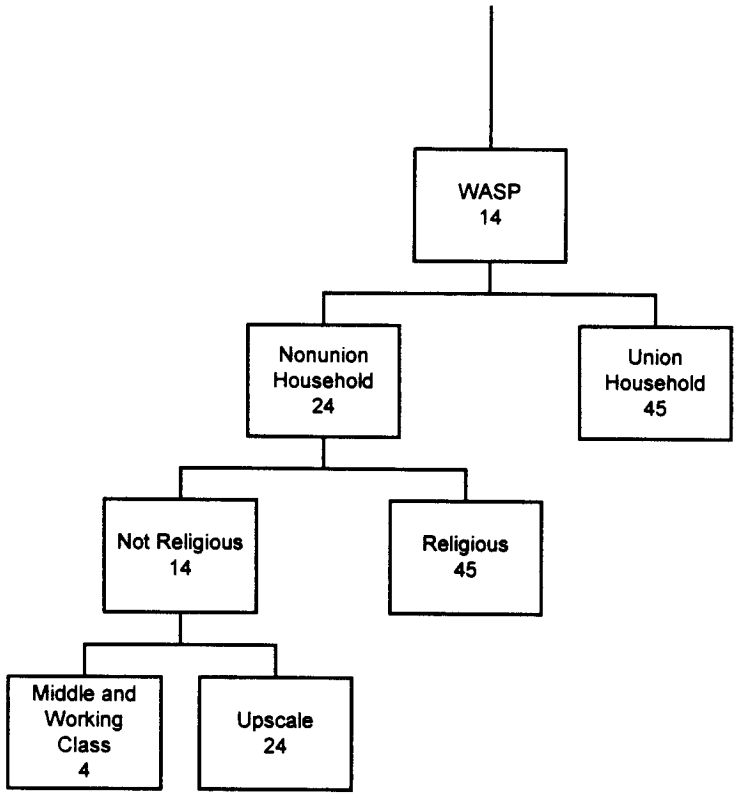
			Group Characteristics of identifiers with the:	
	Size of the Group	Group's Party Bias*	Democrats	Republicans
Southern Whites	16%	-59	26%	7%
Border South Whites	5	-29	6	5
Jews	3	-51	4	1
Blacks	9	-33	10	5
Catholics	13	-29	14	9
Union households	19	-29	21	15
Immigrant Southerners	2	18	1	3
Downscale WASPs	14	12	10	21
Upscale WASPs	16	35	7	30
Others	5	35	2	4
Totals	100%	-17	100%	100%

Note: The Party Bias is the difference in the proportion identifying as Democrat less the proportion identifying as Republican. Negative numbers indicate a plurality of Democrats; positive numbers a plurality of Republicans. African-Americans and Hispanics are not included. The other columns are percentages which total 100 percent, with some rounding error.

Table 2 summarizes the pattern in Figure 2 in terms of discrete groups. It also reports the party bias of each group and the contribution each made to the Democratic and Republican electorate of the 1950s. The groups in the table differ from the segmentation pattern in Figure 2 in only two ways. First, African-Americans are collected as a group simply because they were measurably more Democratic than any comparable group of white citizens. Also, reflecting the impact of union affiliation on party preference, Catholics or WASPs from a union household are classified as a "union member." Blacks, Jews, and Southern whites were given priority status both because no variable further specified their party identification and because of the substantive political salience of the social groups they represent.[6]

Figure 3

Religiosity and the Party Coalitions of the 1950s



A Religiosity Cleavage in the New Deal

The preceding segmentation of New Deal party support made no distinction by religiosity simply because none was sought. However, religiosity does emerge as a party cleavage if it is included in the analysis.[7] Figure 3, which can be overlaid on the results of Figure 2 at the point where race distinguishes white Protestants, shows religious observance as a more important determinant of party preference than social class for WASPs. It also shows that these religiously observant WASPs were the most Republican segment of the electorate during the 1950s.

Table 3
The Effect of Religiosity and Religion on Party Preference

	Party Identification is:	
	Democrat	Republican
Northern White Protestants		
Not observant	43	37
Observant	21	59
Catholics		
Not observant	52	23
Observant	57	16
Southern White Protestants		
Not observant	66	15
Observant	70	15
Jews		
Not observant	59	6
Observant	57	20

Note: Table entries are percentages across the row.

It is not clear, however, that this represents a nascent or unrecognized religiosity dimension to the party division. It is possible, as suggested in Berelson, et al. (1954) and Campbell, et. al. (1960) that those most identified with and involved in their salient social groups (and religion is surely one) tend to exhibit the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of the group to a significantly greater degree. To be sure, the evidence for this idea is weak, as Table 3 shows. While observant Catholics are more inclined to be Democratic than non-observant Catholics, the difference is very small; and the party identification of neither Jews nor

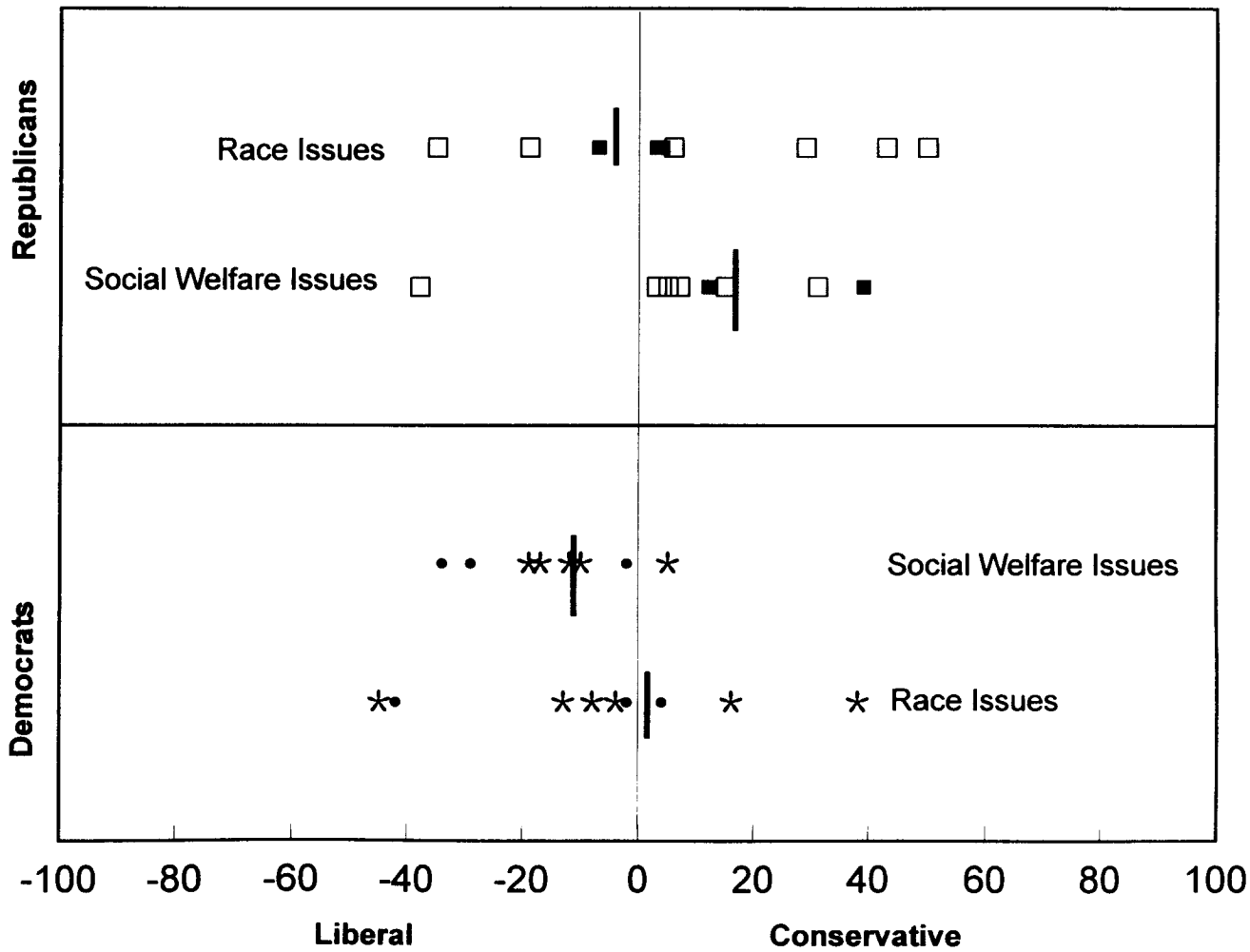
southern white Protestants conform to this asserted social context pressure. Observant Jews are *less likely* to be committed to the Democrats (three times as many are likely to be Republican identifiers), and religious observance had no effect on the uniformly Democratic loyalties of Southern white Protestants. Northern WASPs are the only group which showed a religiosity effect on partisanship during this period. These observant WASPs were also measurably more conservative in their social welfare attitudes, and this consistency in their partisanship and policy attitudes makes it at least plausible that Figure 3 is presenting a real phenomenon rather than some aberrant data. However, the specificity of the effect to WASPs argues against a general religiosity effect.

Issues in the New Deal Coalitions

The group structure of the coalitions was consequential because it limited the programmatic coherence of the parties, especially the Democrats. Figure 4 illustrates this by graphing the mean positions of each group on racial and social welfare issues, by whether the individual in the group is a Democrat or a Republican. Democrats are in the bottom half of the figure, Republican groups are displayed in the top. The groups are further distinguished by their preeminence in each party's coalition. Core Republican groups are denoted by the filled squares; core Democratic groups are noted with asterisks. Party averages are denoted with vertical lines. Several features stand out.

First, the parties were more different on the social welfare issues that defined the policy agenda of the New Deal realignment than they were on racial issues (a largely peripheral issue for the New Deal). Republicans were substantially opposed to social welfare spending; the Democratic average was supportive. The mean difference between the party's supporters on racial issues was trivial: Republicans were slightly more supportive of African-American integration while Democrats were almost neutral. But the averages are not the important feature of the graph. What stands out was the group-based issue diversity of the party's supporters. Southern whites, for example, whether Democrat or Republican were the most conservative on racial issues. Jews and Blacks (Democrat

Figure 4
Issue Distance within the Parties in the 1950s



Note: Vertical lines represent the mean scores for the parties on the issue. Asterisks are core Democratic groups. Filled squares indicate core GOP groups. See the text for a fuller explanation.

or Republican) were the most liberal elements in both parties. Upscale Republican WASPs were the least supportive of social welfare spending; and upscale WASPs who identified as Democrats were less supportive of social spending than any other group of Democrats (except southern whites – who were slightly more conservative). In general, a group's rank position in a liberal to conservative order was duplicated within the parties. For example: The average welfare score of upscale Democratic WASPs were more liberal than those of upscale Republican WASPs, but upscale WASPs were the conservative elements in both parties.

The means were not noticeably different between party identifiers because the left-right policy space occupied by Democratic groups crossed the center point and was *as long* as the liberal-conservative policy space occupied by the Republicans. Issues differences were more consequential for the Democratic coalition because the diverse opinions were held by groups which were major components of their coalition and competing to shape the general posture of the party. Notice, for example, the similarity of issue positions among the core WASP groups in the GOP (the filled squares) compared to the differences among core Democratic groups (Southern whites, union members, Catholics, Blacks, etc.) on both welfare and racial issues – but especially the latter. Southern whites were the most conservative Democrats on both racial and welfare issues.

Table 4 summarizes this effect in an analysis of variance of social welfare attitudes and racial opinions during the 1950s. It compares the variance component associated with the coalition segmentation with the variance component attributable to party identification. The results are clear. The coalition segmentation has a stronger effect on racial and social welfare opinions than party identification. Party identification is a completely insignificant influence on racial issues and it explains barely a third of the variance in social welfare opinion that is explained by the coalition segmentation.

In any given election these issue cleavages shaped defection rates while simultaneously being responsible for one of the hallmarks of the American voter: their low levels of issue voting. Americans were party

voters (upwards of 75 to 80 percent cast a vote consistent with their party identification for President and Congress), but because their partisanship was poorly related to their attitudes on many matters they were not issue voters. The coalitional structure of the parties was one of the structural features of party conflict that shaped central features of the electorate.[8]

Table 4
Influences on Attitudes in the 1950s

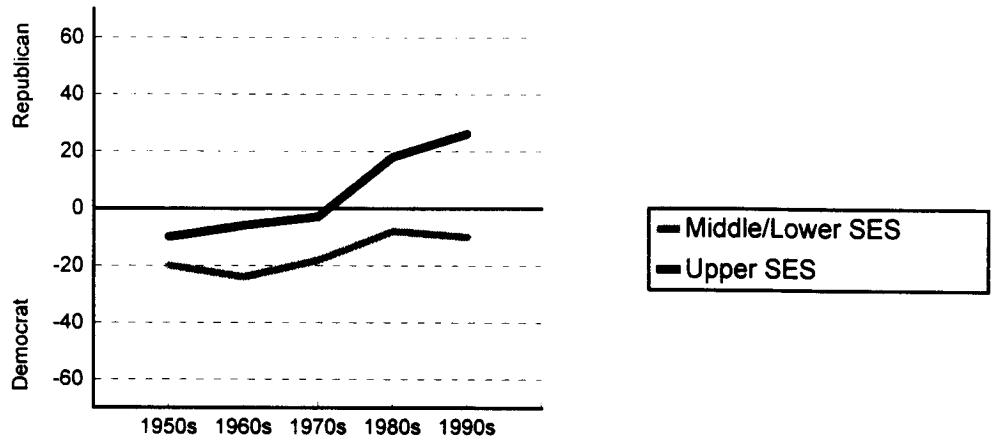
	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F / df	Correlation Ratio
Race Attitudes				
Coalition Segmentation	570.22	51.84	113.5 / 11	.31
Party Identification	1.35	.67	1.47 / 2	.02
Explained	572.44	44.03	96.4 / 13	.31
Welfare Attitudes				
Coalition Segmentation	227.30	20.66	72.4 / 11	.25
Party Identification	85.83	42.92	150.34 / 2	.16
Explained	388.26	29.87	104.6 / 13	.32

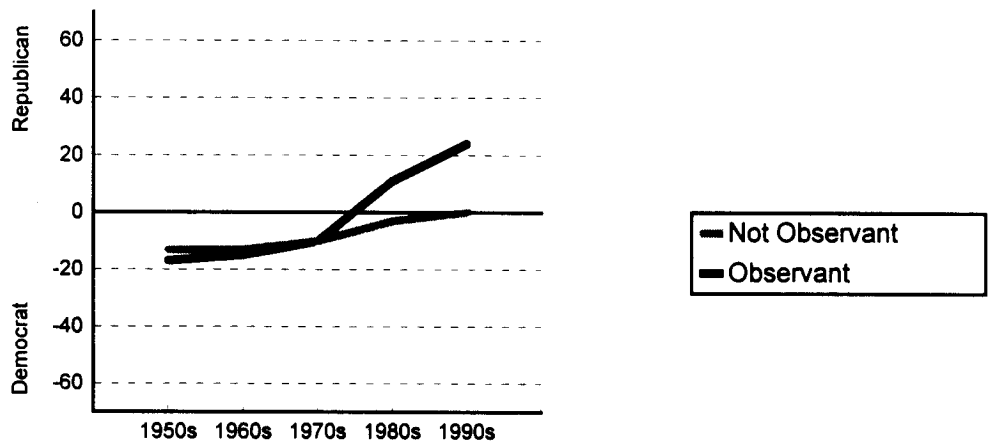
The Contemporary Party Coalitions

A substantial relationship between party preference and class and religiosity emerged by the 1950s, and religiosity and social class became partisan cleavages by this time. Figure 5 shows this change. A slight overall erosion in Democratic strength was dominated by a large shift to the GOP among upscale and religiously observant Americans by the 1980s. Religiosity and class created a party divide in excess of twenty points by the start of the 1990s. Class differences are sharper now (since lower SES Americans are clearly Democratic), but religiosity is also a substantial influence on partisanship compared its irrelevance during

Figure 5

The Effect of Religiosity and Class on Partisanship
(White Catholics and Protestants Only)





the 1950s (See Hout, et. al., 1995 and Huckfeldt and Kohfeld, 1989; and Miller and Shanks, 1996 for similar findings).

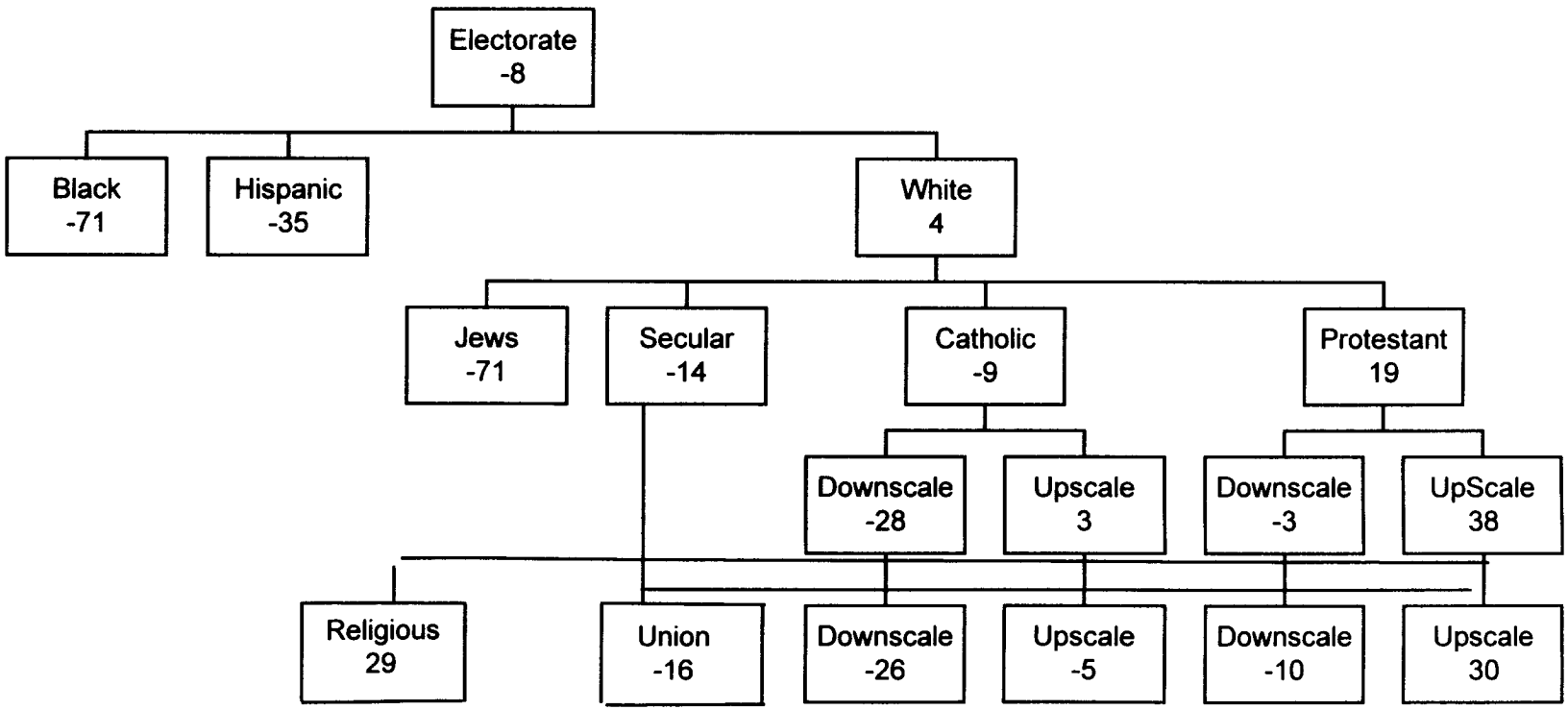
Catholics, strongly Democratic throughout the 1950s irrespective of their social class position or religiosity, lost their strongly Democratic bias by the 1980s and can reasonably be regarded as divided between the parties and a swing group today.[9] Social class differences produced a greater partisan divergence than the moral and symbolic issues embedded in religiosity. A party difference of more than 20 points now exists between observant and less observant Catholics; the class difference in partisanship is 40 points. Upscale Catholics prefer the GOP over the Democrats by almost 15 points; while less-well-off Catholics prefer the Democrats over the Republicans by more than 20 points. Today, observant Catholics are slightly more Republican overall, while less religious Catholics are about 20 points more Democratic than Republican (Gilbert, 1993; Guth, 1992; Jelen, 1991; Leege and Kellstedt, 1993; Smidt, 1993).

Religion and class-related changes among southern whites have been substantially greater. The 60 point Democratic plurality that was undifferentiated by social class or religion in the 1950s became a slight GOP bias with substantial religious and class dimensions in the 1990s. Religious and upscale Southern whites changed the most. They made a disproportionate contribution to the increase in the class and religious differences between Democrats and Republicans. Today, upscale southern whites are about 40 points more Republican than Democrat; lower SES southern whites are evenly divided. Religiously observant southern whites are about 30 points more identified with the GOP, while those who are not observant are evenly divided in their party preference.[10]

The change was not uniform. African-Americans became *more Democratic* irrespective of religiosity; and the most well-off blacks are more Democratic than those who are less well-off.[11] The party preferences of Jews also did not conform to the general pattern. Upscale and religiously observant Jews have remained overwhelmingly Democratic. There is a slight party difference associated with social class and religiosity among Jews, but there is no longitudinal trend to the difference.[12]

Figure 6

The Party Coalitions of the 1990s



The New Coalitions

Figure 6 summarizes a segmentation analysis identical to that used to identify the elements of the New Deal party coalition.[13] The same variables (region, religion, race, social class, religiosity, and size of place of residence) were analyzed, but the outcome of the segmentation was quite different. Region produced no partisan difference. Racial differences in partisanship are preeminent, with whites standing out as Republicans while Hispanics and African-Americans are Democrats.[14] Partisan differences among whites vary with religion. Protestants, as before, are the most Republican and Jews are the most Democratic. Catholics and those who profess no religious identity are more divided, but Democrats on balance. Religion and social class are distinguishing characteristics of Republican and Democratic identifiers and the contemporary party coalitions.

Table 5
The Effect of Social Class, Religiosity and Union Membership on Party Preference

	Religious preference is:	
	Protestant	Catholic
Social Class		
Lower SES	-3	-28
Upscale	38	3
Religiosity		
Not observant	6	-16
Observant	36	1
Union affiliation		
No one in the household	-4	-30
Someone in the househld	23	-4

Note: Table entries are the Party Bias which is the difference in the proportion identifying as Democrat less the proportion identifying as Republican. Negative numbers indicate a plurality of Democrats; positive numbers a plurality of Republicans. African-Americans and Hispanics are not included.

Social class, religiosity, and union membership differentiate all WASPs and Catholics (see Table 5). Social class differentiates the partisanship of Catholics and WASPs slightly better than religiosity or union membership; religiosity differentiates party preference marginally better

than union membership. The segmentation diagrammed pattern in Figure 6 accounts for this by clustering all union members who are Catholics, WASPs, or seculars into a union member group. It also clusters the religiously observant among Catholics and WASPs into a "religious" segment.

Table 6
The "Christian Democratic" Coalitions of the 1990s

			Group Characteristics of identifiers with the:	
	Size of the Group	Group's Party Bias*	Democrats	Republicans
African Americans	11%	-71	19%	2%
Hispanics	8	-35	10	5
Jews	2	-72	3	1
Union household	13	-16	15	12
Low SES Catholics	4	-26	4	3
Low SES WASPs	9	-10	9	9
No religious preference	13	-14	13	11
Upscale Catholics	4	0	4	4
Upscale WASPs	8	30	5	13
Religious Catholics	7	9	6	9
Religious Protestants	18	38	10	28
All others	3	15	2	3
Totals	100%	-8	100%	100%

Note: The Party Bias is the difference in the proportion identifying as Democrat less the proportion identifying as Republican. Negative numbers indicate a plurality of Democrats; positive numbers a plurality of Republicans. African-Americans and Hispanics are not included. The other columns are percentages which total 100 percent, with some rounding error.

Table 6 reports the final result of the clustering. These are, again, exclusive groups. The partisan homogeneity of African-Americans, Hispanics, and Jews made them priority groups; and these categories include all blacks, Hispanics, and Jews – irrespective of their social class, union membership, or religiosity. Union membership is also a priority characteristic (per the segmentation analysis in Figure 6). Anyone from a household with a union member is in the union category, except for respondents who are Jewish, black, or Hispanic. The religious categories, therefore, is limited to avowed Protestants and Catholics who are not

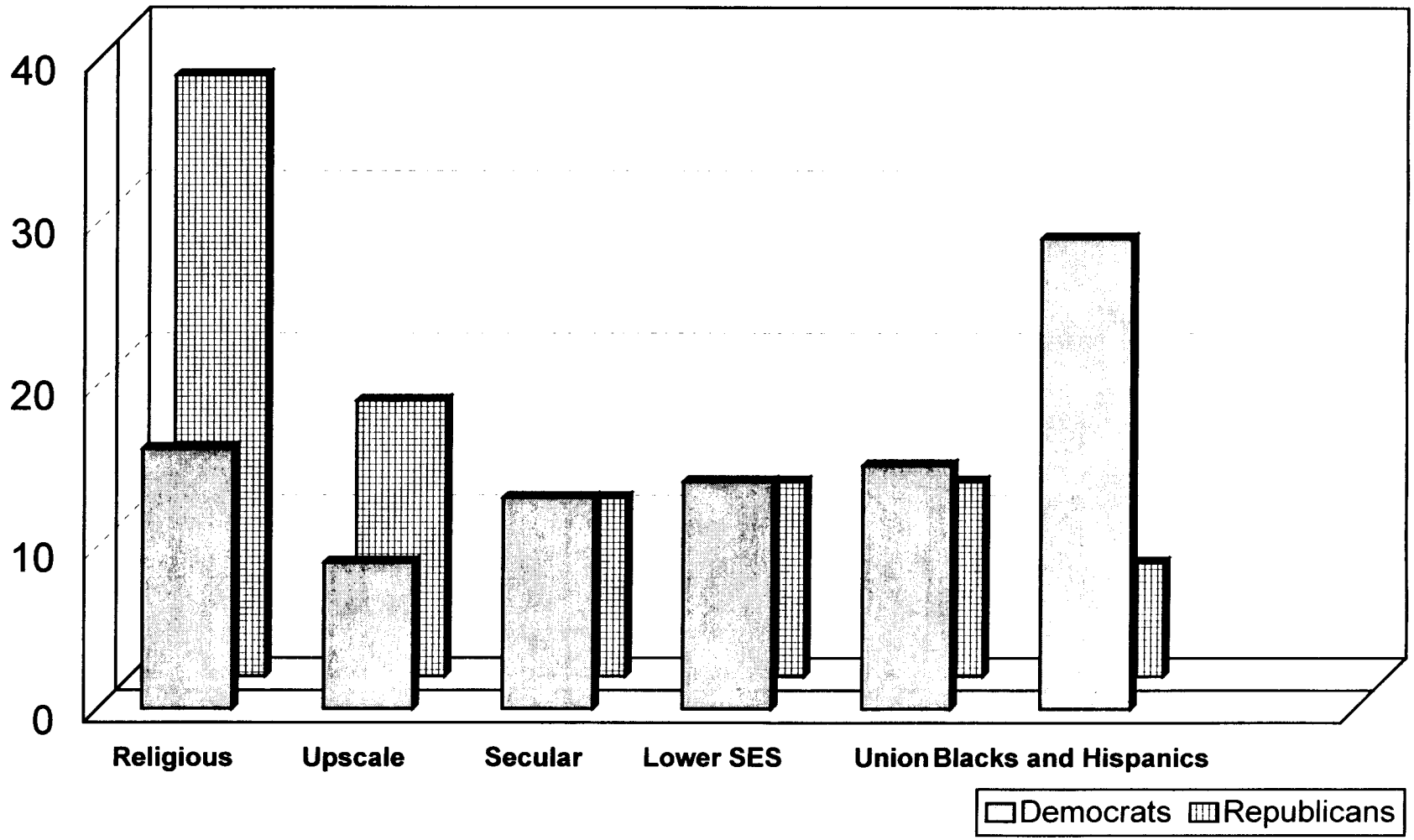
union members. Status difference among Catholics and Protestants are limited to those who are not union members no categorized among the religious.[15]

Figure 7 collapses some of the groups from Table 6 to highlight the coalition differences and the relative weight of the groups within the parties. The religiously observant segment (60 percent Republican and 30 percent Democratic) represent 37 percent of all GOP identifiers. Upscale respondents (identified with the GOP by a margin of 55 to 36 percent) contribute another 17 percent to the Republican coalition, and 54 percent of all Republicans between them. The Democratic electorate receives only about 25 percent of its support from these two groups. The preeminent core group for the Democrats are the 29 percent who are African-American or Hispanic. The remaining groups make relatively similar contributions to both parties, even if, as Table 6 shows, the size of the Democratic electorate makes these groups more Democrat than Republican on balance.

The magnitude of the changes necessary to create the contemporary coalitions is apparent in Figure 8, which compares the size of each group in Table 6 to the size these groups would have been in the parties of the 1950s. The values are calculated by comparing each group's proportion in the electorate with its proportion among each party's identifiers.[16] The resulting number is a "representation ratio," which corrects for the effect of aggregate population change on over time differences in the size of a group in each party's support base.[17] Negative numbers indicate that the group is underrepresented in the party relative to their share of the electorate. Positive numbers indicate that they are over-represented. A value of zero would indicate that the group is as numerous in the party as they are in the electorate – and that the party coalition is not distinctive in terms of this group.

There is imperfect symmetry to the values. A group with relatively high rates of partisan independence can be underrepresented in both parties, just as a group with proportionately few independents may be overrepresented in both parties. In general, however, independents are

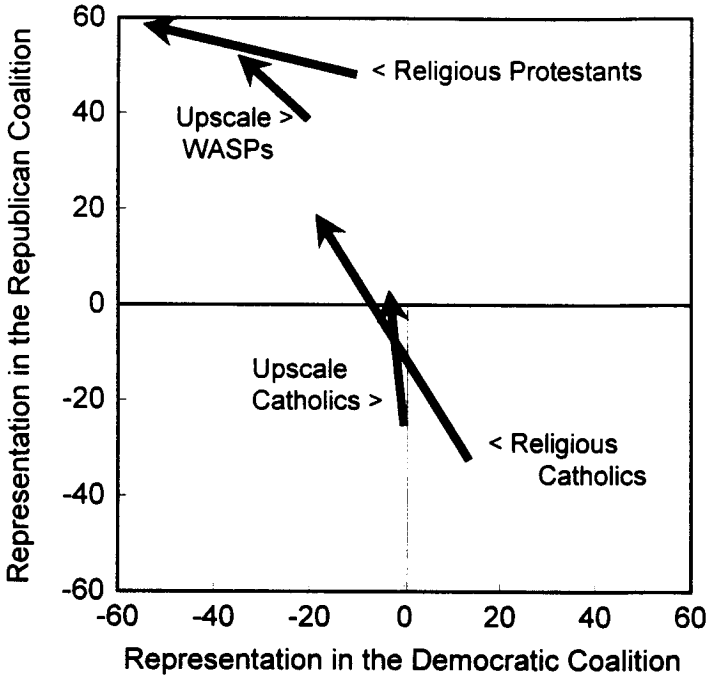
Figure 7
The Party Coalitions



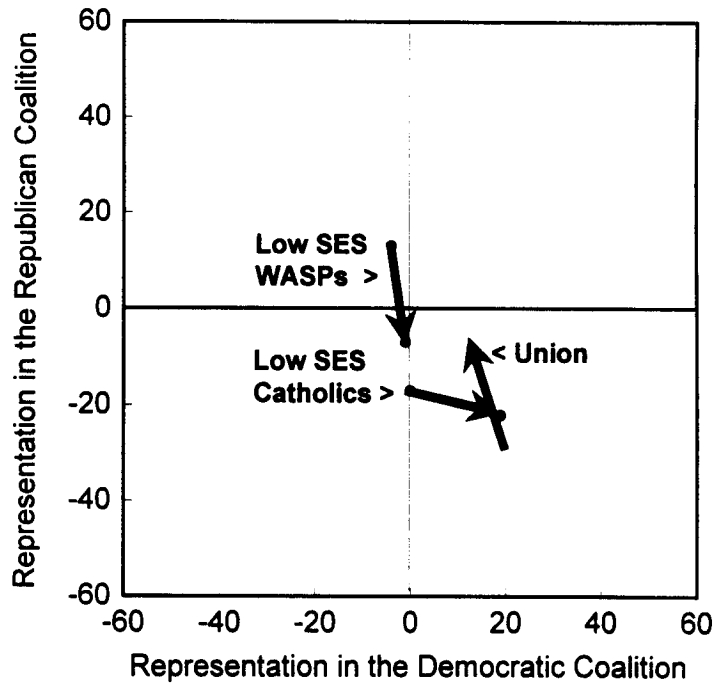
Note: Others represented 4 percent in both parties

Figure 8

The Shifting coalition Groups: 1950s to the 1990s



Religious and Upscale



Low SES and Union

not so numerous that they skew the measure. The two values, therefore, yield a coordinate which measures the partisan distinctiveness of the group. A group in the lower right would be a Democratic group; a group located in the upper left would be a Republican group. Movement to the upper left would indicate that the group has become more Republican; movement to the lower right would indicate that they became more Democratic. The arrow points from the 1950s coordinates to the coordinates for 1990.[18]

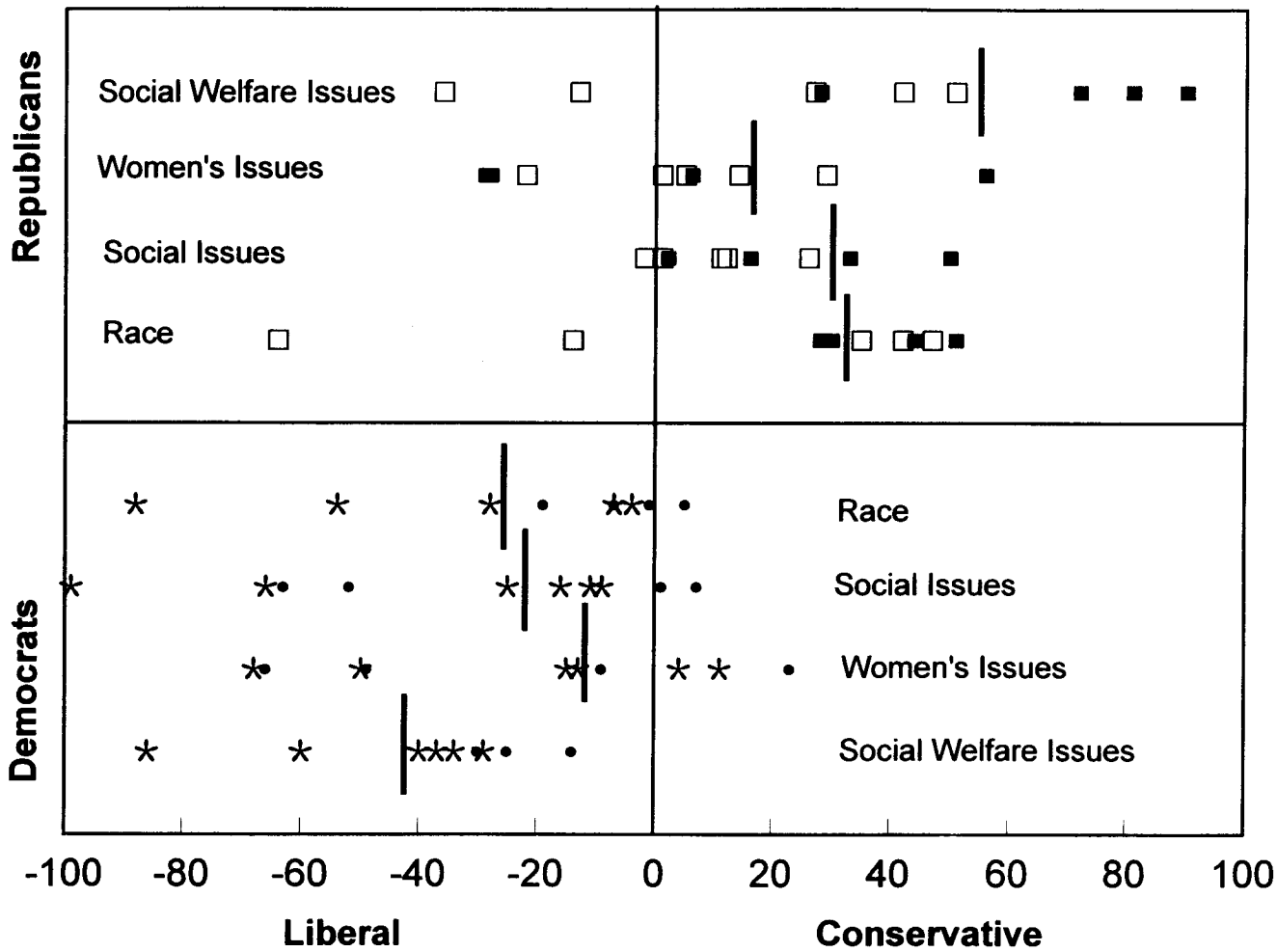
The graph has some expected features. For example, it repeats the familiar finding that virtually all segments of the white population have become more Republican since the 1950s, and, thereby, eroded the Democratic plurality in party identification (compare the overall pro-Democratic bias of 17 points from Figure 2 with the smaller 8 point Democratic plurality in Figure 6). The important theoretical result for this analysis, however, is the surge in the over-representation of upscale and, especially, religiously observant Christians among GOP identifiers and their proportionate decline among Democrats. Upscale voters, both WASP and Catholic are now over-represented in the GOP, (the arrow point is in the upper left quarter of the graph). The increase in the over-representation of the religiously observant since the 1950s is the most prominent change.[19] Further, the absolute magnitude of the religiously observant among Republicans (37 percent) makes them the single largest group in the GOP coalition.

Issues in the Contemporary Party Coalitions

Figure 9 reports party and group positions on four issues: social welfare activity by the government, government activity to aid minorities, attitudes toward the treatment of homosexuals and school prayer, and attitudes toward the role and activity of women.[20] The figure is formatted in the same manner as Figure 4. The vertical lines represent the average position of each party's identifiers on the issue. The issue positions of groups that are core segments of the Democratic coalition are indicated with an asterisk; the issue scores of groups that are core elements of the Republican coalition are denoted with solid squares. The clearest feature

Figure 9

Issue Distance within the Parties in the 1990s



Note: Vertical lines represent the mean scores for the parties on the issue. Asterisks are core Democratic groups. Filled squares are core GOP groups. See the text for a fuller explanation.

of the graph is that the contemporary party coalitions are no more consensual than their New Deal progenitors.

Table 7
Influences on Attitudes in the 1990s

	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F / df	Correlation Ratio
Race Attitudes				
Coalition Segmentation	344.44	38.27	42.2 / 9	.29
Party Identification	170.55	85.27	94.1 / 2	.21
Explained	673.02	61.18	67.5 / 11	.39
Welfare Attitudes				
Coalition Segmentation	223.57	24.84	36.0 / 9	.25
Party Identification	483.96	241.98	350.5 / 11	.38
Explained	970.12	88.19	127.8 / 11	.51
Social Issues				
Coalition Segmentation	201.87	22.43	25.03 / 9	.22
Party Identification	182.07	91.03	102.8 / 11	.22
Explained	401.39	36.49	41.2 / 11	.32
Women's Issues				
Coalition Segmentation	300.45	33.83	38.8 / 9	.28
Party Identification	38.63	19.32	22.5 / 2	.11
Explained	322.45	29.31	34.1 / 11	.29

Table 7 summarizes this point statistically. The coalition segmentation accounts for more of the variance than party identification on three of the attitudes: racial issues, social issues, and women's issues. Party identification is more consequential only for social welfare attitudes. The contemporary coalitions are more programmatically coherent than their New Deal progenitors. Party is never irrelevant (as it was for racial opin-

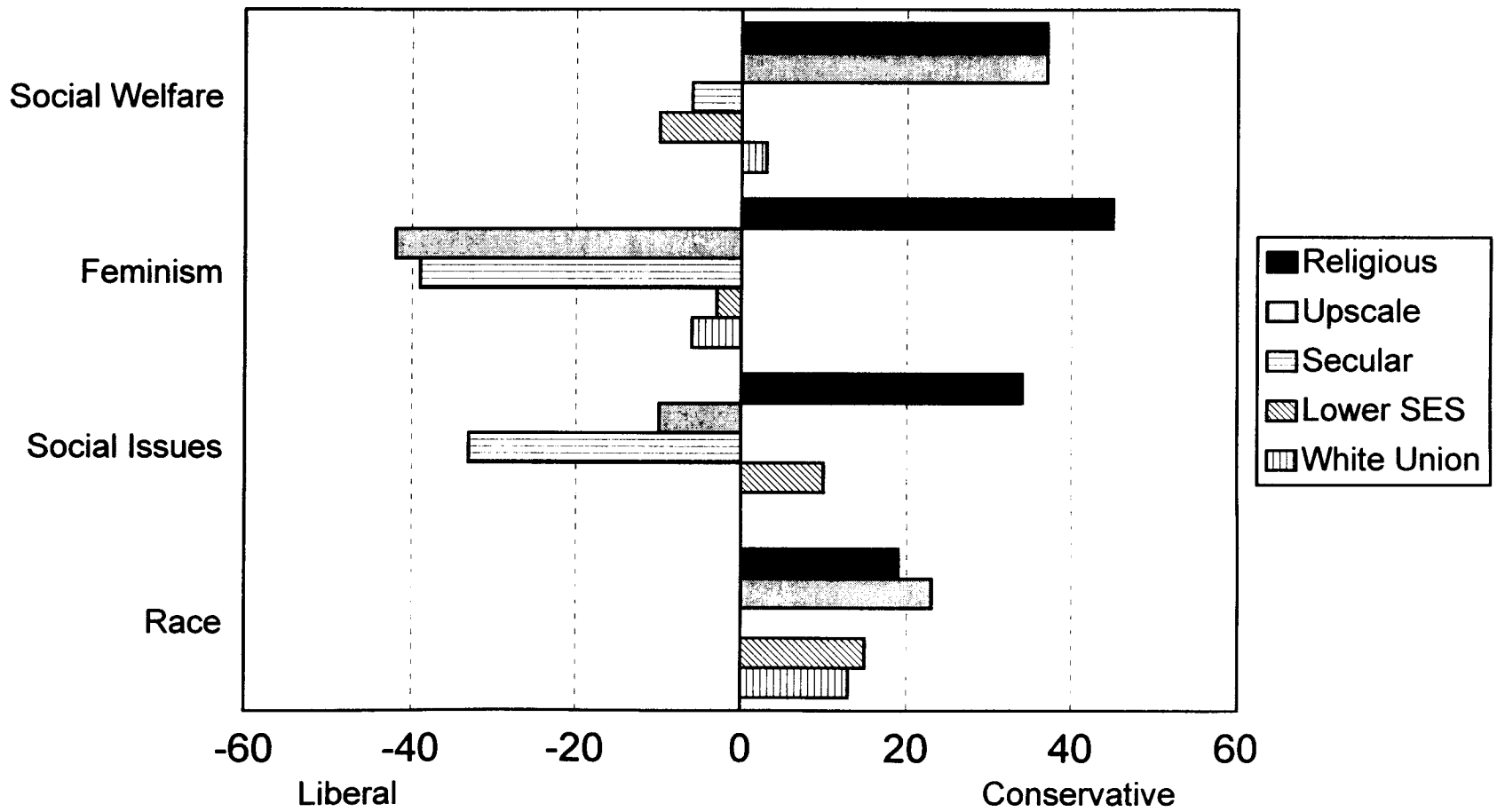
ions in the New Deal coalitions), but the opinion diversity that is inherent in coalition parties has not disappeared, and the party system's susceptibility to wedge issue remains high.

The Democrats have no groups as alienated from the party mean as were southern whites on racial issues in the 1950s. But the policy space of Democratic identifiers extends from the political center to the extremely liberal, and the groups at the boundaries for every issue are core Democratic groups. Working class Catholics and union members, for example, contribute about 20 percent of all Democratic identifiers, and are racial moderates. African-Americans and Hispanics, who contribute almost 30 percent of all Democratic identifiers, occupy positions on the far left. Social issues and feminist attitudes divide core Democratic groups. This division may be slightly less consequential since the groups at the boundaries are not large segments of the core Democratic electorate, but the variance among the groups is high. Even social welfare issues – the centerpiece of Democratic politics elicits dissent, with Blacks and Hispanics much more liberal once again than most Democratic groups.

While GOP groups are still not as diverse as the Democrats, they are more diverse than they were 40 years ago. They are relatively consensual and conservative on racial issues and social issues (a bit less so on the latter), but occupy a lengthy issue space on social issues. On social issues, for example, upscale Republicans WASPs and Catholics (collectively about 17 percent of all Republicans) are moderates, while the religious segment – nearly 40 percent of all Republicans – are strongly conservative. Women's issues may be even more divisive since these same upscale WASPs and Catholics are substantially liberal on women's issues while the religious segment is, again, strongly conservative. Just how coalition-stressing these issues may be for the "Christian Democratic Republicans" is illustrated in Figure 10.

The only position on the issues shared by all five groups graphed in Figure 10 is a moderate conservatism toward helping minorities overcome previous discrimination. Opinion divergence occurs for all the other questions. The dominant upscale and religious groups (who, remember,

Figure 10
Issue Positions of Core Republican and Swing Groups



Note: See footnote zz for a full explanation of the indices.

are 57 percent of all Republican identifiers) share a strongly conservative position on social welfare issues, but they are opposed or only weakly endorsed by the swing groups of white seculars, lower SES whites, and union members (who contribute 35 percent to the GOP core). The religious are strongly conservative on feminist issues, and opposed to all other Republicans (especially the upscale and secular) who are strongly liberal. The treatment of homosexuals and school prayer (the social issue) divides the groups, and again puts the core religious and upscale on opposite sides.

But a focus on core groups obscures the important fact that the "minor" elements in each party's electorate contribute a large fraction of identifiers to that party. Over 25 percent of all Democratic identifiers come from groups normally allied with the Republicans, while almost 43 percent of all Republican identifiers are contributed by groups normally associated with the Democrats. Keeping in mind that these "atypical" Democrats and Republicans tend to be, respectively, the most conservative and liberal elements in their party, the more diverse coalitions of the 1990s have at least as great a potential for defection as they exhibited in the past. The losses that Republicans have suffered around issues such as abortion may be an example of that, as is the GOP's interest in creating a "big tent" which can hold all parts of a potentially contentious coalition.

Christian Democracy and the Republicans

Christian Democratic parties had diverse origins in countries where they have been prominent (a brief but cound history can be found in von Beyme, 1985). Often initially opposed by the Catholic church (although they have been the most successful in countries with large Catholic populations), the Catholic church became their major boosters by the 1920s and 1930s (see Whyte, 1981). Party ideology varied considerably. Some were quite conservative, others (responding to their intellectual dependence on Catholic social doctrine) typically promoted expansive social welfare policies. Generally, however, they tended to stress the religious

foundation of their programs, and they articulated moral and ethical positions that were linked to a religious viewpoint. Their programmatic statements often began with general statements of Christian values. Concretely, their positions on such issues as abortion or divorce were often specifically linked to Christian principles and their support for the privileges of organized religion and the positions of the church reflected ideas about the role that the church and its representatives should play in the society. Overtime (by the 1960s) the parties minimized their religious character but informal ties (and sometimes formal ones) were rarely severed and Christian Democratic support for the institutional protection of religion and churches and the social order hardly varied – as it does among the Republicans today.

The preeminence of their religious appeal (and its associated social conservatism) tended to make Christian Democratic parties heterogeneous on most other dimensions (social class, region, language). The distinct status differences that existed between Christian Democratic parties and their opponents had less to do with the social class of Christian Democratic supporters, and much more to do with the class appeals and distinctly lower class profile of socialist and worker parties. Devout Christians gave only modest support to these parties because Christian Democratic parties emphasized themes which appealed to the religious and socially conservative, and pointedly dismissed class appeals which divided believers. Socialist and worker parties emphasized class divisions and dismissed the relevance of the moral appeals of the Christian Democrats. The result was a party structure which asymmetrically mobilized class and religious divisions. In the aggregate, however, both class and religion predicted party preference in these parts systems – as it does in the United States today.

The mix of sectarian, national origin, and immigrant versus native divisions that helped to suppress the link between party conflict and the religious impulse through most of American history has largely vanished. The religiosity of Americans, however, remains high at the same time that new beliefs and life styles have competed with traditional, often re-

ligiously-linked, beliefs. Parallel efforts to reduce the heretofore overt role of religious belief in the public space has also mobilized the religious and the most socially conservative. The mobilization of the religious impulse by the GOP has created a Republican coalition that is highly reminiscent of the coalitions that support Christian Democratic parties through much of the rest of the world, and especially western Europe.

Endnotes

[1] Although there is a well-distributed appreciation of the significance and stability of demography-linked influences on political attitudes and behavior. Standard texts (e.g., Erikson and Tedin, 1995; Abramson, Aldrich and Rhode, 1998) never fail to examine voting and party identification differences by religion, race and ethnicity, region, gender, age, education, and social class. And it is a convention to include socio-demographic variables as a proxy for unspecified effects in regression models which are testing nondemographic hypotheses.

[2] Consider, for example, Holland, which, from the late 1940s until the early 1970s, operated a very highly aligned party system. During this period the five major parties drew their support from very limited groups (see Lijphart, 1968). The Catholic People's Party (KVP) drew over 90 percent of its support from religious Catholics, and 75 percent of religious Catholics voted for the KVP - making it the largest of the five major parties. Religious Protestants supported the Christian Historical Union (the CHU) or the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP), depending upon whether they were theological liberals (CHU) or conservatives (ARP). The political party link for the religious Protestants was as strong as the party link for religious Catholics. In both cases, over 70 percent of all CHU and ARP support came from "their" confessional groupings, and over 60 percent majorities of each religious group supported their group's party. The less religious supported the class-based Liberal (VVD) and Labor (PvdA) parties, which drew massively disproportionate shares of their support from the middle class (VVD) and working class (PvdA). This changed dramatically in the last 25 years. See Rochon's essay in Yisalada (forthcoming) and Irwin (1984).

[3] The logic for focusing upon these attributes is quite simply their prominence in all accounts of American political history (see Kelley 1979; Benson, 1961) and their acknowledged place in contemporary accounts of American politics. See footnote 1.

[4] Party identification scores are based on treating leaners as identifiers. Specifically strong, weak, and leaning Democrats are coded –1, while similar classes of Republicans are coded as 1. Everybody else is coded as a zero. The resulting "party bias" scores reported throughout display a percentage difference value in which negative numbers indicate a plurality of Democrats while positive numbers indicate a plurality of Republicans. A score of "-17", for example, indicates that the category in question is 17 percentage points more Democratic than Republican.

[5] The Deep South refers to the states of Virginia, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas. The Border South states are Kentucky, Maryland, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and West Virginia.

[6] Detailed code to construct these groups can be requested from the author.

[7] Religious is defined here as agreement that the individual attends religious service “every week” or “almost every week” (the exact code text varies slightly between 1952 and 1996). This is not an optimal definition. It misses important distinctions which are captured by questions asked in the more recent NES surveys. However, the correlatetion between this measure and various alternatives in the recent NES surveys is quite high. The extant measure has the virtue of reasonable consistency over the period analyzed for this paper.

[8] Ultimately, these issue cleavages (and others) became the proximate cause of the erosion of the Democratic plurality as the most disaffected southern whites moved into the Republican party in the 1970s and 1980s.

[9] This comment does not apply to Hispanic Catholics who are not categorized as Catholics in theis analysis. Hispanics are a distinct group. All references to Catholics assumes them to be non-Hispanic.

[10] Changes among whites in the Border South have been smaller and similar to the patterns observed for Catholics: class differences are quite strong, religious differences more muted, and their aggregate party preference has a distinctive Democratic titl.

[11] Although the difference was small and it distinguished only super Democratic majorities. The party bias of the less well-off was 68 points Democrat. Upscale blacks gave an 80 point plurality to the Democrats.

[12] Upscale Hispanics were also less Democratic, but, again, there was no trend to the difference. Religious observance was substantially unrelated to party preference.

[13] The analysis used a merged dataset from the 1992, 1994, and 1996 NES. The datasets were reweighted so that sample sizes did not allow any one of the years to exert a disproportion effect on the results by virtue of the size of the sample.

[14] Asians, American Indians, and other racial groups were too small to report.

[15] Detailed code to construct these groups can be requested from the author.

[16] The exact calculation is: (P-M)/M, where P is the percentage of the group of all identifiers with the party and M is the size of the group in the population.

[17] Longitudinal trends in the aggregate size of a group, e.g., union membership has declined in the United States, is politically consequential. Fewer union members reduces the importance of unions in party councils, but that is a different matter from getting an estimate of the changing relative importance of a group within the party compared to oter groups – the matter of interest here.

[18] Blacks and Jews are deleted from the graphs. Their overrepresentation among Democratic identifiers in both periods, and especially in the 1990s, requires graph corrdinates that make the entire figure difficult to read. The relevant score for African Americans in the 1950s was 9 points on the Democratic axis and –43 points on the Republican axis. In the 1990s their coordinate scores are 66 and –80, respectively. The coordinates for Jews in the 1950s is 32 and -74. The coordinates for Jews in the 1990s is 71 and -71.

[19] Only African-Americans changed their partisan concentration more than the religious.

[20] Attitudes toward social welfare spending, social issues, feminism and blacks are all multi-item indices based on factor and reliability analyses. The social welfare index includes questions regarding program spending for the poor, the middle class, and African-Americans, as well as two more general questions regarding the desired level of government services and the proper role of government with regard to providing jobs and health care. The social issues measure combines items relating to gay rights and prayer in school, while the feminist Issues index includes questions on abortion and the desirability of women working outside of the home. All of the measures are scaled so that higher scores indicate a more conservative attitude. Liberal for the social welfare index means support for more spending. Liberal for the social issues index means support for protecting homosexuals from discrimination and opposition to school prayer. Support for abortion, and support for working women are coded as liberal responses for the feminist Issues measure. These measures are also explained in Kaufmann and Petrocik (1997).

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