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American political affiliation, 2003–43: a cohort component projection

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The Next American Voter: The Political Demography of American Partisanship

A large body of demographic research focuses on the impact of social and political attitudes on demographic outcomes. Yet there is limited work on demography as an independent variable, especially insofar as it affects politics and culture. Some studies have examined gender roles and political orientations and their effect on marital stability and fertility. (Greenstein 1995, Kalmijn et al. 2005, Axinn et al. 2008) But few have investigated the impact of demographic differences on socio-political variables. Alongside this lacuna is a paucity of studies on the social-compositional effects of demographic change. This despite the fact that individual-level demographic behaviour, such as fertility differences, often carries important aggregate-level implications for society and politics. We aim to build upon the emerging corpus of demographic studies which use multistate projection models to assess the effect of demography on socio-political change. These include work on demography's effect on: the balance between European and national identities (Lutz et al. 2006); educational attainment (K.C. et al. 2010); or religious composition. (Skirbekk et al. 2010)

Unlike forecasts of, for example, long-term economic growth or energy use, demographic projections tend to have comparatively low error margins, even for forecasts half a century ahead. (National Research Council 2000; Keilman 2001) Traits that systematically vary along age or cohort lines can thus be projected with a fair degree of accuracy. (i.e. K.C. et al. 2010) Beginning with current age structures and building in alternative migration and inter-group fertility scenarios permits us to model the social consequences of population change more accurately than previous forecasts. This article deploys demographic projections as a tool which can explore counterfactuals, thereby

shedding light on potential long-term socio-political change. Moreover, it specifies the time frame within which we may expect fertility and immigration-driven political change to emerge.

Demography and Politics

While popular essayists have raised the issue of political demography, there have never been proper demographic projections of partisan affiliation, in the United States or elsewhere. Moreover, the field of political demography, defined as 'the study of the size, composition and distribution of population in relation to both government and politics' is dramatically under-represented in both demography and political science. (Weiner and Teitelbaum 2001, pp. 11-12) Demographers may include information on political views as a determinant of demographic events (Liefbroer and Fokkema 2008), but seldom look at how demography determines political views (an exception being Lutz et al. 2006). Meanwhile, political scientists neglect to factor in demographic changes in their analyses, preferring institutional, structural or cultural explanations of political change.

This neglect contrasts markedly with the rising interest coming from policymakers. 'Ten years ago, [demography] was hardly on the radar screen...Today, it dominates almost any discussion of America's long-term fiscal, economic or foreign-policy direction.' (Jackson and Howe 2008) Today's under-5s (along with the immigrants of tomorrow) will be the new voters of 2025 and the political elites of the 2050s. Cultural and institutional forces along with unforeseeable period effects will alter their

socialisation, but many of this generation's salient political characteristics will be inherited from their parents. (Jennings and Niemi 1981, ch. 4; Beck and Jennings 1991, pp. 758-9; Abramowitz and Saunders 1998, pp. 643) In this article, we suggest that if partisan attachments are enduring and crystallise in early adulthood, much of the future story of American partisanship has already been written.

The American Context

There is a further imperative for writing the first scholarly paper to apply cohort component projections to American politics: to introduce systematic demographic techniques into a field marked by partisan claims and ad hoc forecasting. In the wake of Barack Obama's 2008 victory, which showed clear majorities of under-30s, Hispanics and college-educated urbanites in support, many began to speak of a rising Democratic majority. Ruy Teixeira, for instance, contends that (Teixeira 2008a; Teixeira 2008b) the young age structure and growth of Hispanics, Asians, the college-educated, unmarried and seculars will tilt the partisan balance in a Democratic direction for the foreseeable future. Texeira is a political demographer whose 2002 book (with John Judis), *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, was the most widely discussed political book of that year and selected by *the Economist* as one of the best books of 2002. Today, in his *Demographic Change and the Future of Parties*, he argues that Republican success in the 2010 midterms is a cyclical swing that masks underlying demographic realities which are steadily moving in a Democratic direction. 'Can conservatism survive mass

immigration?,' he asks. (Texeira 2010) This work is shaping elite opinion, yet there is not a single demographic projection in it.

Texeira's arguments are not based on the realignment of the partisan preferences of social groups but rather on the demographic expansion of particular groups who tend to identify and vote Democratic. This article will show that much of this Democratic optimism is misplaced. While demography *is* increasingly important for partisanship in a polarized climate, the age structure of American partisans suggests that Democrats will benefit only modestly from the rapid demographic changes taking place within the American population. Republican optimism about their fertility advantage over Democrats is also wide of the mark because the fertility gap would need to widen and hold for the better part of a century before partisanship could be seriously affected. Both parties will therefore have to rely on old-fashioned political marketing, not demography, to win elections.

Ever since Kevin Phillips' *The Emerging Republican Majority* (1969), there has been a lively interest in forecasting the longer-term bases of American partisanship and voting behaviour, but interest has grown in recent years. Part of the explanation is the growing polarisation of the American population along party lines. In recent decades, clearer distinctions between the platforms of the major parties have increased the proportion of the electorate who identify with a party. (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Carsey and Layman 2006) This is now so pronounced that in the US, party loyalty heavily shapes one's place of residence, one's church and even one's religious denomination. (Bishop and Cushing 2008; Putnam and Campbell 2010) With fewer

floating voters and a more polarized electorate comes a concern over the size and endogenous growth potential of each party's base.

Teixeira and Judis (2002) first developed the argument that the growth of the nonwhite population and rise of a new postindustrial knowledge class would endow the Democrats with an inbuilt majority. On the other side of the ledger, conservative writers like Arthur Brooks and Mark Steyn or centrists like Philip Longman point to the marked fertility advantage of white Republicans over Democrats. As Brooks put it, 'liberals have a big baby problem: They're not having enough of them, they haven't for a long time, and their pool of potential new voters is suffering as a result'. (Brooks 2006) What is lacking, however, is academic work which can test the veracity of such statements against models utilising demographic projection techniques.

To be sure, both of the aforementioned scenarios have their basis in well-established demographic trends. U.S. Census Bureau population projections, for example, chart a steady decline in the white non-Hispanic population from roughly 70 per cent in 2000 to below 50 per cent by 2050. (United States Census Bureau 2007) We know that Hispanics - with the exception of Cubans - have tended to lean Democratic and Asians slightly so. (Miller and Shanks 1996, ch. 9; Alvarez and Bedolla 2003) Less clear is how ethnic shifts and domestic migration will affect the partisan composition of critical swing districts and states. Sadly, the lack of district or state-level data on the age structure of party identifiers (or the net migration and fertility of partisans) precludes such projections.

Against this Democratic tide, work by leading demographers confirms the link between white reproductive behaviour and voting in the 2004 US presidential election.

Hence Lesthaeghe and Neidert (2006) find the correlation between the non-Hispanic white Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in a state and the vote for George W. Bush in 2004 to be .78. The correlation for postponement of first births and the vote in the same group is -.78 and that for postponement of first marriage is -.84.

Common to the logic of these arguments is the idea that society can change even if individuals do not. The more polarized a society, the more important demography becomes. The paradigm cases here are divided societies like pre-1960s Holland, Northern Ireland or Lebanon. (Lijphart 1977; McGarry and O'Leary 2004) In these situations, changes in the religio-ethnic composition of society translate fairly clearly into politics, as is evident in the increasing success of demographically buoyant Catholic parties in Northern Ireland, ultra-Orthodox Jewish ones in Israel or Shi'ite parties in Lebanon. (Horowitz 1985; Toft 2002)

In the US, the Democratic party benefited from non-Anglo Saxon immigration after 1830, and 'immigrant stock' votes continued to be a mainstay of the northern wing of the Democrats until the end of the New Deal alignment in 1968. (Burner 1968) More recently, research on California shows that the rapid growth of the Hispanic and Asian electorate during 1990-2001 reduced Republican partisanship by around 3 per cent and gave the state a secure Democratic character by 2001. Were it not for this demographic change, California would be a battleground state. (Korey and Lascher 2006) As the United States follows California's ethnic trajectory, will the nation's partisan politics follow suit?

Nobody should discount the importance of interest-driven voting. Yet party identity is far more enduring and predictable than voting. According to Green et al.

(2002), partisan attachments consist of positive affective images which are woven into regional, class and personal identities. These have emotional resonance and resist the kind of short term pressures (scandal, events, economic performance) which buffet the popularity of candidates.

This article accepts that short term currents introduce volatility into partisanship numbers. However the long-term resilience of the partisanship data from both the American National Election Study (ANES) and General Social Survey (GSS) shown in figure 1 suggests that a high degree of stability constrains the scope for large shifts. The two series agree on rising Republican identification and at least some decline in Democratic fortunes over 1972-2004. There is evident volatility to the numbers and the trend varies a good deal between the two surveys, especially when it comes to measuring those who declare themselves independents (i.e. identifying with neither major party). We define independents as 'pure' independents only. Independents who lean toward one of the parties are treated as partisans. Those who answer 'don't know' are excluded but typically make up less than 1 per cent of the sample. For the seminal research on the importance of distinguishing between pure and other independents, see Keith et al. 1992.

[Figure 1 here]

Though the question has not been asked by ANES since 1992, researchers using post-1952 ANES data found that a majority of Americans retained their parents' partisan allegiance if both parents shared the same affiliation. (Mattei and Niemi 1991, pp. 168) In

the case of respondents from a 'mixed marriage' between Republicans and Democrats, the children reflect this mix. Thus the ANES 1952-1992 sample records that those with Democratic fathers and Republican mothers exhibited a Democrat:Republican partisanship ratio of 46:41. For Republican fathers and Democratic mothers the Republican:Democrat ratio is 45:47. Early literature suggested that stronger affective bonds between mothers and children combined with mothers' increasing post-60s education, workforce and political participation levels would result in a disproportionate maternal influence on the political socialisation of children. (Jennings and Langton 1969) However, subsequent studies have failed to confirm this. (Beck and Jennings 1991) Overall, a major source of group membership is inheritance, and relative partisan stability suggests that party allegiance has a strong intergenerational transmission component, which implies that demographic based models that include fertility differentials and parent-child transmission by party allegiance can be productively applied to the problem of partisanship.

Consider the realignment to the Republicans in the South which followed the New Deal Democratic alignment of 1932-68. This is treated as a largely sociological phenomenon, with the civil rights movement reorienting white southerners away from their traditional Democratic 'Dixiecrat' inclinations in favour of the Republicans whilst black Southerners experienced a reverse conversion to the Democrats. Even so, the demographic component of this change should not be underplayed. Time-series cross-sectional examination of partisan loyalties among southern whites after 1952 shows that partisanship demonstrated remarkable resilience in the teeth of changing ideological winds. Older white southerners clung to their Democratic affiliations. Youth changed

more easily since partisan attachments do not tend to crystallise until early adulthood. Green et al. (2002) found that society was changing because emerging generations of more Republican young voters comprised a growing component of the white southern electorate.

All told, roughly half the change in white southern partisan loyalty in the period from the 1950s to the 1990s consisted of cohort replacement, a demographic mechanism, rather than conversion from Democrat to Republican. New voting cohorts started their electoral lives more Republican than previous ones, though all experienced some conversion to the Republicans over this period. In other words, much of the shift to the Republicans could have been predicted by a demographic model that includes cohort replacement adjusted for a steady rate of Democrat-to-Republican conversion among successive 5-year electoral cohorts. Adding a steady, albeit lower, rate of conversion among adults of older age cohorts to the model would afford it a very high degree of accuracy since conversion to the Republicans was more gradual than episodic. (Green et al. 2002, pp 141, 160-2)

There is a clear tendency for shifts in political allegiance and attitudes to be highest among young adults and then sharply decline thereafter, implying that cohorts tend to have stable political allegiances for much of their adult life. This means that change largely takes place through replacement of successive cohorts. (Alwin and Krosnick 1991) This relates to the finding that other ideological and cultural changes, such as religious conversion, peak in the early 20s and decline later in life. (Iannacone 1992) Likewise, personality traits tend to stabilise after young adulthood. (Roberts and DelVecchio 2000) When survey respondents are asked about the most important events

of the past half century, there is a tendency to over-report events that took place when the individual was under thirty. (Schuman and Scott 1989) At the aggregate level, this means that demography can slow or accelerate political change, depending on which segments of the population are younger, more fertile or better represented among immigrants.

Method

The demographic models we use employ the cohort component projection method and utilise PDE multi-state projection software. Projections only display the over-20 population, a good approximation of the electorate. Input parameters include:

Starting (base) year parameters (2003): population by partisan affiliation (Republican, Democrat), subdivided by 5-year age band and sex. We use the GSS, a biennial survey of roughly 3,000-4,500 people, for the years 2000-2006, to derive these parameters. Independents are removed from the total population, thus the projections are based on the 2003 population less 15 per cent. The actual share of independents varies somewhat, but the 15 per cent figure accords with the general range of the 'pure' (i.e. non-leaning) independent population in recent years. The ANES estimate is closer to 10 per cent, but shows a similar, limited, band of oscillation to GSS data. Independents tend to be younger than partisans, but exhibit a more erratic life cycle effect. Our view is that the data do not justify modelling scenarios based on a rising or falling share of partisans, though this may be an agenda for future research, which could pay attention to the age

structure and relative share of 'dropouts' from both parties. Rather than risk erroneous predictions, we have decided to focus on the firmer trends exhibited by the major parties. Finally, we assume that the population of children (0-19) inherits the partisanship of their parents. Since women and men differ on average, we assume that the 0-19 population inherits a partisan breakdown which is intermediate between the averages for their mothers and fathers (more on this later).

Dynamic parameters that can change with time period: net immigration by partisan affiliation, subdivided by 5-year age band and sex; age-specific fertility rates for women of each party. Differentials in fertility rates are based on the average number of children ever born (CEB) per woman over the age 40, derived from an average of the GSS 2000-2006. Those differentials were then applied to the age-specific fertility rates as reported for 2003 by the US Census Bureau. In addition, we assume a standard developed country mortality schedule which is identical for both groups. Immigration assumptions are based on annual legal immigration data from the US Census Bureau. Immigration to the United States in the period 2000-2007 averaged 1.2 million per year, a large component of which consisted of undocumented immigrants who were granted amnesty. (CPS 2007) Since 28 per cent of respondents of 'other race' do not identify with one of the main parties, we have reduced the flow of net migrants in our model to 863,000 per year.

This underestimates the impact of immigration since the children of immigrants have a rate of partisan identification closer to that of the native population. On the other hand, we have overestimated the impact of immigration since many do not participate in the electorate, hence the two assumptions work in different directions – see subsequent

discussion in this article. Given the intense debate over immigration reform in the 110th

Congress (which remains unresolved) and the ongoing demographic transition in Latin

America, one of our scenarios posits a reduction in the level of immigration. Here we

model scenarios based on both zero immigration and half the 2001-6 level of

immigration.

Immigrant age structure, fertility and partisanship could be approximated from the

GSS sample of foreign-born Americans for the years 2000 to 2006 inclusive. However,

the GSS immigrant pool is considerably more white (54.8 per cent) than the current

inflow. This is partly because the foreign-born American population does not match the

current inflow. For instance, in 2000-2005, fully 76 per cent of American immigrants

came from Latin America and East Asia alone, yet those of 'other' race – defined in the

GSS as those who do not identify as white or black - comprised under a third of the GSS

immigrant population for 2000-06. The proportion of 'other' race in the 1972 GSS was

just 0.25 per cent, but by 2004, this figure had reached 7.15 per cent. (CPS 2005) Now, as

in the future, the vast majority of immigrants will be of 'other' race. Indeed, the

proportion of white foreign-born as of 2000-2006 drops steeply across age cohorts within

the GSS, from roughly two-thirds among upper age groups to around a third among the

most recent cohorts.

Rather than assume that the immigrant flow will match the current immigrant

stock, we therefore posit that future immigrants' partisanship will match that of those of

'other' race already in the country. This implies a Democratic to Republican slant of

71:29, a very different picture from the 46:54 balance within the population as a whole,

and considerably different from the 63:37 Democrat/Republican tilt within the GSS

immigrant stock population. (see figures 2 and 3) We also ran parallel projections using the GSS immigrant stock population as a proxy for the immigration flow, which reduces the projected 2043 Democratic-to-Republican shift by 1.3 points. Evidently, immigration is a demographic ingredient which has the potential to create a more Democratic electorate, as in California in recent decades, perhaps along lines similar to the non-Protestant immigrant-origin voters who buttressed successive Democratic machines in the urban northeast during the first seven decades of the twentieth century.

[Figure 2 here]

[Figure 3 here]

Partisan Fertility Differences

Fertility differences between party identifiers are important, and their trajectory over the course of the twentieth century is highly revealing. If we consider women aged 40-59 (i.e. who have completed their fertility) in the period 1972-1984, our data show that Democratic women had 2.85 children ever born (CEB) on average, compared to 2.59 for Republican women. But things are changing. During 2001-6, by way of illustration, the respective figures are 2.39 for Democratic women and 2.38 for Republican women. Thus the Democratic fertility advantage of 10 per cent for the 1972-84 period had completely disappeared two decades later. Triangulation with ANES data, which uses an imperfect measure of fertility based on children present in the household, confirms the

pattern. In 1956, the average Democratic respondent over age 18 had 1.40 children present in their household, compared to 1.09 for the average Republican, a 29 per cent advantage. In 2004, the positions had drawn much closer: 0.56 children for Democrats against 0.52 for Republicans, now just an 8 per cent Democratic advantage.

Expanding the category to encompass all women over age 17 can offer us a glimpse into the future, though some of these women have yet to complete their fertility. This analysis reveals that Republican women had only 93 per cent of Democrats' over-17 total fertility in the 1972-84 period, but had overtaken the Democrats by 2001-2006, with the typical Republican woman over 17 is now 104 per cent as fertile as her Democratic counterpart. The Republican fertility advantage is particularly marked among white Americans since higher-fertility Hispanic and African-American mothers help redress the balance in favour of the Democrats. (Lesthaeghe and Neidert 2006)

It may be that white Democratic women will "catch up" and recuperate some of their fertility in later periods, but overall, the evidence seems to support second demographic transition theory which assigns values an increasingly prominent role in determining fertility levels in modern societies. (Van de Kaa 2001; Surkyn and Lesthaeghe 2004) Undoubtedly, part of the explanation for this growing gap also involves realignment between the two parties. Relatively fertile evangelical Christians and white Catholics from lower socioeconomic backgrounds increasingly identified as Republican over this period while the growing but less fertile nonreligious population and tertiary-educated professionals have shifted slightly to the Democrats. One aspect of the second demographic transition that we cannot account for is the possibility that Republicans form families earlier than Democrats. This is certainly true among white

women. (Lesthaeghe and Neidert 2006) If the finding extended to all women, this would narrow the space between Republican generations as compared with Democrats and so accentuate the Republican fertility advantage beyond that stated in this paper.

Constant fertility assumes that fertility within each party remains at the level observed in 2003. Though our expected projection takes 2003 CEB as its baseline for respective fertility rates (i.e. 2.38 Republican v. 2.39 Democrat), retrospective trends point to the possibility of a continued widening of the fertility gap in favour of the Republicans, which we account for in half of our scenarios. Taking samples from two periods, 1972-84 and 2000-2006, we find that Republican fertility has dipped by 10 per cent and Democratic fertility by 23 per cent. The growing Republican advantage scenarios assume that fertility rates continue to widen as they have since 1972. This would see Democratic TFR decline from 1.98 in 2003 to 1.59 in 2025 to 1.4 in 2043. Republican TFR declines more slowly from 2.08 in 2003 to 1.89 in 2025 to 1.8 in 2043, widening the partisan fertility differential. While migration is often much more important for population composition in the short term, fertility differences can have a substantial impact on populations over a period of decades. This is evident in the growth of both the Mormon and evangelical Protestant denominations during the twentieth century. (Hout et al. 2001; Sherkat 2001)

The overall set of fertility, immigration and conversion scenarios is provided in table 1. Note that the combination of different parameters this yields eleven different scenarios, labelled hypotheses 0 to 109. H_0 is the expected (baseline) scenario, based on current parameters.

[Table 1 here]

Results

As mentioned, for each projection, we develop an expected scenario based on contemporary trends (H_0 in table 1) but we also experiment with a number of alternatives in which fertility, migration and political socialisation assumptions differ from the expected scenario. Figure 4 shows the projected trend in the electorate (aged 20+) for the Democrats (assuming the two parties comprise 100 per cent of the total) for the period 2003-2043. This assumes no realignments or other social changes. Overall, based on H_0, we predict a maximum drift to the Democrats of 2.4 per cent between 2003 and 2043. The change will bed down gradually as Democrats claim 1 per cent from the Republicans by 2018 and 2 per cent by 2038.

By 2043, in the absence of any realignment among individuals, Democrats will outnumber Republicans 59:41, up from roughly 56.5:43.5 today. This is mostly due to the immigration of those of 'other' race who are more Democratic than native-born Americans, but also because of the slightly younger age structure of Democrats, in turn linked to the greater diversity of the younger populations which will be entering the electorate as opposed to elderly voters who die off. As figure 4 shows, even if immigration was cut to zero (H_2), a fifth (0.5 points) of the shift to the Democrats would still materialise. The magnitude of the projected change in partisanship is important but not decisive: only about 40 per cent of the strength observed by Korey and Lascher (2006) for California during 1991-2001. Republican partisans will be disadvantaged even if Republican women are able to maintain their past trajectory of widening fertility

advantage. Figure 4 displays just two-tenths of a point of difference between scenarios based on growing Republican fertility advantage ($H_{3,4,5}$) and the current even fertility balance ($H_{0,1,2}$).

[Figure 4 here]

Long Run Dynamics

Why does the Republican fertility advantage have such a slight effect? One conclusion from these simulations is that fertility differences tend to increase their power only in the long run while immigration is more important in the short and medium term. In addition, in contrast to divided societies like Northern Ireland or Lebanon, considerable switching of party identity over generations moderates - but does not obviate - the impact of demography on American politics. Population projections are less definitive over a century than over decades, but long run projections are useful for what they conceptually reveal about the relationship between demographic parameters and compositional effects. Consider the aforementioned scenario (H_3) of a widening fertility advantage for Republicans, stabilising at a TFR of 1.8 for Republicans and 1.4 for Democrats in 2043. This will have an effect on partisanship, but with the fertility gap only now emerging, its impact will be felt first in maternity wards and primary schools rather than in the voting booth. This means a twenty-year delay before the wave of

fertility change breaks through to the electorate. Only in 2033 will the Republicans begin to reap the benefits of their (probable) fertility advantage of 2013.

By way of comparison, we can look to Northern Ireland, where predictions that Catholics' longstanding fertility advantage would soon tip the electoral balance in their favour (given the 2001 estimate of 53 per cent Protestant to 47 per cent Catholic) have been shown to be erroneous. Changing demography is not likely to translate into a Catholic-majority electorate until 2041 at the very earliest. (Courbage 2003) Likewise, the fact that ultra-Orthodox and Arab pupils comprise nearly half the Israeli primary school total has as yet had only a limited effect on Israeli elections and policies. (Ben David 2007)

Having said this, if fertility trends continue to widen along their current path toward Republican advantage (cresting at 1.8 vs 1.4 for Democrats under scenarios $H_{3,4,5}$), Republican growth will begin to pick up dramatically by mid century at the expense of the Democrats. Projections which span more than a few decades are less certain because of the increased possibility of social change. Still, it is instructive that under the scenario of Republican fertility advantage, even at current immigration levels (H_3), by the 2050s, the Republicans will have checked their post-2003 slide and begin to narrow the Democrats' lead. The impact of fertility will begin to accelerate, reversing the entire Democratic gain of 2003-43 by around 2085.

Note the difference between 2043 and 2103: in 2043, the immigration gap is ten times more important for the outcome than fertility differences. By 2103, the two effects are approximately equal, with Republican fertility exhibiting a much stronger effect on partisanship than a halving of immigration levels. Zero immigration combined with

Republican fertility (H_5) enables the Republicans to overtake the Democrats before the end of the century. Under the more plausible scenario (H_4) of a 50 per cent reduction in immigration (given a growing Republican fertility advantage), the Republicans, by 2073, would make up all of the ground lost during 2003-43. Change would begin to accelerate so that the two parties would draw to within 6 points by century's end - from 13 points today - with the Republicans surging past the Democrats in the following century. (See figure 5) Again, much can change in a century, but this model shows that in the very long term, Republican fertility is just as important a political force as Democratic immigration.

 [Figure 5 here]

Political Socialisation

We are currently in a period of relative partisan stability, but a great deal can transpire in 20 or 40 years, never mind a century. For the purposes of this model, we assume that children have the same party affiliation as their parents, regardless of the type of union, mono-party or mixed. This accords with the literature and survey evidence reviewed earlier. In other words, the first generation, aged 20-24 in our projections, inherits a partisan identity intermediate between those of the maternal and paternal generation of parents. Having said this, any shift toward maternal or paternal socialisation will have a significant impact on partisan trends.

Following Green et al. (1998, 2002), our expected scenario, presented in figure 4, assumes that partisan loyalties are stable over the life cycle and that there is no net

conversion between party identifications. Though at least some partisan conversion almost certainly will occur in the future, we are in no position to render predictions of exogenous socio-political change. We merely note that partisan loyalties tend to change very little within individuals over the long-term and that we seem to be in an era of particular partisan stability since the effects of the post-Civil Rights realignment have largely passed.

That said, what we can do is to experiment with realignment scenarios in which there is a steady rate of conversion from one party to another. We base this on the level of partisan conversion from Democratic to Republican experienced by white southerners between 1964 and 1998. (Green et al. 2002, pp. 150) This amounts to one-fifth of a scale point per decade on the seven point GSS/ANES partisanship scale. Aggregating into a simplified two-category Republican-Democrat scale gives us 2/35 or a 5.7 per cent per decade rate of partisan conversion across all age groups. Bear in mind that this somewhat overstates the pace of partisan change by collapsing a 7-point scale which includes independents into just two partisan categories, and is thus a relatively cautious simulation of the impact of sociological realignment. Using the two major parties as the categories, we run this realignment scenario in both a Republican ($H_{5,9,10}$) and Democratic ($H_{6,7,8}$) direction for the period 2003 - 2043.

Figure 6 displays the projected impact of major realignments, with each pair of lines denoting maximal and minimal demographic effects for a given pattern of realignment. The graph shows that the effects of a major electoral realignment - in this case a southern white post-1964 style period effect of 5.7 per cent per decade across all age groups - would dwarf those of demography. If realignment occurred in a Republican

direction, the Republicans would gain between seven (H_8) and ten points (H_{10}) on the Democrats by 2043. If the realignment was Democratic, the Democrats as the larger party would benefit less, but would still add seven points to their partisan support under their demographically most favourable scenario (H_7).

By contrast, in the absence of realignment, the most Republican demographic scenario (zero immigration, widening fertility gap (H_5)) would only lead to a maximum gain of 2.3 per cent for the Republicans by 2043 and the most Democratic demographic outlook (no fertility gap, double immigration (H_6)) would benefit the Democrats by just 1.3 percentage points. In other words, about 80 per cent of the change to 2043 would be socio-political and just 20 per cent demographic. Still, for the Republicans (assuming Republican realignment), the most favourable demographic picture would bring forward the point at which they overtake the Democrats by nearly fifteen years, from 2043 to roughly 2030.

 [Figure 6 here]

Nobody expects another post-1964 realignment any time soon, so we need to consider another possibility. Suppose that only emerging cohorts of young voters in the 20-24 age bracket were realigned - a 'cohort effect' scenario. In this case, change would take place far more slowly and demography would play a concomitantly greater role. For instance, the difference in outcome between the Republican and Democratic 'cohort effect' scenarios (not listed in table 1) is less than three points by 2043. The Republican

maximum gain is less than two points, a major contrast with the ten point gain registered under the previous Republican realignment (i.e. period effects) scenario H_{10}. Moreover, favourable Republican demography - in the form of zero immigration and a widening fertility advantage – accounts for 42 per cent of the Republican gain under the more circumscribed 'cohort effects' realignment, a far larger proportion than under the full (period effect) realignment scenario H_{10}.

Demography is relatively predictable, but we cannot say the same for cohort and period effects. Assuming the absence of these socio-political changes, we face a period of modestly rising Democratic partisanship. Contrast this placid partisan picture with that for race, where a major change in the American population, from 70 per cent non-Hispanic white in 2000 to 50 per cent in 2042, is taking place. This is an entirely demographic phenomenon, and if the new racial minorities lean Democratic, why wouldn't partisanship exhibit similar shifts?

Clearly the answer lies with age structure. Hispanic and Asian populations are much younger than whites, so can power demographic change in the future. Conversely, Republicans and Democrats have a similar age structure. This suggests that Republicans have made sufficient inroads among younger minority voters to offset immigration-driven demographic losses. Indeed, since 1990, the GSS shows that younger Americans, especially African-Americans and those of 'other' race, lean a few points more toward the Republicans than older voters from the same racial group. Immigration and higher fertility are magnifying the 'browning of America', and much of America's future ethno-racial composition is already predetermined by these age structures. The same cannot be

said for partisanship, however, where the present has locked in relative stability, though there will be some momentum favouring the Democrats for the next few decades.

The current evenness of the partisan age structure reduces the effect of immigration: current immigration levels (H_0) will add just 1.9 points to Democratic partisanship in 2043 despite the overwhelming 72:28 advantage of the Democrats among immigrants. If immigration halves (H_1), Democrats would gain just 0.9 points from immigration. These are not large shifts compared to what might occur in the event of partisan realignment. All of which reminds us that the demographic momentum built into partisan age structures will blunt the partisan impact of immigration upon the electorate.

This is the reverse of what is happening with race in America, where change rather than stability is built into the racial age structure. Much of the growth of the Hispanic and Asian populations is assured by demographic momentum even if immigration ceases or becomes wholly white while Hispanic fertility drops overnight. Were we to examine the age structure of white southerners in the 1980s, we would find a similar mechanism of 'locked-in' dynamism because southern white Republicans were younger than Democrats. As the population aged, more southern Democrats died and more southern Republicans entered the electorate. A demographic analysis in 1980 would indicate that cohort replacement would be sufficient to drive growth in Republican partisanship in the 1990s and 2000s, which is precisely what happened. (Green et al. 2002) Today, however, partisan age structures have largely stabilised nationwide, hence new cohorts of voters are reproducing the same patterns that exist within the electorate at large. Much more is required to generate the kind of changes that would lead to a 'natural'

party of government, as with the Liberals in Canada, Congress in India or the Ulster Unionist Party in Northern Ireland prior to 2003.

Nonetheless, these results suggest the Democrats will reap a demographic dividend in the coming decades. In a finely balanced, polarised electorate, this is important. Partisanship is by no means everything – if it were, the Democrats would carry every election - but it is among the strongest predictors of voting behaviour. We must also frame these results within the context of civic engagement due to immigrants' lower rates of citizenship, registration and turnout. Overall, just 39 per cent of Hispanics and 50 per cent of Asians over 18 were eligible to vote in 2004 as compared to 77 per cent among whites. Even within the eligible voter population, just 47 per cent of Hispanics and 44 per cent of Asians voted in 2004, against 67 per cent for whites.

The results are startling: 'In Nevada' writes William Frey, 'Hispanics account for 20 per cent of the voting-age population but are expected to amount to only 10 per cent of the state's voters. In Arizona, Hispanics are 24 per cent of those who are of voting age, but only 12 per cent of those expected to turn out at the polls.' (Frey 2004, 2008) This is reflected in the GSS, where just 6.7 per cent of respondents during 2000-2006 were of 'other' race, as compared to over twice that number in the over-18 population at large. Our data may therefore be viewed as a good approximation of the actual 'other race' electorate. All of which would suggest that citizenship initiatives and amnesties, voter registration drives and canvassing among Hispanics and Asians could have an effect equal to, or greater than, immigration.

In a sense, such activity could greatly increase the 'immigration' of new minorities into the electorate and thereby points to the need to upwardly revise our

estimate of the boost to Democratic support. However, all future immigrants in this model are assumed to be of 'other' race and to immediately join the electorate when we know that many, if not most, will not do so. Our assumptions therefore undercount resident Asians and Hispanics but are biased toward over-participation by future Asian and Hispanic immigrants. In other words, we presume that today's undercounted minorities will join the electorate, making up for tomorrow's overcounted, nonparticipating immigrant minorities. Since the two forces work at cross-purposes, we may fairly assume that our results yield an accurate projection.

That said, the considerable stock of unenumerated Hispanic and Asian respondents in the GSS means that the *potential* electorate is already more Democratic than we have outlined. Conversely, the nonparticipation of many future immigrants indicates that immigration levels will not affect the electorate as much as we suggest, or will affect it only after a considerable lag period. The upshot is that more of the changes we have outlined (i.e. 2.4 point shift to Democrats by 2043) are already built in to the resident population while the impact of a moratorium on immigration is correspondingly reduced, i.e. will not remove the full 1.9 of the expected 2.4 point Democrat gain. None of which should be taken to alter our overall partisan projection of a modest 2.4 point shift from the Republicans to the Democrats by 2043.

Conclusion

Demographers have tended to neglect the role of demography as an independent variable which affects the social and political composition of populations. This paper seeks to augment the very small literature in this subfield. In the wake of Barack

Obama's 2008 victory, and notwithstanding the setbacks of the 2010 midterm elections, some speak of an emerging Democratic majority, built less on realignment than on the nation's changing demography. Others point to the fertility advantage of Republicans. Surprisingly, despite a plethora of qualitative work and straight-line forecasting, American partisan trends have never been the subject of demographic projections. This paper seeks to rectify this deficiency in the literature by drawing upon data from the GSS, supplemented by the ANES and US Census, to project the relative balance between Republican and Democratic party identifiers to 2043.

These partisan 'populations' allow for clearer forecasts than current conclusions drawn from trends like the growth in the population of elderly, college-educated, secular or Hispanic Americans because this partisan population model encompasses them all. In contrast to race, where Asians and Hispanics are markedly younger than native whites, we find the age structure of the two parties to be relatively similar. Thus demographic momentum favours change in racial, but stability in partisan, composition.

Having outlined the prospects for demographically-driven partisan change, it is vital to remind ourselves that despite current party polarisation, the United States is not a divided society like Northern Ireland or Israel. Political marketing and social change have the capacity to alter the partisan balance, and partisanship is only one factor in voting behaviour. To be sure, Democrats are slightly younger than Republicans and we expect Democratic identifiers to increase by 2.4 percentage points between 2003 and 2043 while Republicans decline by the same amount. Yet the Democrats have been out of power far more than the Republicans since 1968 despite their partisan advantage. Independents, especially in swing constituencies, are critical to parties' electoral success. Viewed from

this angle, a shift of two and a half points – even in a polarised electorate – is not sufficient to create an inbuilt Democratic electoral majority.

The fertility of Republican women has been rising at an increasingly quick pace (in relative terms) against that of Democrats since the 1950s and has now reached parity. Within the white population, Republicans maintain a considerable lead. If this trend continues into the future, it is likely that Republican fertility will surpass that of Democrats as a whole and may settle down at a markedly higher level. This will have a negligible impact prior to 2043. However, if parameters were to hold in the very long run (i.e. beyond 2100), a Republican fertility advantage would lead to a reversal of Democratic gains and, in the event of reduced immigration, permit Republican partisans to surpass the Democrats – an unprecedented event since survey work began in 1956. This demonstrates how the changes introduced by differential fertility transpire over a longer timespan than those driven by immigration.

Overall, the lesson of American partisan demography is that we urgently need to comprehend the effect of migration, fertility and age structures on the socio-political futures of electorates. Period effects change political attitudes and orientations almost immediately, but in ways which may be difficult to comprehend. Cohort effects, which are largely demographic, operate more slowly. Immigration, which is wholly demographic, has a smaller immediate effect than cohort change, but - as in the US case - produces relatively important political effects over a period of decades. Partisan fertility differentials take even longer than immigration to produce political shifts, but over the course of a century may bring more significant socio-political change than immigration.

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Figure 1. Partisanship, GSS and NES compared, major parties only, 1972-2004
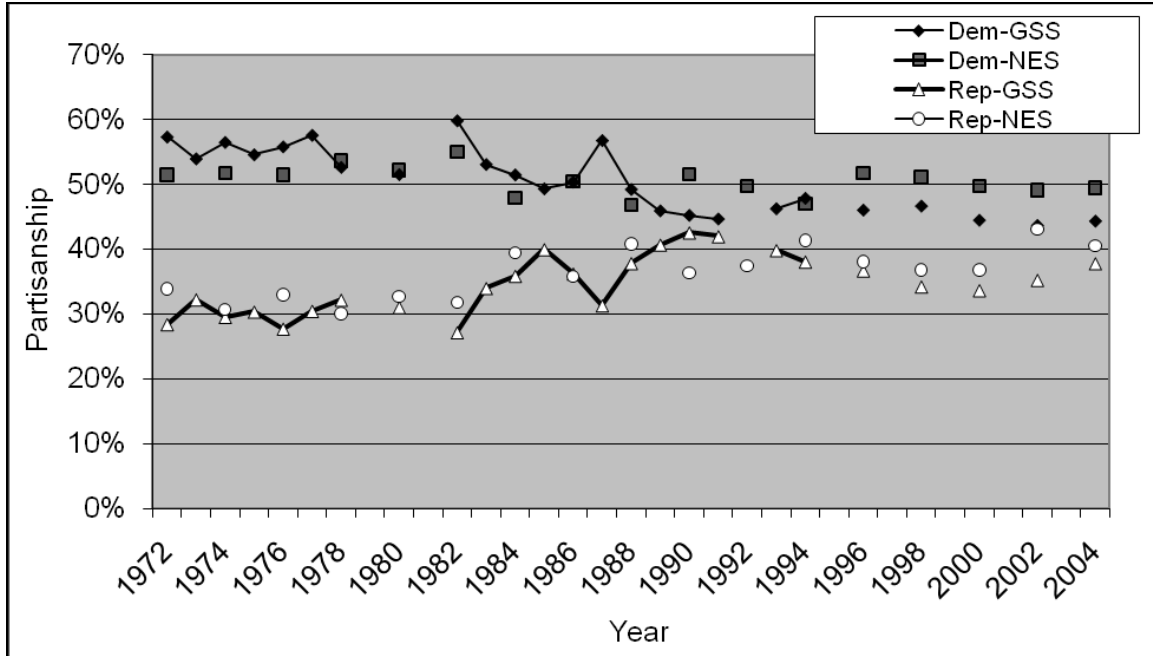
Source: GSS 1972-2004; ANES 1972-2004. Much of the difference between the two series concerns the size of the Independent/unaffiliated group, which tends to be higher in the GSS than ANES in recent years.
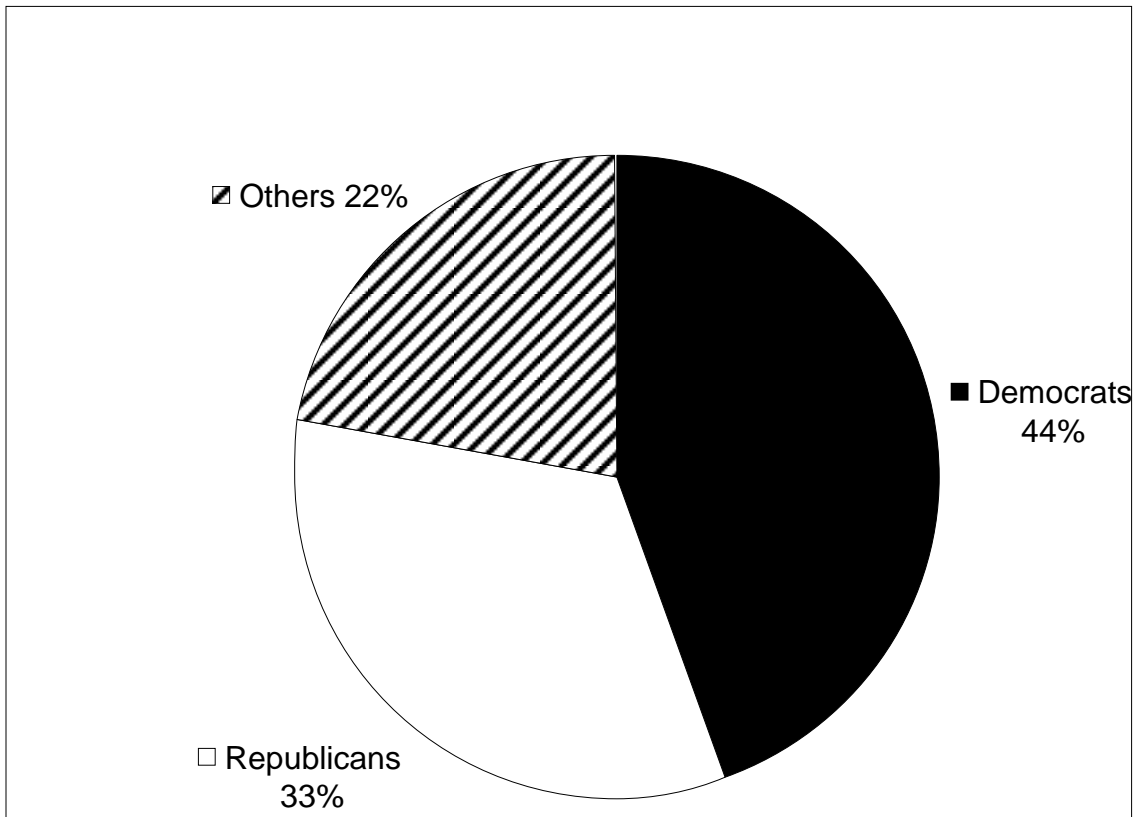
Figure 2. Partisanship, all Americans, 2000-06 period

Table 1. Projection Scenarios

Fertility Differentials	Conversion	Immigration			
		Constant	*Half*	*Zero*	*Double*
Constant	*No realignment*	H_0	H_1	H_2	H_6 (figure 6 only)
	Democratic realignment				H_7 (figure 6 only)
	Republican realignment				H_8 (figure 6 only)
Growing Republican advantage	*No realignment*	H_3	H_4	H_5	
	Democratic realignment			H_9 (figure 6 only)	
	Republican realignment			H_{10} (figure 6 only)	

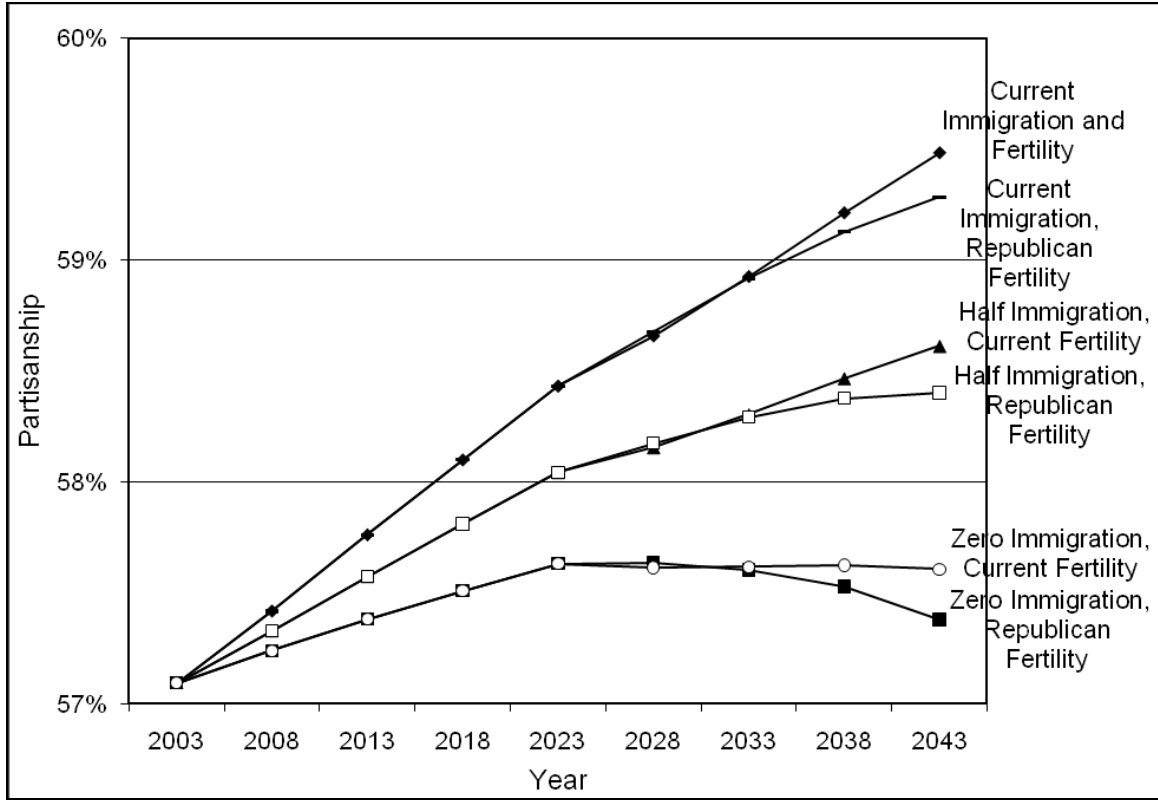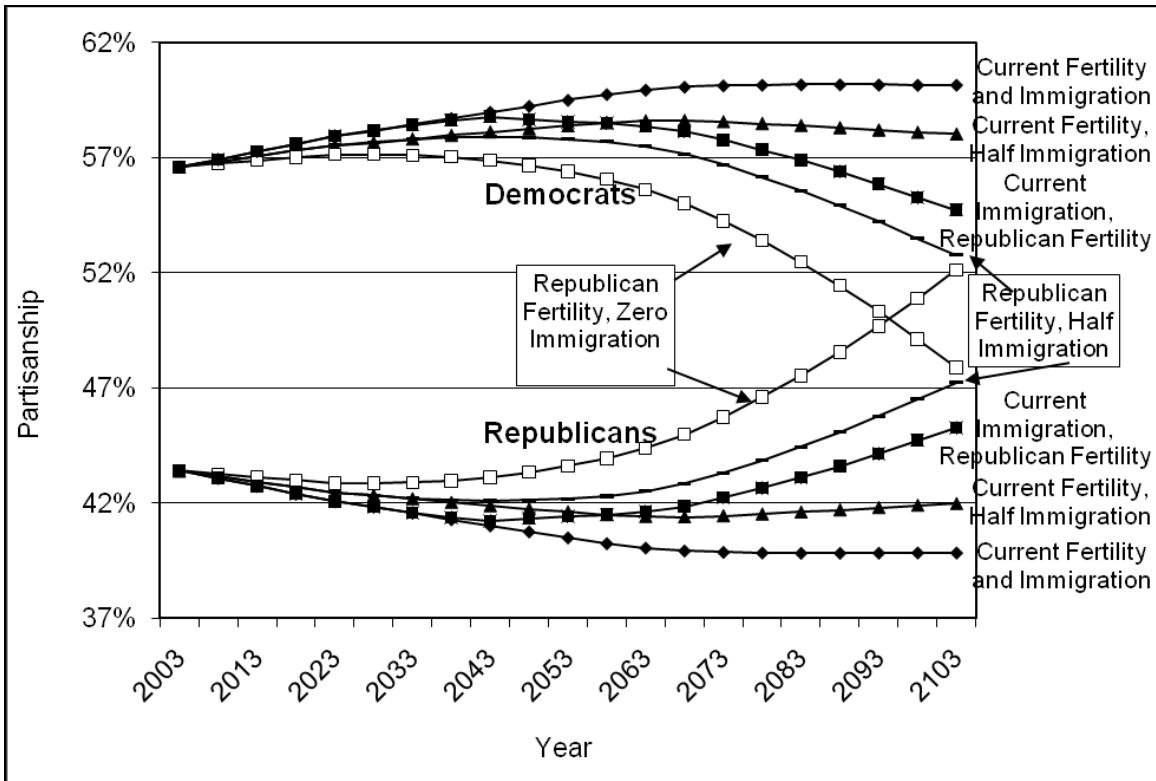Figure 3. Partisanship, Americans of 'Other' race, 2000-06 period
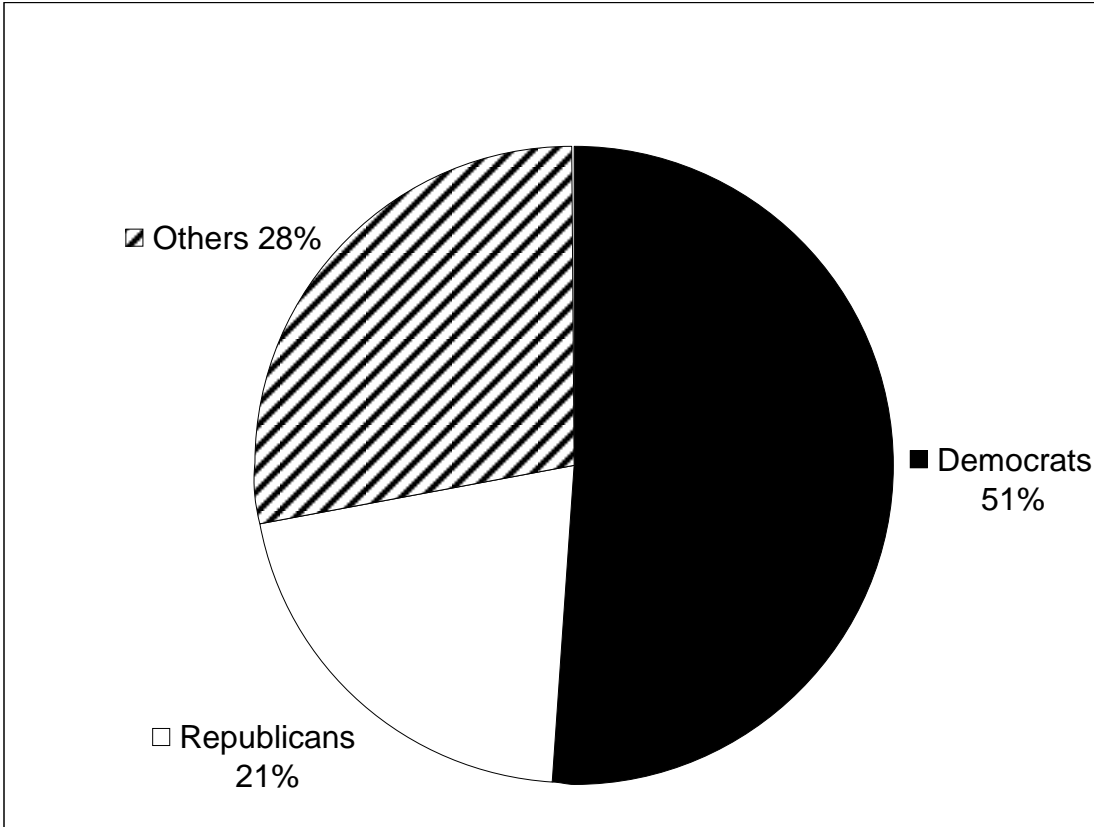
Figure 4. Democratic macropatisanship, 2003-43, under 6 scenarios
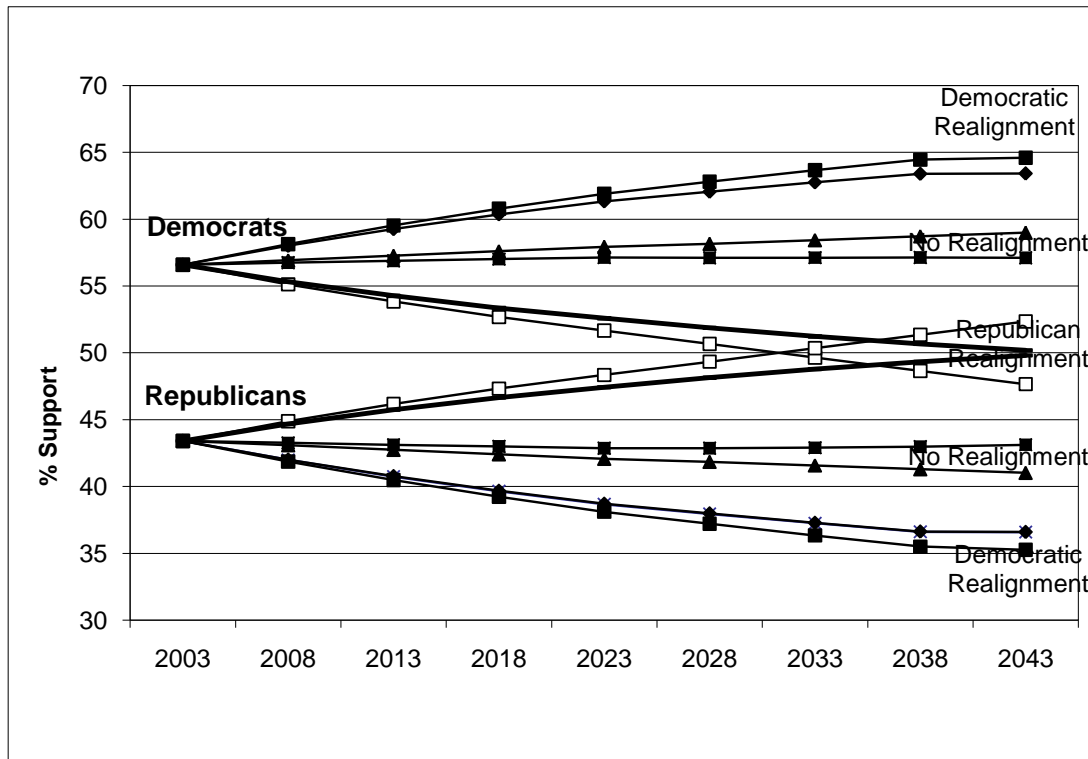

Source: Authors' calculations

Figure 5. Long run partisan balance, main parties only, 2003-2103

Source: As for figure 4.

Figure 6. Projected partisan balance under realignment, with maximal demographic alternatives, major parties, 2003-2043

Source: As for figure 5.