

The Motivated Partisan:  
A Dual Motivations Theory of Partisan Change and Stability

by

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To My Parents, Gary and Jill Groenendyk

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## Abstract

### The Motivated Partisan: A Dual Motivations Theory of Partisan Change and Stability

by

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Is party identification highly stable or regularly updated? Is party identification an impediment to democratic accountability or a helpful shortcut? Political scientists have debated the answers to these questions for fifty years. This dissertation incorporates intuition from both of the two dominant camps in this debate, arguing that partisan dynamics are shaped by *competing* motives. This theory is tested through a series of four original experiments and analysis of survey data from the American National Election Studies. By bringing partisans' attitudes and party identities into conflict with one another, I am able to observe the methods that partisans use to reconcile their motives and defend their identities. By inhibiting partisans' ability to deploy these defenses, I am able to induce party identification change among the most vulnerable partisans. Through a survey experiment, I observe how salient political evaluations can create identity pressure during surveys and how respondents go about resolving this pressure. Finally, by

priming instrumental concerns versus expressive concerns, the motivational underpinnings of partisan responsiveness are clarified. Specifically, party identification change results from the desire to appear pragmatic—a norm of civic duty—and not from the drive to attain policy benefits. Implications for partisan dynamics, the responsiveness of the electorate, and our understanding of democratic accountability are discussed.

## Introduction

Sports analogies are virtually omnipresent in American politics. From the start of the “race to the White House” to the “passing of the baton,” each campaign is one leg of an ongoing competition between parties. Along the way, fans cheer for their team, wave signs, and even paint their faces, while, in an awesome barrage of mixed metaphors, candidates “duke it out in the ring,” “throw Hail Mary passes,” “swing for the fences,” and “play hardball.” Each side has a mascot—elephants versus donkeys—and a team color—red versus blue. Like box scores, the latest tracking polls appear in the morning paper, and political pundits, like ESPN personalities, spend the day on cable television endlessly debating which team will come out on top at the end of the campaign season. The “horse race” is never ending, and despite the occasional stodgy academic critique, this seems to be just the way we, the voters, like it. After all, parties and political consultants live and die by their ability to get candidates elected, and in an increasingly competitive media industry, each outlet must attract consumers to survive. In short, you have to give the fans what they want, and we like the game.

Of course, this should probably not surprise us. After all, is politics really that different from sport? At its basis, politics *is* a competition, and political parties *are* essentially teams. Therefore, in politics, as in sports, citizens get swept up in competition, rallying behind the Red Elephants or the Blue Donkeys just as they rally behind the Red Sox or the Blue Jays.

Of note, however, is that the quintessential civics class analogy is not democratic politics as sport, but rather democracy as a marketplace of ideas, wherein the best ideas, as determined by the citizenry, become policy. Of course, a marketplace and a sports arena are two very different venues. When given a choice between two products of equal price, marketplace consumers will naturally gravitate toward the product of higher quality. But, in the sports arena, quality is often much less important than loyalty. While some “fair weather fans” may gravitate toward whichever team is better, most fans abide by the norm of loyalty to one’s hometown team. Of course, if American democracy is, in important respects, more like a sports area than a marketplace, what are the implications for our understanding of American government?

Scholars should consider how political competition plays out in the mind of the voter and how our assumptions about the mind of the voter shape our understanding of the democratic process. Do team loyalties get in the way of voters’ objectivity and willingness to hold parties and candidates accountable for their policy positions and performance? If so, under what conditions does this occur? And under conditions when it does *not* occur, what motivates objectivity?

From 2000 to 2009, we witnessed a shift away from identification with the Republican Party (Etheridge 2009). But will this change lead to an enduring realignment, or will Republicans return to their party? The key to answering this question may lie in these voters’ motivation to remain loyal to their “team” despite their disagreements and frustrations.

To provide an example of how team loyalties can shape our motivations and behavior, imagine a fairly typical sports fan who is loyal to a terrible franchise. Fans

have the option to root for any team they choose, and while some “fair weather fans” gravitate toward winning teams, many others maintain lifelong loyalties to teams with long losing traditions. If you grew up on the North side of Chicago, you probably root for the Cubs like your parents before you and your children after you—despite the Cubs’ century long losing streak. If you grew up in Michigan, you probably root for the Detroit Lions despite the fact that they recently set an NFL record by going 0-16 in the 2008 season.

Such fans often find rival teams to possess more attractive qualities—more exciting players, a more stimulating style of play, greater physical or mental toughness, etcetera. But their team loyalties are *not* rooted in these evaluations. Instead, their allegiances develop out of regional, cultural, and familial tradition. At the end of every season, many frustrated fans of teams like the Chicago Cubs and the Detroit Lions proclaim that they are finally giving up on their team. Yet the next year, when the time comes, they are back in the stands cheering for their team once more. Their family and friends are all fans of the team, so they grew up as fans of the team, and they will probably always root for their team despite their annual declarations to the contrary. It is not about positively evaluating the team, but rather feeling that they are somehow connected to the team. When their team occasionally wins a game, it feels like a win for them, and when they lose a game, it feels like a personal loss. The team’s embarrassments are their embarrassments, and when they discuss sports with others, they refer to the team as “we,” as in “we lost again.”

Readers familiar with identity research may recognize these attributes. To refer to one’s group as “we,” to feel wins and losses for one’s group as wins and losses for the

self, and to experience group embarrassments as personal embarrassments are all tell-tale signs of social identification (Greene 1999; Mael and Tetrick 1992). In other words, part of these fans' identity is wrapped up in their sense of association with their team. These fans may actually evaluate rival teams more positively than their own, yet they simply cannot bring themselves to root for the other team.

Like identification with a sports team, identification with a political party entails much more than liking or agreeing with a party. It means seeing one's self as a Republican or a Democrat. While the concepts of attitude and identity are often used interchangeably in the political science literature, attitudes toward parties are nonetheless conceptually distinct from identification with a party (Green et al. 2002). While attitudes are *evaluative* in nature (Eagly and Chaiken 1993), identities are rooted in *self-conceptualization* (Monroe et al. 2000). In short, an important distinction exists between *being* and *liking*. In fact, this was the reason for conceptualizing partisanship as an identity in the first place (see Campbell et al. 1960 Chapter 6; Campbell et al. 1954 Chapter 7).

“In characterizing the relation of individual to party as a psychological identification we invoke a concept that has played an important if somewhat varied role in psychological theories of the relation of individual to individual or of individual to group. We use the concept here to characterize the individual's affective orientation to an important group object in his environment . . . We have not measured party attachments in terms of the vote or evaluation of partisan issues because we are interested in exploring the influence of party identification on voting behavior and its immediate determinants. When an independent measure of party identification is used it is clear that even strong party adherents at times may think and act in contradiction to their party allegiance” (Campbell et al. 1960, pp. 112-123).

The distinction between attitude and identity plays out in important ways as we observe public opinion and political behavior. Being part of one's self-concept, an

identity is something we are motivated to defend. Like our sports team loyalties, we tend to inherit our party identities from our families and our communities, and party images are often interwoven with our understanding of local culture and history. For many years, being a “true Southerner” meant being a Democrat almost regardless of one’s issue positions, and this is certainly not the only example of party identity becoming interwoven with other identities. One can certainly think of examples in which racial, religious, and occupational identities have become entwined with party as well. Because party identity has such deep roots, change does not come easily. Like the sports fans described above, partisans may find their political attitudes increasingly in conflict with their identity, yet they continue to feel a pull toward their party. Still, party identification does change, and it is the objective of this dissertation to determine under what conditions this change occurs.

As voters evaluate politics and develop attitudes toward candidates and policies, occasional conflicts between attitudes and identities are inevitable. Often, our party identities guide our attitudes—either by serving as objective heuristics or by facilitating motivated reasoning—so disagreements are avoided. But this is not always the case. When an individual discovers that his or her attitudes and identity conflict, one or the other must be changed, or the discrepancy must be justified in order to maintain cognitive consistency. To change one’s attitude to be consistent with one’s identity constitutes partisan bias, and we have strong norms against such bias in our society. Throughout American history, political institutions and civic culture have been shaped by tensions between party loyalty and the ideals of objectivity and pragmatism (Schudson 1998). In order to be a good citizen, it is necessary to be—or at least appear—reasoned and

pragmatic. Of course, to change one's party identity is also psychologically costly. Therefore, partisans have a strong incentive to come up with some justification for continued identification despite any disagreements they may have with their party.

Like sports fans, partisans do not always agree with their team, but they are motivated by their loyalties. And, in politics, justifications for continued identification come prepackaged as "talking points" from party elites. Partisans only need to turn on cable news to hear the latest justification for every move their party makes—particularly those that fail. And when they are really on the ropes, pointing out the other party's failures often works just as well. In the heat of competition disagreements tend to dissipate quickly, and as long as the rival team is more hated, loyalty to one's own party can be justified. In large part, party identity change occurs when justification for continued identification can simply not be found.

If the recent decline in Republican identification has occurred because Republicans have had a difficult time justifying their identities in the current political climate, then there is a good chance that they will eventually return to the party. However, if these voters have lost the motivation to justify identification with the Republican Party, then the change will likely endure. For now, the most we can do is attempt to gain a better understanding of how motivations shape partisan dynamics in general while paying particular attention to patterns observed recently among Republican identifiers.

## **Plan of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is organized around a series of predictions—each of which will be the focus of a chapter. These predictions are derived from a dual motivations theory of party identification which I develop in Chapter 1. The dual motivations theory posits that two competing psychological forces shape party identification—partisan motivation and responsiveness motivation. On one hand, partisans are driven to maintain party loyalty, but on the other hand, they are motivated to be responsive to their political environment. When individuals disagree with their party, they will attempt to develop justifications for maintaining their party allegiance despite that disagreement. Party identification change occurs when a justification cannot be found or if responsiveness motivation is simply too high.

Chapter 2 attempts to uncover evidence of partisan motivation. While verification of partisan stability is easy to come by, there is relatively little evidence to suggest that this stability is actually driven by partisan motivated reasoning (Green et al. 2002). I look for evidence of party identity justification as an indicator of the influence of partisan motivation. If individuals attempt to rationalize away disagreement with their party, we can be assured that partisan motivation does exist. Otherwise, there would be no reason to produce such justifications.

Chapter 3 then considers whether partisan stability is actually contingent on one's ability to justify his or her party identity. If partisan stability is contingent on one's ability to justify maintaining her party identity, then absent the ability to justify one's identity, we should see evidence of party identification change.

Chapter 4 considers what psychological pressures might increase responsiveness motivation to the point where it is high enough to overcome partisan motivation and produce changes in party identification. This should occur when evaluations are made salient to partisans prior to reporting their party identification. While much of the existing literature on party identification debates whether partisans update their identities to reflect their evaluations or whether such findings result from measurement error, Chapter 4 seeks a partial reconciliation. It is hypothesized that survey respondents update their identities to reflect their evaluations, because they are driven by the need for cognitive consistency. However, these changes are undone as individuals rationalize away this inconsistency and seek new justifications for their original identity. Therefore, variation that might be called measurement error, offers important insights into the dynamics of party identification.

Chapter 5 asks, to whatever degree people are motivated to change their party identities, what is the root of this motivation? Do partisans change their identities because they wish to identify with the party that offers them the most policy benefits, or do people update their identities in order to conform to norms of civic duty and pragmatism? In other words, is partisan updating instrumental to the attainment of policy benefits, or does partisan updating result from the need to express one's pragmatism?

Finally, in the conclusion, I discuss the implications of the dual motivations theory for our understanding of party identification's role in democracy. Particular attention is paid to the efficiency of party identification as a voting heuristic and the implications for parties' institutional role. The chapter concludes by considering directions of future research.

## Chapter One

### A Dual Motivations Theory

If we know one thing about voter behavior, it is that most citizens vote their party identity most of the time. By and large, Republicans vote for Republican candidates, and Democrats vote for Democratic candidates. And studies show that party identification is the single most powerful predictor of Americans' voting behavior (Converse and Markus 1979; Campbell et al. 1960; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). However, the implications of this empirical regularity continue to vex scholars of political behavior. Does partisan identification act as a useful heuristic, guiding people to the "correct" choice given their interests, or is it a filter that biases perceptions of the world in favor of one's previous party preference?

On one hand, political parties simplify politics by narrowing down the set of choices for democratic citizens. In this way, party identification may serve as an efficient shortcut for voters. From this point of view, when faced with political decisions, citizens are reasonably safe in assuming that their party's candidates and policy positions are favorable relative to those of the opposing party. Since individual voters have relatively little time or incentive to gather information about politics, such a shortcut or "heuristic" may play an important role in supplementing voter competence. In other words, even

without perfect information, party identification may allow citizens to vote as if they were well-informed.

However, while voters need not be particularly attentive to politics for party identification to function as an efficient heuristic, *they must be motivated to vote for the candidate who best represents their policy interests and, therefore, willing to accept relevant information when it comes their way.* If party identification prevents citizens' from accepting relevant new information and updating their identities accordingly, partisanship ceases to function as an efficient heuristic, because it no longer serves as an accurate approximation of voters' "true" policy interests. At the theoretical extreme, where citizens deflect *all* information that is inconsistent with their partisanship, party identification impedes voter competence, causing ostensibly competent citizens to favor candidates and policy positions that they would otherwise oppose. In short, we must understand what *motivates* partisans if we hope to understand whether this most powerful predictor of political behavior helps or hinders voter competence. The stakes of this debate could not be higher. After nearly fifty years, the question remains whether party identification facilitates policy driven voting or whether it threatens voter competence.

### *The Nature and Stability of Party Identification*

The dispute over the nature and stability of party identification is long standing. For years, scholars have debated whether partisanship is better characterized as a highly stable socialized identity (Campbell et al. 1960; Green et al. 2002; Green and Palmquist 1994, 1990; Miller and Shanks 1996; Miller 1991) or a readily updatable summary

measure of political attitudes<sup>1</sup> (Brody and Rothenberg 1988; Franklin and Jackson 1983; Franklin 1984; Jackson 1975; MacKuen et al. 1989; Page and Jones 1979; Achen 1992, 2002; Fiorina 1981; Allsop and Weisberg 1988; Franklin 1992). Originally, party identification was assumed to be exogenous to political attitudes and voting behavior (Campbell et al. 1960). According to the original theory, party identification develops early in life and remains highly stable as a result of partisans' motivation to defend their identities. More recently, however, revisionist research has shown that individuals' policy positions (Highton and Kam 2008; Franklin and Jackson 1983; Jackson 1975; Franklin 1992; Carsey and Layman 2006), retrospective performance evaluations (Fiorina 1981), candidate evaluations (Page and Jones 1979), and past votes (Markus and Converse 1979) affect individuals' party identities. Such findings are bolstered by studies showing variation in party identification over time at the individual (Allsop and Weisberg 1988; Brody and Rothenberg 1988) and aggregate level (MacKuen et al. 1989; Box-Steffensmeier and Smith 1996). "Revisionist models" tend to characterize party identification as a "running tally" of political evaluations (Fiorina 1981). To the degree that party identification appears stable, this stability is thought to result from Bayesian updating (Achen 1992, 2002; Franklin 1984; Gerber and Green 1998). Under this model, the stability of party identification increases as individuals gain confidence in their understanding of the parties' positions relative to their own. In other words, and perhaps counter-intuitively, partisan stability results from a willingness to update one's identity in

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this dissertation the terms "attitude" and "evaluation" will be used interchangeably, but as will be discussed in the pages that follow, both of these terms are considered distinct from "identity." Attitudes are, by definition, evaluative in nature (Eagly and Chaiken 1993), while identities are rooted in self-conceptualization (Campbell et al. 1954; Monroe et al. 2000; Campbell et al. 1960; Green et al. 2002).

response to new information. As more and more knowledge is accumulated about the parties' positions, each additional piece of information matters less.

However, other work demonstrates that short-term influences on party identification disappear when random measurement error is taken into account (Green and Palmquist 1990, 1994; Green et al. 2002). Green and colleagues argue that party identification is much more stable than revisionist scholars claim. These authors stress the vital distinction between evaluation and identification. Citizens certainly evaluate the political world around them, but, like Campbell et al. (1960), they argue that party identification is rooted in one's self-concept rather than his or her political evaluations. Therefore partisanship is better characterized as a socialized identity than a "running tally" of evaluations (Green et al. 2002).

Despite their endorsement of certain aspects of the classic model of party identification, Green and colleagues stop short of arguing that partisan stability results from motivational biases as Campbell et al. (1960) originally suggested. Instead, they contend that partisan stability stems from the persistence of symbolic imagery associated with rank-and-file partisans. In other words, party identification is thought not to be rooted in evaluation, but rather partisan symbolism. Because individuals begin to develop partisan stereotypes during childhood, they tend to hold strong beliefs (priors) about what the parties symbolize. Therefore, despite a willingness to update their party identities, little party identification change is expected under this model, except in cases when party symbolism is dramatically altered—resulting in massive partisan realignments. For instance, despite their ideology, many southern conservatives identified with the Democratic Party into the 1960's, because they were socialized to

view the Democratic Party as the party of the Confederacy and the Republican Party as the party of the Union. However, once parties took clear and opposing positions on civil rights legislation, this party imagery finally changed, and a partisan realignment occurred in the American South (Green et al. 2002).

Theories such as these, which provide accounts for partisan stability even in the absence of partisan bias, have given rise to debate over the degree to which partisan bias plays any significant role at all in political perceptions (Gerber and Green 1999).

Nonetheless, there does exist a good deal of evidence to suggest that party identification biases individuals' views of the world (Bartels 2002). For instance, party identification moderates the influence of character weakness on candidate evaluations, suggesting that partisans hold candidates of the opposing party to higher character standards than they hold their own party's candidates (Goren 2002, 2007). Partisans also tend to take the issue positions of their party even when those positions conflict with their ideology (Cohen 2003). Partisan cues even influence which values citizens endorse (Goren 2005; Goren et al. 2007). And these micro-level processes appear to bias mass opinion in predictable ways (Bartels 2002; Zaller 1992).

For the most part in political science, "rational choice" and "biased reasoning" models are considered to be at odds with one another, and the debate over party identification is no exception. At the heart of this controversy lie specific but distinctive motivational assumptions. Are partisans driven to reap psychological rewards through loyal identification? Are partisans motivated to identify with the party that offers them the most preferable policies? I ask whether the answer might be conditional on the information environment and individual characteristics of the voter. Perhaps the classic

and revisionist theories of party identification each explain a significant piece of the “truth.” The dual motivations approach, proposed here, offers a framework through which “rational choice” and “biased reasoning” models can be reconciled. And more importantly, it generates falsifiable hypotheses illuminating the conditions under which partisans are likely to defend their identities versus the conditions under which they change their identities in accordance with new information.

In moving beyond the language of absolutes and recognizing that partisan stability may be conditional, I attempt to build an integrated model of the party identification *process*. If party identification is viewed as an ongoing process, we can generate hypotheses about what factors shape it—increasing or decreasing the probability of partisan change and shedding new light on the implications of party identity’s massive behavioral influence.

Specifically, I characterize one’s current party identification as the outcome of a process through which individuals attempt to reconcile their competing motivations. On one hand, individuals are motivated to make accurate evaluations, but they are also often motivated to arrive at particular evaluations (Kunda 1990, 1999; Lodge and Taber 2000; Taber et al. 2001). Just as it is a mistake to assume that partisan consistent outcomes must be driven by partisan bias (Gerber and Green 1999), it is also dangerous to assume that citizens are driven to reach “correct” or unbiased evaluations. In order to understand whether party identification helps or hinders voter competence, it is essential to understand the motivations governing partisan dynamics.

In the pages that follow, I will lay out a dual motivations model in which partisans must justify their biases or else update their party identities in order to conform to social

norms against overt partisan bias. According to the theory, partisan stability hinges on a person's motivation and ability to justify maintaining her party identity relative to her motivation to hold her party accountable for its actions. Therefore, the key to establishing the conditions under which party identification change occurs is to understand the interplay between an individual's motives. This dual motivations approach facilitates investigation of the central normative question—does party identification facilitate voter competence, undermine voter competence, or is the answer conditional?

This approach may provide new insights into other related empirical phenomena as well. For instance, why do partisan strength and stability increase with age (Jennings and Niemi 1981; Converse 1969, 1976; Franklin and Jackson 1983)? On one hand, partisan stability may result from the accumulation of information about what the parties stand for (Achen 1992, 2002; Franklin 1984; Gerber and Green 1998). On the other hand, party identities may simply crystallize with age and experience (Converse 1969, 1976; Alwin and Krosnick 1991; Sears and Levy 2003; Brader and Tucker 2001) as individuals are exposed to campaigns (Valentino and Sears 1998; Sears and Valentino 1997). The proposed theory suggests another potential stabilizing mechanism—partisans may become better at justifying their identities as they mature and gain experience with politics. If true, this leads to the counterintuitive and perhaps distressing conclusion that democratic accountability hinges disproportionately on the least experienced or “most impressionable” citizens. For these are the ones among us who are least equipped to rationalize away disagreements they may have with their party.

The ambiguity surrounding party identification also raises concerns over model specification. Given that party identification appears in virtually every contemporary explanation of vote choice, this is no minor issue. If party identification precedes issue positions and candidate evaluations in the funnel of causality (Campbell et al. 1960; Miller and Shanks 1996; Goldberg 1969), then it must be controlled for if one hopes to isolate the independent effects of these downstream forces on vote choice. However, if party identification mediates between attitudes and vote choice, then controlling for party identification means systematically underestimating the effect of issue opinions and candidate evaluations on behavior.

### *Motivated Reasoning*

Psychologists have long been interested in how motivation affects attitudes. Early research spoke to the potential for attitudinal durability even when individuals face massive countervailing evidence (Festinger et al. 1956). These studies revealed that individuals are innately driven to maintain cognitive consistency (Festinger 1957). More recently, research into cognitive dissonance has been incorporated into a larger theory of motivated reasoning (Kunda 1990). Motivated reasoning theory posits that individuals are driven by two competing forces: accuracy motivation and directional motivation (see Kunda 1990, 1999; Lodge and Taber 2000; Taber et al. 2001). Often times, individuals have a vested interest in arriving at a particular conclusion. For example, when evaluating sports teams, fans tend to be motivated to see qualities in their favored team and faults in the opposition. This is known as directional motivation. However, this drive may be offset by a competing motivation to reach an accurate evaluation—

particularly if there is something at stake. For instance, if an individual is evaluating sports teams in order to decide on which team to place a wager, the motivation to see one's favored team in a positive light would almost certainly be tempered by the incentive to win the wager.

While material incentives such as this provide a clear example of when accuracy motivation is likely to exert influence, research has also shown that accuracy motivation can be triggered when people expect to have to justify their beliefs to their peers. Studies show that, given the expectation that they will be held accountable for the positions they take, individuals engage in more thorough processing (Tetlock and Kim 1987) and prevent their biases from having much influence (Kunda 1990). Such results indicate that there is value in the appearance of pragmatism. Individuals need to prove to themselves and their audience that their positions are well reasoned. "Failure to behave in ways for which one can construct acceptable accounts leads to varying degrees of censure—depending, of course, on the gravity of the offense" (Tetlock et al. 1989). Therefore, just as material incentives may increase accuracy motivation, the incentive to conform to societal norms of pragmatism may increase accuracy motivation as well.

Mutz (1998) expands on this accountability effect by suggesting that individuals engage in "internalized conversations with perceptions of collective opinion" (p. 23). In an era of twenty-four hour news and constant public opinion polling, social pressures can be felt even without interpersonal communication.

When they [citizens] learn that a particular candidate or issue is popular or unpopular, their implicit interaction with these generalized others prompt them to alter or refine their own political views (p. 23).

In short, individuals may feel social pressure to conform to norms of pragmatism even if they do not anticipate having to directly discuss their opinions with their peers.

However, experimental research also shows that, once individuals commit to a position on a political issue, they will devote the bulk of their mental effort to justifying that position rather than reexamining it (Tetlock et al. 1989). People are motivated to defend their positions because they “do not want to appear to lack the courage of their convictions” (p. 633). In other words, once an individual commits to a particular position, directional motivation seems to take hold and individuals dedicate cognitive resources to justifying their original position rather than reconsidering it. This strategy allows individuals to appear pragmatic and justified in their position without “flip-flopping.”

One might expect this directional motivation to be particularly potent in the realm of politics because, not only do individuals have an incentive to appear consistent, but much of the debate is enmeshed in partisan competition. Therefore, changing one’s position, and certainly changing one’s party identity, constitutes an act of disloyalty in the mind of the devout partisan. Recent work in neuroscience supports the idea that directional motivation influences the way people process political information. When individuals encounter information threatening to their favored candidate, brain regions associated with emotion and motivation become activated, while regions associated with “cold” reasoning and emotion regulation are not (Westen et al. 2006).

Similarly, social psychologists have found that directional motivation biases the cognitive processes involved in judgment formation. For example, when led to believe that a particular self-concept (introversion or extroversion) was related to academic

success, subjects in a series of experiments came to see themselves as possessing the desired trait (Kunda and Sanitioso 1989). Analysis of memory-listing and response time data showed that these self-assessments resulted from biased memory search (Sanitioso et al. 1990). The same process may be at work when it comes to stereotyping. After having their self-images threatened by negative performance feedback, individuals become more likely to derogate a stereotyped outgroup in order to facilitate a favorable social comparison. Derogation of this stereotyped group raises self-esteem back up to the baseline level (Fein and Spencer 1997).

In short, research shows that the need to see one's self in a favorable light leads individuals to unconsciously access memories and stereotypes that support the desired conclusion. These directional biases should be most evident when accuracy motivation is low. However, directional motivation can exert an influence even when accuracy motivation is high as long as it can be justified. "When one wants to draw a particular conclusion, one feels obligated to construct a justification for that conclusion that would be plausible to a dispassionate observer" (Kunda 1990). In other words, the influence of directional motivation is capable of exerting a powerful influence on reasoning, but this influence is contingent on one's capacity to justify or rationalize that judgment.

### *Competing Motivations Underlying Party Identification*

By applying motivated reasoning theory to the literature on party identification, it is easy to see how a dual motivations theory of party identification may help us to understand the conditions under which party identification changes or remains stable. In *The American Voter* (1960), party identification is portrayed as a source of directional

motivation. Party identification is thought to provide symbolic and expressive rewards. A victory for the group is felt as a victory for the self as well (Greene 2004). Given the present context, I will refer to this specific type of directional motivation as *partisan* motivation.

In contrast to the classic model of party identification, revisionist models assume that party identification is driven largely by accuracy motivation—or the desire to hold an identity that accurately reflects one’s positions relative to those of the respective parties. Identification with the “correct” party is considered to be instrumental to the maximization of policy benefits, and therefore desirable. Under such models, individuals identify with the party that offers the most favorable policy proposals and vote for that party in order to increase the likelihood that those policies will be implemented. In some formulations of the model, partisan bias is explicitly assumed to play no role at all (Gerber and Green 1998; Achen 1992, 2002). While there is significant variation in the scholarship generally considered under the umbrella of “revisionist work,” scholars of the revisionist camp share the view that partisans are responsive to their information environment. I will therefore, refer to the drive for accuracy in party identification as *responsiveness* motivation.

Again, it is worth calling attention to the contrasting portraits of the American voter drawn by the classic and revisionist models of party identification. On one hand, we have the *partisan* citizen who appears hopelessly blinded by his own biases, while on the other hand we have the *responsive* citizen, whose party identity is merely a reflection of her ongoing political evaluations—the ideal democratic citizen.

Both images seem caricatured. The dual motivations theory of party identification attempts to meld insights from the two approaches. In this model, partisans have both *responsiveness* motivation and *partisan* motivation. The probability of changing one's party identity to reflect a given evaluation is modeled as a function of one's *responsiveness* motivation relative to her *partisan* motivation.

### **A Dual Motivations Model**

While it is important to maintain the conceptual distinction between identities and attitudes (Green et al. 2002; Groenendyk 2008a, 2008b; Rosema 2006), individuals may nonetheless feel psychological pressure to maintain consistency between their attitudes and identities when discrepancies between them become salient (Campbell et al. 1960; Groenendyk 2008a). In its simplest form, party identification at a given time ( $t$ ) can be modeled as a function of past party identification ( $P_{t-1}$ ) and attitudes or evaluations ( $E_t$ ) based on party performance and issue positions.

$$P_t = B_0 + B_1 E_t + B_2 P_{t-1} + u_t$$

It is important to note that the central question is not whether political attitudes cause changes in party identification, but whether inconsistencies between evaluations and party identification weaken party identification. This is an important distinction because it is not disputed that agreement with one's party may strengthen party identification. The crux of the debate pertains to whether party identification acts as a "filter" for disagreeable information or whether disagreement with one's party weakens party identification (Campbell et al. 1960). Even in a perfectly biased world where partisans filter out all information that conflicts with their party identity, individuals may

nonetheless update their identities to reflect their attitudes when they agree with their party. This fits the known pattern whereby party identification becomes stronger with age and experience (Converse 1969, 1976; Alwin and Krosnick 1991; Sears and Levy 2003; Brader and Tucker 2001). In short, to demonstrate that party identification changes with attitudes is not necessarily evidence against partisan filtering. In fact, given that the standard scale runs from strong Republican to strong Democrat, shifts in party identification may result from weakening identification with one party, strengthening of identification with the other, or both. Therefore, the key question is not just whether party identification changes with attitudes, but when individuals become aware of inconsistencies between their attitudes and identities, do they report weaker identities? To this end, party identification ( $P$ ) is replaced with strength of party identification ( $S$ ) in the model, and partisans who crossover from one party to the other are coded as having zero strength.<sup>2</sup> Evaluation ( $E_t$ ) is replaced with agreement ( $A_t$ ) and disagreement ( $D_t$ ) with one's party.

$$S_t = B_0 + B_1A_t + B_2D_t + B_3S_{t-1} + u_t$$

Turning to the motivational element of the model, individuals have both responsiveness motivation ( $R$ ) and partisan motivation ( $M$ ). When a partisan agrees ( $A$ ) with her party, partisan motivation ( $M$ ) only serves to reinforce responsiveness motivation ( $R$ ). However, when disagreements arise, partisan and responsiveness motives come into conflict. The amount of influence exerted by partisan motivation is subject to one's ability to justify ( $J$ ) her party identity. In other words, individuals must

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<sup>2</sup> By crossing over from one party to the other, I mean those partisans who report identifying with or leaning toward one party at time t-1 and then report identifying with or leaning toward the other party at time t.

be able to rationalize their biases. While the  $M$ -term accounts for an individual's motivation to maintain her party identity, the  $J$ -term accounts for her ability to justify acting on that motivation.<sup>3</sup> While partisan motivation may be a powerful thing, individuals must be able to maintain their sense of pragmatism (Campbell et al. 1960; Kunda 1990). Adding in the motivational components, party identification strength ( $S_t$ ) can be modeled as follows:

$$S_t = B_0 + B_1 A_t (R + MJ) + B_2 D_t (R - MJ) + B_3 S_{t-1} + u_t$$

Since motivations cannot be measured directly, there are no coefficients associated with these terms in the model. They only serve to inflate or deflate the effects of agreement and disagreement on party identification strength. However, reasonable proxies for the  $J$ -term (one's ability to justify her partisanship) do exist, such as experience with politics, political sophistication, and other indicators of cognitive resources. Since the influence of partisan motivation ( $M$ ) is contingent on the ability to justify partisan outcomes ( $J$ ), explicit inclusion of  $J$  in the model makes it possible to estimate the effects of agreement ( $A$ ) and disagreement ( $D$ ) when  $J$ , and therefore  $M$ , are equal to zero.

$$S_t = B_0 + B_1 J + B_2 A_t (R) + B_3 D_t (R) + B_4 A_t J (R + M) + B_5 D_t J (R - M) + B_6 S_{t-1} + B_7 S_{t-1} J + u_t$$

If partisan stability turns out to be contingent on one's ability to justify maintaining his or her identity, we will know that partisan motivation has an important role to play in stabilizing party identification. Evidence of identity defense suggests a

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<sup>3</sup> The author remains agnostic with regard to whether or not such processes must be conscious. Presumably, with rehearsal, justifications become automatic and occur outside of consciousness (Bargh and Chartrand 1999). This may help to explain why we observe increased partisan stability and partisan strength with age. Still, this issue remains outside the scope of the current paper.

motivation to defend. Another way to think about this is that such a result would indicate a cost to partisan updating, specifically, the cost of forgoing benefits flowing from loyal partisanship.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, this frame suggests a familiar concern for those acquainted with the “paradox of voting.” If there is a cost to updating one’s party identity, are the benefits of updating sufficient to outweigh this cost?

To answer this question, we must consider what the possible benefits of partisan updating may be. In other words, what incentives underlie responsiveness motivation? While partisan motivation clearly stems from the value of expressing partisan loyalty, responsiveness motivation is potentially rooted in both instrumental incentives and expressive incentives. Shively (1979) theorizes that party identification is *instrumental* to attaining policy benefits, and this assumption seems to underlie much of the revisionist scholarship on party identification. As long as citizens are willing to update party identities when they receive credible information, party identification may serve as an efficient heuristic—aiding individuals who possess incomplete information to vote approximately as if there were well informed about the candidates’ positions (Huckfeldt et al. 1999; Popkin 1991; Shively 1979; Schaffner and Streb 2002; Tomz and Sniderman 2005; Brady and Sniderman 1985).

In considering the degree to which responsiveness motivation stems from such instrumental concerns, it is essential to consider the expected benefit of one’s actions relative to their costs. Anthony Downs (1957) famously points out that the probability of a given individual casting the decisive vote in any major election is approximately zero.

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<sup>4</sup> These costs are not necessarily constant across changes in party identification. To shift from a weak identifier to an Independent leaner may be more costly than shifting from a strong partisan to a weak partisan or a partisan leaner to a pure independent. This amounts to different sized intervals between levels of party identification and is accounted for in the analyses that follow by using ordered probit regression.

Therefore, the policy benefits to be gained from voting “correctly” approach zero. It also follows that, if the expected policy benefits of “correct” voting approach zero, the expected policy benefits to be gained from responsive partisanship are also vanishingly small. If there are costs associated with partisan disloyalty, it stands to reason that partisan responsiveness is not driven by the quest for policy benefits. This raises the question of whether responsiveness motivation should lead to any amount of party identification change. Yet, even the most ardent proponents of stable party identification acknowledge that it would be folly to argue that party identification never changes (Campbell et al. 1960; Green et al. 2002). What then might explain these instances of party identification change?

I hypothesize that responsiveness motivation is driven by the need to express one’s pragmatism and lack of bias, thereby conforming to norms of civic duty. In other words, partisan responsiveness may offer *expressive* rewards.<sup>5</sup> Individuals have an incentive to see themselves as good citizens whose party allegiances are grounded in the issues (Campbell et al. 1960; Kunda 1990). There is some evidence consistent with this idea. Kam (2007) finds that when citizens are provided subtle reminders of civic duty, they are more likely to learn where candidates stand on issues and search for information in an open-minded way. Schudson (1998) traces this norm back to the nation’s founding, but argues that its importance was renewed during the Progressive Era. He explains that, in the backlash against the party machines of the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, “the new model of citizenship called for a voter more intelligent than loyal” (p. 182). In short, there is reason to believe that partisans may update their identities to demonstrate their

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<sup>5</sup> See Fiorina (1976) and Schuessler (2000) for extensive discussions of instrumental versus expressive utility.

pragmatism and lack of bias even if the expected policy benefits of partisan updating are very small. They do this because “good citizens” consider the issues and not just the party.

Readers familiar with the “paradox of voting” literature will recognize that this reformulation of responsiveness motivation builds directly on the Riker and Ordeshook (1968) voter calculus model in which the *expressive* value of affirming one’s civic duty is captured by the (in)famous “D-term.” According to Riker and Ordeshook, if these expressive benefits are high enough to offset the cost of voting, then voters will turnout on Election Day.<sup>6</sup> Riker and Ordeshook model the rewards to be derived from voting as a function of the probability of casting the decisive vote ( $p$ ), the policy benefits to be gained by the preferred party winning ( $B$ ), the cost of turning out to vote ( $C$ ), and the expressive benefits of voting ( $D$ ):

$$Rewards = pB - C + D$$

To apply this logic to party identification, responsiveness motivation can simply be substituted for rewards in the Riker and Ordeshook model. But, in this case, the D-term is meant to capture a somewhat broader concept of civic duty—not just the value of turning out to vote, but the importance of considering the issues in an unbiased and pragmatic manner. Dalton (2008) refers to this aspect of citizenship as autonomy.<sup>7</sup> In my model, responsiveness motivation ( $R$ ) is derived from the probability of one’s vote determining the outcome of the election ( $p$ ), the policy benefits associated with the

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<sup>6</sup> While individuals’ misperceptions of their potential for influence ( $p$ ) may increase the influence of  $B$ , empirical investigations suggests that one’s sense of civic duty is the dominant driver of turnout in this model (Barry 1970; Riker and Ordeshook 1968).

<sup>7</sup> In his analysis of data from the 2004 General Social Survey (GSS) and the 2005 Citizens, Involvement, and Democracy Survey (CDACS), he finds that Americans’ ideas about what it means to be a good citizen load onto two distinct dimensions—one that picks up norms of participation and deference to the law, and another which captures several constructs including autonomy.

preferred election outcome ( $B$ ), and the expressive benefits that come from seeing one's self as a unbiased and pragmatic citizen—an aspect of civic duty ( $D$ ).

As noted above, the cost of partisan updating flows from partisan motivation ( $M$ ). To act on responsiveness motivation ( $R$ ) and update one's party identity to reflect disagreement ( $D$ ) entails incurring the costs of disloyal partisanship (or foregoing the benefits of acting on one's partisan motivation). Therefore,  $C$  is replaced with  $M$  in the party identification model. In the case of agreement ( $A$ ) with one's party, to act on one's responsiveness motivation ( $R$ ) also means acting on one's partisan motivation ( $M$ ), so  $M$  is added (as a benefit) rather than being subtracted (as a cost). Substituting for  $R$  in the full model yields:

$$S_t = B_0 + B_1 A_t (pB + D + MJ) + B_2 D_t (pB + D - MJ) + B_3 S_{t-1} + u_t$$

In summary, both responsiveness motivation ( $R$ ) and partisan motivation ( $M$ ) have the potential to influence party identification ( $S_t$ ). To the degree that responsiveness motivation has an influence, agreement ( $A$ ) and disagreement ( $D$ ) will both affect party identification. And to the degree that partisan motivation has an influence, disagreement will affect party identification less. Since the probability of influencing policy ( $p$ ) is expected to be low, responsiveness motivation is expected to primarily be a function of one's desire to appear as a good pragmatic citizen ( $D$ ). However, if an individual can convince herself, through rationalization and justification ( $J$ ), that her partisan motives ( $M$ ) are rooted in pragmatism, then disagreement will not undermine party identification. Next I outline specific hypotheses derived from the theory.

## Hypotheses

The classic model of party identification suggests that partisan stability stems from motivated psychological processing—the famous “perceptual screen” (Campbell et al. 1960). More recently, however, revisionist scholars have demonstrated that partisan stability can be theoretically accounted for through a simple Bayesian learning model—without partisan motivation playing a role (Achen 1992, 2002). As outlined earlier, to accept this account of partisan stability is not merely a move toward parsimony, but a significant theoretical departure from the classic model with enormous normative implications. Under this model, party identification functions as a perfectly efficient heuristic, and the powerful influence of partisanship on virtually all aspects of political life is of no concern. This places the onus on proponents of the classic model to demonstrate the existence and impact of partisan motivation. To demonstrate the stability of party identification is not enough to prove the existence partisan motivation, because such findings can be explained through Bayesian learning. If partisan motivation has an influence, we should see evidence of this motivation. With this in mind, I will look for examples of party identity justification in instances when individuals disagree with or negatively evaluate their party. If partisan motivation does not play a role in stabilizing party identification, no evidence of identity justification should be found. Partisans should simply update their identities to reflect their disagreement.

H1: *Justification Hypothesis*: When partisans disagree with their party, they will attempt to justify their existing party identity.

If evidence of party identity justification emerges, this will provide us with evidence that partisan motivation exists. However, the theory not only suggests that partisan motivation exists, but that identity stability is contingent on one's motivation and ability to justify her identity. When partisans disagree with their party, they devote their cognitive resources to justifying their existing party identities rather than updating their identities to reflect their disagreement. However, since some citizens are better equipped than others to perform these sorts of justifications, the probability of party identity change should be greater among those who have the fewest cognitive resources available to them. Political sophistication and experience serve as cognitive resources that make some individuals inherently better at justifying their identities, but variable factors such as political context and working memory availability are likely to matter as well.

H2: *Cognitive Resources Hypothesis*: When cognitive resources are limited, partisans will be more likely to bring their identities into alignment with their attitudes.

The above hypotheses pertain to partisan motivation, suggesting that party identity change occurs when individuals are unable to justify maintaining their identities. But what factors might increase responsiveness motivation such that individuals will update their party identities to reflect their evaluations? I hypothesize that responsiveness motivation should exert its most powerful influence on party identification when individuals' evaluations of parties are made salient to them *prior* to considering their party identification—as is often the case in public opinion surveys. Under such circumstances, individuals may find it difficult to maintain stable party identities, at least

momentarily, as a result of their need for cognitive consistency. However, any changes in party identification should quickly dissipate as individuals seek to justify returning to their original identity. In a survey context, evidence of justification should be evident in subsequent responses.

While the existing literature on party identification is filled with conflicting findings, the dual motivation theory may also help to illuminate the underlying source of this conflict. One important debate is between those who believe that partisans update their identities (Highton and Kam 2008; Franklin and Jackson 1983; Jackson 1975; Franklin 1992; Carsey and Layman 2006; Fiorina 1981; Page and Jones 1979; Markus and Converse 1979) and those who believe that most over time variation in party identification is merely attributable to measurement error (Green and Palmquist 1994, 1990; Green et al. 2002; Green and Schickler 1993). While these findings seem to be totally at odds with one another, there may be a good deal of truth to both.

If individuals adjust their party identities in the short-term to reflect evaluations made salient to them in surveys, this constitutes important evidence of responsiveness motivation. Even if such effects are short-lived, such results suggest that partisans have a desire to appear pragmatic and a willingness to act on this desire. Yet, these individuals should also be motivated to maintain their party identities, so in the context of a survey, their efforts to return to their party identity should also be evident. While responses provided prior to party identification measures are likely to drive partisan updating, responses provided after party identification should show evidence of identity justification and lead to subsequent identity reversion.

If party identification fluctuates within the context of a single survey, such variation may reasonably be characterized as measurement error. But, to do so neglects the significance of this variation for understanding the nature of party identification. Examinations of partisans' survey behavior may provide us with a window into the partisan mind and the process underlying party identification. If individuals are motivated to maintain consistency between their attitudes and identities in the context of a survey, there is no reason why such motivations should not exert themselves in other situations as well. Of course, if identity justification allows individuals to return to their prior party identification, this is also likely to occur outside of the survey context.

H3: *Saliency Hypothesis*: Individuals will update their identities to reflect their attitudes when these attitudes are made salient prior to reporting their party identity. However, subsequent identity justification—observable in subjects' responses—will undo these changes in party identification.

If partisans feel pressure to update their identities when they are made conscious of their discrepant evaluations, the question remains whether this motivation is rooted in the incentive to identify with the party that offers the most favorable policies or the need to appear pragmatic and unbiased by partisanship. The dual motivations theory of party identification suggests that responsiveness motivation should be rooted much more in the latter than in the former. If there are psychological costs to updating one's party identity and the expected policy payoff of partisan updating approaches zero, consideration of policy stakes should have little impact on party identification. In other words, contrary to

conventional wisdom, party identification should not be affected by consideration of the policies parties propose to enact upon taking power. Instead, partisan responsiveness is hypothesized to be a social norm associated with civic duty. Therefore, to act responsibly and update one's party identity to reflect evaluations is likely to provide expressive rewards in and of itself—independent of any effect partisan updating may have on policy benefits.

H4: *Duty Hypothesis*: Responsiveness motivation, and therefore partisan change, will be driven by the desire to appear unbiased and pragmatic, thereby conforming to norms of civic duty. Consequently, partisan identity updating will increase when norms of civic duty are made salient.

H5: *Stakes Hypothesis*: Party identification will not be affected by consideration of the policies the parties will attempt to enact upon taking power. Therefore, partisan identity updating will *not* increase when the policies at stake in an election are made salient.

The hypotheses laid out above will be tested in the chapters that follow. While alternative theories may explain the results of any one of these tests individually, each test is designed to build on the last so that, as the dissertation progresses, alternative explanations may be ruled out until only the dual motivations theory remains plausible. Chapter 2 examines the *justification hypothesis* through a laboratory experiment and analysis of data from the American National Election Studies (ANES). Chapter 3 tests the *cognitive resources hypothesis* through a national experiment in which disagreement

with one's party and cognitive resources are each manipulated. In chapter 4 the *saliency hypothesis* is tested in another national experiment—this time focusing on Republican identifiers at a time when their attitudes and party identities were particularly likely to conflict with one another. Chapter 5 tests the *duty hypothesis* and *stakes hypothesis* in a third national experiment in which subjects are either primed to consider what it means to be a good citizen, the policies implications at stake in an upcoming election, or nothing at all. The conclusion summarizes these results and considers both normative and empirical implications of the findings.

## Chapter Two

### Justifying Party Identification

Are partisans motivated to maintain stable party identities even when their party does something they disagree with? If so, how would we know? Proponents of the classic model of party identification point to the stability of party identification over time (Miller and Shanks 1996; Campbell et al. 1960), but revisionist scholars have shown that this stability can be accounted for without such motivation (Achen 1992, 2002; Gerber and Green 1999; Gerber and Green 1998; Green et al. 2002; Franklin 1984). Bayesian learning models suggest that party identification should stabilize as individuals accumulate information about what the parties stand for. Nonetheless, these models assume a *willingness* to change one's party identity, given sufficient cause. They suggest that party identity adjustment should be observable, particularly among younger citizens who have had less time to accumulate information about the parties.

Cowden & McDermott (2000) attempt to produce party identification change—taking the novel approach of directly testing the classic and revisionist models against one another in a series of experiments. In one experiment, the authors test Markus and Converse's (1979) claim that partisans update their identities to reflect their vote choice. In another experiment, they test Page and Jones' (1979) assertion that partisans update their identities in light of their candidate evaluations. Both experiments yield null results,

supporting the classic model. However, as the authors acknowledge, null results do not provide conclusive evidence of null effects. In other words, their experimental stimuli may simply have lacked sufficient “punch” to produce a change in party identification.

I build on this literature by reframing the question. In order to separate the classic model from the null hypothesis, I ask, what mechanism produces stable party identification? If partisan stability results from the motivation to avoid changing one’s identity (Campbell et al. 1960), we should see evidence of this in the form of identity justification. On the other hand, if individuals are driven solely to identify with the party that best represents their interests, they would have no reason to develop such justifications.

As outlined in Chapter 1 the notion of partisan justification is rooted in literature on motivated reasoning and memory search (see Kunda 1990; Lodge and Taber 2000). These works demonstrate that individuals who are predisposed to favor a particular conclusion tend to rely on positive test strategies. In other words, they search their memories for confirmatory evidence and then stop once they find it. Likewise, the dual motivations theory of party identification suggests that when one’s party identity is challenged, an individual will search for attitudes to justify continued identification with her party.

To understand how partisans use their attitudes to justify their party identities, it is helpful to imagine the process in two-dimensional attitude space. In Figure 2.1, the x-axis represents attitudes toward one’s own party, and the y-axis represents attitudes toward the other party. Conventional wisdom suggests that a strong negative relationship should exist between attitudes toward the two parties. The more a person likes one party,

the less that person should like the other party. I hypothesize, however, that this pattern may be altered as individuals attempt to justify continued identification with their party.

[Insert Figure 2.1]

The 45-degree line running from the bottom left to the top right represents indifference between the two parties. After one's attitudes cross over this indifference threshold, continued party identification is difficult to justify, because the opposition party is favored. Therefore, I hypothesize that partisans will attempt to maintain attitudes to the right of this threshold. However, some individuals will be unable to avoid being pushed toward the indifference threshold. As individuals' approach indifference, they are expected to employ a specific method of identity justification, which I refer to as *identifying with the lesser of two evils*.

Lesser of two evils identity justification will be the primary focus of this chapter because it serves as a concrete and observable example of an identity justification. This justification method is likely familiar to the reader as it is often notable even in casual observations of politics. For example, at a given moment in time, a Democrat may hold lukewarm attitudes toward her party. Yet, she may be able to justify identifying with the Democratic Party on the basis of her highly negative attitudes toward the Republican Party by reasoning, "It's not that I particularly like the Democratic Party; I simply detest the Republican Party." Since the Democratic Party is the lesser of two evils, identification with Democrats is justifiable. This strategy enables partisans to follow their partisan motivation, thereby maintaining their party loyalty without demonstrating overt biases and thus acting against their motivation to appear responsive.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> While the focus of this chapter will be on lesser of two evils justification, the theory also allows for greater of two goods justification. In other words, partisans may feel pressure to change their identities

In a pair of experiments, conducted by Pool, Wood, and Leck (1998) subjects experienced lower self-esteem after discovering that their attitudes differed from those of a self-relevant valued majority group. They also experienced lower self-esteem after discovering that they agreed with a self-relevant disliked minority group. This effect emerged regardless of whether individuals expressed their attitudes in public or in private, suggesting that the observed decrease in self-esteem resulted from individuals' personal desires and not from concerns about social perceptions. Perhaps most important in the current context is the fact that, when given the opportunity to re-interpret the groups' positions prior to reporting their self-esteem, subjects shifted their interpretations of those positions. In the favored majority condition they shifted their interpretation so that the group's position matched their own, and in the derogated minority condition they shifted their interpretation so that the group's position conflicted with their own. These reinterpretations helped subjects to maintain positive self-esteem.

Interestingly, studies have also shown that stereotyping and outgroup derogation can help to protect self-esteem. In a series of experiments, Fein and Spencer (1997) manipulated performance feedback on an intelligence test, thereby threatening subjects' self-images. As a result of this threat to self-image, subjects' propensity to employ negative stereotypes against outgroups increased. Moreover, the act of stereotyping subsequently brought subjects' self-esteem back up to baseline by allowing them to

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when they find themselves liking the opposition party. However, by rehearsing positive thoughts about their own party, individuals can ensure that their attitudes toward their own party remain more positive than their attitudes toward the opposition party—thereby avoiding the indifference threshold. From an empirical standpoint, these individuals would appear in the upper right hand quadrant of Figure 1, lining up on the same orthogonal dimension as lesser of two evils identifiers. However, the data, as well as casual observation, suggest that greater of two goods justification is uncommon—perhaps not surprising given the adversarial nature of media coverage and the tendency for negative information to be weighted more heavily (Lau 1985; Kernell 1977; Lau 1982). Therefore, attention is focused instead on lesser of two evils justification.

reaffirm their positive self-image relative to the outgroup. This suggests that if partisanship is indeed an aspect of one's self-image, as many contend (Campbell et al. 1960; Campbell et al. 1954; Green et al. 2002; Greene 2004), then individuals should react to threats to their party identity in a similar manner.

For instance, an individual who feels that her party has taken the wrong stance on a particular issue may call to mind negative stereotypes of the opposition party in order to justify continued identification with her own party. As long as her party remains the lesser of two evils, continued identification is justifiable. Empirically speaking, this means that as attitudes approach the indifference threshold, a second attitude dimension should emerge. On this dimension, liking one party less is associated with liking the other party less as well—a positive relationship. Partisan change should be most likely to occur when individuals fail to engage in this type of defensive process.

#### *Multidimensional Identity, Measurement Error, or Justification*

Various works argue that party identification cannot be adequately measured on a single dimension (Alvarez 1990; Weisberg 1980; Valentine and Van Wingen 1980; Greene 2005; Kamieniecki 1988). Proponents of such models often cite the small negative and sometimes positive correlations between attitudes toward the Republican and Democratic Parties (Alvarez 1990; Weisberg 1980). However, I argue that what appears to some as evidence of multidimensional party identification may actually constitute evidence of party identity justification.

First, attitudes are conceptually distinct from identities (Groenendyk 2008b, 2008a; Green et al. 2002; Rosema 2006). While attitudes are evaluative in nature (Eagly and Chaiken 1993), identities are rooted in self-conceptualization (Monroe et al. 2000).

Therefore, departure from the assumed unidimensional negative relationship between attitudes toward the two parties does not necessarily constitute evidence of multidimensional party identification. Instead, it may result from party identity defense. As attitudes approach the indifference threshold, a second attitude dimension should emerge as a result of individuals' attempts to justify continued identification with their party. Lesser of two evils identity justification entails a positive relationship between attitudes toward the two parties. Individuals who like their own party less will come to like the opposition party less as well.

In arguing against the claim that party identification is multidimensional, Green (1988) points out that deviation from the expected strong negative correlation between party feeling thermometers may simply result from measurement error. Random measurement error drives correlation coefficients toward zero, while systematic error or "charitability bias" might actually lead to a positive correlation (Green and Citrin 1994; Green 1988). In other words, some individuals are likely to have a more charitable nature and therefore rate both parties higher than average, while less charitable individuals will rate both parties lower than average. Since this charitability trait dimension is an omitted variable, it may bias correlation coefficients between party feeling thermometers in a positive direction. After accounting for measurement error, Green shows that Republican and Democratic Party feeling thermometers are more negatively correlated. However, in a survey context, the type of correlational dynamism hypothesized above is indistinguishable from measurement error. Just as variation in respondent charitability may drive the correlation between party feeling thermometers in a more positive direction, so might the motivation to justify one's party identity.

I take a multi-method approach to understand whether the relationship (or lack thereof) between party feeling thermometers is best explained by a multidimensional model of party identification, measurement error, or identity justification. Experiments provide researchers with leverage over both random and systematic error through random assignment, ensuring that differences between groups can only be attributed to the treatment and not measurement error. By pairing these tests with aggregate level analyses, it is possible to assess how these micro-level processes manifest themselves at the macro-level. When making aggregate level comparisons within a single population over time, the effects of measurement error should be greatly reduced. In large N samples, random errors should cancel out. Moreover, if each cross-section is truly representative of the population of interest, then aggregate charitability biases cannot explain differences between samples.

*Justification Hypothesis:* When partisans disagree with their party, they will attempt to justify their existing party identity.

## **Experiment**

We know from previous experiments that party identification influences political attitudes (Cohen 2003; Rahn 1993), but experimenters have not been able to show that attitudes shape party identification (Cowden and McDermott 2000). The following experiment builds on knowledge gained from these previous works. Rather than focusing on whether or not subjects' party identities can be changed, I first concentrate on how partisans go about defending their identities when they are threatened—the implication

being that partisan change occurs when defenses break down. More specifically, this experiment induces conflict between individuals' party identities and the issue positions they espouse in order to understand how partisans go about reconciling this psychological inconsistency. The design is laid out in Table 2.1.

In order to induce this conflict, all subjects viewed an issue advocacy advertisement endorsing a fictitious bill. In one condition, subjects were provided with partisan cues telling them which party supported (or opposed) the bill. In another condition, subjects were not provided with party cues until after they had taken a position on the bill. If they took the position advocated in the appeal, they discovered that this position conflicted with their party identity. In a control condition, subjects viewed no ad at all. Again, the idea here was to create pressure for partisan change in order to determine how subjects react to such pressure.

[Insert Table 2.1]

## ***Method***

*Participants.* Two hundred and fifty-four student participants were recruited during the fall of 2005 from the campus of a Midwestern college town. Participants were offered five dollars to participate in a thirty minute public opinion study. No more than twelve subjects were allowed to participate at any one time, and there were usually only one to four in the lab at a time. Seven cases were excluded from analysis after reporting that they were not citizens of the United States. Given population demographics and logistical considerations, the study was designed for Democratic identifiers. Therefore, if party identification is not found to vary between conditions, Republicans will be excluded from further analysis.

*Materials.* The treatment was administered via a political advertisement created by the researcher. In an informal test, viewers were unable to distinguish the advertisement from an authentic political appeal. The ad appeared to be sponsored by the AFL-CIO and focused on a fictitious “Bankruptcy Abuse Bill.” The Enron, Global Crossing, and WorldCom scandals had recently received considerable media attention, while legislation related to the issue had received much less attention. The appeal advocated passage of the “Bankruptcy Abuse Bill” and paired Enron, Global Crossing, and WorldCom job loss statistics with dramatic audio and visual effects to rouse the viewer. Clips borrowed from actual political ads showed an apparent corporate executive pleading his Fifth Amendment rights in front of the U.S. Senate. Another clip showed an apparent middle class man rubbing his forehead as he looked over his bills at the kitchen table. A transcript of the advertisement with screen shots is included in the appendix.

Information about the parties’ positions came in the form of three fictitious newspaper quotations seen below. These newspaper articles either commented on Democratic opposition to the bill or Republican support for the bill. Within each of the three experimental conditions, Democratic opposition and Republican support were randomized to insure that any effects would be attributable to inconsistency between issue attitudes and party identification and not support versus opposition framing.

By *opposing* the bankruptcy abuse bill . . .

“Democrats let corporate crooks off the hook”—The Washington Post

“Democrats are simply wrong on bankruptcy abuse”—The Boston Globe

“Democrats are playing politics with people’s lives”—The New York Times

or

By *supporting* the bankruptcy abuse bill . . .

“Republicans are keeping the heat on corporate crooks”—The Washington Post

“Republicans are right on bankruptcy abuse”—The Boston Globe

“Republicans are putting people above politics”—The New York Times

*Procedure.* Subjects were randomly assigned to one of five groups as they entered the lab. These groups are consolidated into three experimental conditions for analysis.<sup>9</sup> One of these groups viewed a version of the ad (described above) that contained partisan cues. Another group was exposed to a version of the same ad with the partisan cues removed. Subjects in this condition received these cues after viewing the ad and reporting their support or opposition for the “Bankruptcy Abuse Bill.” These cues were presented in onscreen text in exactly the same format and for the same amount of time as they were in the ads. The third group viewed no ad at all and served as a control.

The expectation is that those assigned to the disagreement condition (which received no party cues until after taking a position on the bill) will experience the most threat to their party identity. I also expect that some of the people in the party cues condition (which received party cues during the ad) will experience partisan identity threat as well. However, most are expected to follow the available party cues and avoid disagreement with their party, thereby avoiding identity threat as well. The control group serves as a baseline against which the other groups will be compared.

*Measures.* Opinions on the Bankruptcy Abuse Bill are assessed on a seven-point scale running from strongly oppose (-3) to strongly support (3) with a neutral point at zero. Party identification is measured using the standard NES branching question yielding a 7-point scale ranging from (-3) strong Republican to (3) strong Democrat.

Partisan feeling thermometers allow subjects to rate how warm or cold they feel toward

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<sup>9</sup> As noted above, cues came in two forms—both of which conflicted with Democratic identity. Either Democrats were said to oppose the bill or Republicans were said to support the bill. Therefore, the *Republicans support* versus *Democrats oppose* factor will be collapsed to yield two treatment conditions—one which received party cues prior to taking a position on the bill (party cues condition) and one which received party cues only after taking a position on the bill (disagreement condition). Comparisons between the *Republicans support* and *Democrats oppose* groups show that effects of both stimuli run in the same direction, though *Democrats oppose* tends to produce larger effects, as one might expect.

the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. Smaller values correspond to colder (more negative) feelings and larger values correspond to warmer (more positive) feelings. Feeling thermometers are rescaled to run from -50 to 50. A measure of attitude indifference was also created by subtracting the Republican feeling thermometer from the Democratic feeling thermometer. This yielded a single scale running from -100 to 100, on which larger values signify attitudes favoring the Democratic Party. Four additional questions ask subjects, "Regardless of who you tend to vote for, how often do you find yourself supporting [opposing] what the Democratic [Republican] Party stands for?" Subjects are asked to place themselves on a 7-point scale that runs from "never" to "always." In contrast to the bipolarity of feeling thermometers, these questions allow subjects to express occasional support and occasional opposition for the same party. An open-ended question is administered toward the end of the study to allow subjects a chance to explain, in their own words, why they identify with a particular party. This item reads, "You have already indicated that you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or something else. In a few sentences, please explain why you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or something else. The study is nearly complete, so feel free to take your time." Responses to this item range from 1 to 327 words and were blind coded so that there would be no way to determine which subjects had been assigned to which conditions. These codes are meant to capture lesser of two evils identity justification. To do this, a very simple coding scheme was applied. Subjects who flatly stated that they identified with the lesser of two evils or that their identity was primarily based on negative attitudes toward the opposition party were coded as lesser of two evils identifiers. This group also includes subjects who

made less overt statements, yet explained their identities largely in terms of their negative attitudes toward the opposition as opposed to their positive attitudes toward their favored party. All other subjects were coded as 0 to create a dummy variable for lesser of two evils identity justification. Dummy variables called *disagreement* and *party cues* were created to correspond to treatment conditions. Each of these variables is coded “1” for treatment and “0” for control condition. At times, comparisons will also be made between treatment conditions, but this will be indicated in the text.

## **Results**

Using the standard 7-point measure of party identification, no partisan differences emerge between cells ( $F(4, 244) = .03$ ). Nor do any significant pairwise differences emerge. Group means range from .75 to .88 on a scale that runs from -3 to 3. As previously mentioned, this study is designed for Democrats. Therefore, since party identification appears very stable across groups, Republicans can be excluded from further analyses without concern. More specifically, I will restrict analyses to those who label themselves as a strong Democrat, weak Democrat, Independent leaning Democrat, or Independent not leaning toward either political party.<sup>10</sup> This allows me to focus on those subjects for whom the treatment was likely to be threatening.

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<sup>10</sup> Pure independents are included in the analysis in order to avoid losing data on any subjects who may have been leaning toward the Democratic Party prior to the treatment and shifted into the pure independent category as a result of the treatment. While no differences in party identification emerge between cells, it is possible that changes may have occurred that are too small to detect statistically. By including pure independents in the sample, I avoid improperly excluding these subjects. In the chapters that follow, pretest measures of party identification are available. Therefore, it will not be necessary to include pure independents in analyses conducted in those chapters. It is also important to note that, in the sample used in this chapter, the pure independent category appears to include closet Democrats—as one might expect in a college student sample. Looking at the characteristics of pure independents within this sample of college students shows that, on average, they look a great deal like Democrats. On a feeling thermometer running from 50 to -50, pure independents gave the Republican Party an average rating of -11.11 while they give the Democratic Party an average rating of 2.04. Chapters that follow will make use of national samples.

Examination of subjects' opinions on bankruptcy abuse indicates that the manipulation worked largely as expected. Of the 153 non-Republican subjects assigned to one of the two treatment conditions, 150 were able to correctly identify the bankruptcy abuse bill as the issue on which the ad focused. Findings also indicate that subjects in the disagreement condition ( $M= 0.90$ ,  $SD= 1.53$ ) expressed an almost identical amount of support for the bill as those in the control group who viewed no ad at all ( $M= 0.89$ ,  $SD= 1.29$ ). This suggests that while, overall, subjects were supportive of the bill, the ad itself did not prove to be particularly persuasive. However, since subjects tended to support the bill anyway, this is of little consequence for the manipulation. Despite the weakness of the appeal, the vast majority of the subjects in the disagreement condition did express opinions inconsistent with those of their party. Moreover, those in the partisan cues condition seem to have followed those cues and avoided disagreement with their party—though they were apparently not able to avoid it completely since, on average, they still showed support for the bill. This means that we should expect to see some degree of party identity justification in this group, though probably not as much as in the disagreement condition. Finally, while those in the control group actually expressed support for the bill as well, they did not experience disagreement with their party since they were never provided with any partisan information (or other political information for that matter). In other words, the experimental manipulation appears to have operated as it was designed.

Given that disagreement was successfully evoked between subjects and the Democratic Party, yet no change in party identification appears to have occurred, attention can now be directed toward the original question of interest. Is the observed

partisan stability a result of motivated identity justification or was the stimulus simply not powerful enough to produce party identification change? To answer this question, I first examine responses obtained through an open-ended measure in which subjects were asked to explain why they identify with their party. As expected, based on the length of their responses (number of words), those assigned to the disagreement condition ( $M=70.92$ ,  $SD=51.14$ ) appear to have been more motivated to justify their identities than those assigned to either the party cues ( $M=54.62$ ,  $SD=39.00$ ,  $p<.05$ ) or control condition ( $M=62.53$ ,  $SD=35.61$ ,  $p=.31$ ). Moreover, results in Table 2.2 show that those who wrote longer responses were able to maintain a significantly greater distance between their evaluations of the Republican and Democratic parties despite exposure to either treatment condition. In other words, the more effort individuals put into justifying their identities, the farther away they were able to stay from the indifference threshold. However, once party identity justifications dropped below fifty words (approximately) both treatments appear to have been pushed subjects toward the indifference threshold. This effect is indicated by the negative coefficients associated with *disagreement* and *party cues* in Table 2.2, though these intercept shifts do not reach statistical significance.

[Insert Table 2.2]

In order to facilitate comparisons with earlier predictions made in two-dimensional attitude space, Figure 2.2 accepts conventional wisdom and assumes for a moment that individuals' attitudes toward the two parties negatively reinforce each other. The figure illustrates how longer responses (200 words compared to 0 words) help individuals in both treatment conditions to maintain a safe distance from the indifference threshold. While those in the party cues condition appeared on average to have been less

motivated than those in the disagreement condition to justify their identities (as one would expect), the words they did write in justification of their identities appear to have helped them maintain their distance from the indifference threshold. The figure also makes evident the surprising reverse pattern on display in the control group. In this group, longer responses are associated with more indifference rather than less. One might speculate that, absent a catalyst for partisan motivation (i.e. conscious inconsistency between an issue attitudes and party identification), greater consideration of one's reasons for identification leads to less reliance on partisan stereotypes and other heuristics, and this leads to more moderate evaluations. This possibility will be examined more closely in Chapter 4.

[Insert Figure 2.2]

Open-ended responses were also coded for whether or not they contained evidence of lesser of two evils justification. When subjects' attitudes approach the indifference threshold, they are expected to avoid crossing over by calling to mind negative attitudes and stereotypes of the opposition party to offset negative attitudes toward their own party. Since, the justification process is not necessarily expected to occur on the conscious level, this is an extremely blunt measure. Therefore, observations of such overt lesser of two evils identity justification are expected to be low across conditions. Nonetheless, Figure 2.3 shows that subjects in both the disagreement condition, as well as those in the party cues condition, were significantly more likely to use lesser of two evils justifications to explain their identity than those assigned to the control condition. In fact, not a single subject in the control group was coded as having used a lesser of two evils identity justification.

[Insert Figure 2.3]

I now examine attitude correlations within each of the three experimental conditions. If subjects are relying on lesser of two evils identity justification, this should also be observable in more positive (less negative) correlations between party feeling thermometers. Again, what may appear in cross-sectional snapshots to be multidimensional party identification (Alvarez 1990; Weisberg 1980; Valentine and Van Wingen 1980) may actually be party identity justification. I expect that, in the absence of disagreement, attitudes toward parties will line up on a single dimension. However, when inconsistencies arise between issue attitudes and party identification, individuals will venture off of this dimension and begin to line up on a second lesser of two evils dimension. Again, this should be reflected in increasingly positive (less negative) feeling thermometer correlations from the control group to the party cues condition to the disagreement condition.

Results in Table 2.3 fit this prediction extremely well. While, in the control group, the standard expectation of a large negative relationship appears to hold, this is not the case in the other two conditions. As party identity threat intensifies from the control group to the party cues condition to the disagreement condition, the negative relationship between attitudes toward the Republican and Democratic parties becomes smaller in magnitude and actually passes zero to become (non-significantly) positive.

[Insert Table 2.3]

Are these more positive (less negative) correlations arising as individuals venture out onto a new (lesser of two evils) attitude dimension in order to avoid crossing over the indifference threshold? The factor analysis method is extremely useful for answering this

question, because it makes it possible to determine whether these correlation differences arise as a result of partisan attitudes splitting into two orthogonal dimensions. If this is the case, as I expect it to be, we should see a new justification dimension begin to emerge as party identity threat increases from condition to condition. On this dimension, liking one's own party less should correlate with liking the other party less as well. Factor analyses are conducted separately for each experimental condition to facilitate comparison between conditions. Included in these factor analyses are feeling thermometer measures, party support and opposition measures, and strength of party identification. Results are displayed in Table 2.4.

As hypothesized, a single factor emerges in the control group. On this dimension, liking Democrats more means liking Republicans less—just as conventional wisdom suggests. This factor explains just over 66% of the total variance within the condition. A single factor solution also emerges in the party cues condition. Interestingly, however, this factor only accounts for about 48% of the variance in this condition—suggesting that subjects' attitudes no longer line up as well on a single dimension. Finally, as predicted, two orthogonal factors emerge in the disagreement condition.<sup>11</sup> Prior to rotation, the first of these two factors is identical to the factor extracted in each of the other two conditions. As in the party cues condition, this factor explains about 48% of the total variance. Looking across conditions, it appears that this factor explains less variance as threat to

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<sup>11</sup> Eigenvalue cutoffs are set to 1.0 (Kaiser's Rule), though the number of unique factors is very clear in each condition. Cattell's scree test yields the same number of factors. In the control group, the first factor has an Eigenvalue of 4.624 compared to a value of .692 for the second factor. In the group cues condition, a second factor with an Eigenvalue of .953 approaches the threshold of 1.0. However, this factor still explains relatively little variance compared to the first factor with its Eigenvalue of 3.93. In the disagreement condition, the first two factors have Eigenvalues of 3.390 and 1.692 respectively. The next factor has an Eigenvalue of only .630.

party identification increases.<sup>12</sup> On the second factor, liking one party less corresponds to liking the other party less, and liking one party more corresponds to liking the other party more. In a cross-sectional survey context it is quite understandable how this dimension might be interpreted as a unique independence or ambivalence dimension (Greene 2000; Dennis 1988; Kamieniecki 1988; Weisberg 1980; Valentine and Van Wingen 1980; Alvarez 1990). However, given that this second factor only arises in the disagreement condition and strength of party identification still loads onto the first factor, this experiment suggests a very different interpretation—identity justification. In sum, as party identification comes under threat, partisans depart from zero-sum attitude reinforcement. As they approach indifference between the two parties, they call to mind negative evaluations and stereotypes of the opposition party in order to justify maintaining their party identity.

[Insert Table 2.4]

## **Aggregate Trends**

Results from the above experiment strongly suggest that motivated reasoning is triggered when inconsistencies arise between individuals' issue attitudes and party identities. Under such conditions, individuals feel the need to justify their party identities in order to avoid changing them. As individuals approach indifference between the two parties, they engage in lesser of two evils identity justification. This entails a departure

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<sup>12</sup> After rotating the matrix to maximize the variance of loadings for each factor, the two dimensions extracted in the disagreement conditions come to reflect attitudes toward the Democratic Party and attitudes toward the Republican Party respectively. Strength of party identification is associated with both of these dimensions (negatively with the opposition party dimension), though it is associated more strongly with the favored party dimension.

from the strong negative relationship between attitudes toward the Republican and Democratic parties that one might expect. In fact, in the disagreement condition, we saw the emergence of a second attitude dimension on which liking one party less was associated with liking the other party less—consistent with the notion of lesser of two evils identity justification.

In cross-sectional survey analyses, the lack of a strong negative relationship between attitudes toward the Republican Party and Democratic Party is often cited as evidence of multidimensional party identification (Weisberg 1980; Alvarez 1990), but the above results suggest that this interpretation may be off the mark. These results suggest that the lack of a strong negative correlation between attitudes likely results from individuals attempting to justify their party identities. Of course, if this is the case, the relationship between attitudes toward the parties should vary over time as circumstances require greater and less amounts of identity justification. Despite the longstanding debate over the dimensionality of partisanship, little attention has been paid to over-time variation in the correlation between these attitudes. As is evident in Figure 2.4, substantial temporal variation does occur in these correlations. Notably, the highest observed positive correlation appears in 1974, at the height of Watergate, among Republican identifiers. While the negativity of the correlation between attitudes toward the two parties may be underestimated due to measurement error (Green 1988), both random and systematic measurement error should be relatively constant over time in aggregate level analysis. Therefore, the temporal variation on display in Figure 2.4, suggests that measurement error does not tell the whole story.

[Insert Figure 2.4]

Still, in order to determine whether this temporal variation is due to dynamic identity justification and not stable multidimensional identification, I examine the impact of economic performance on the correlation between attitudes toward the two parties. When our ongoing evaluations of party performance are consistent with our party identities, attitudes toward the two parties are likely to reinforce one another, yielding a strong negative correlation as conventional wisdom suggests. However, the state of the world may sometimes be such that partisan consistent evaluations are difficult to maintain. For instance, objective economic indicators may suggest that one's preferred party has performed poorly while in power. Recalling Figure 1, this may strain party evaluations for some partisans to the point that they are in danger of crossing over the indifference threshold. Under such circumstances, these individuals are likely to turn to lesser of two evils identity justification in order to maintain loyalty to their party—entailing a break from zero-sum evaluations of parties. From an empirical standpoint, this means that when economic performance threatens party identification, we should observe a less negative (more positive) correlation between attitudes toward the Republican Party and Democratic Party than conventional wisdom suggests. Since economic performance is exogenous to attitudes toward the parties, we can be certain that economic performance is affecting the relationship between attitudes and not vice versa.

*Measures.* As discussed, the correlation between attitudes toward the Republican Party and Democratic Party serves as my primary dependent variable of interest. Since correlations are, by their very nature, aggregate level assessments, aggregate level analysis is required. These correlations are calculated separately for Republican and Democratic identifiers (including leaners) in each of the twenty years in which party

feeling thermometers were included in the ANES. I calculate these correlations separately for Republicans and Democrats so that I may distinguish between the effects of economic performance by one's own party versus the effects of the opposition party's performance. Poor performance by one's own party threatens party identification, while poor performance by the other party reinforces party identification. Additionally, by pooling the observed thermometer correlations among Republicans and Democrats, I double the number of observations in my dataset from twenty to forty.

Economic performance is calculated by determining change from the previous year's unemployment level and change from the previous year's level of inflation and then adding these two values together.<sup>13</sup> Larger values indicate better economic performance. An incumbency dummy variable signifies which party controlled the White House in the year leading up to the election.

The ANES altered the feeling thermometer questions to ask about the "Republican Party" and "Democratic Party" rather than "Republicans" and "Democrats" after 1982. Therefore, a control for question wording is also included.

Finally, since the point of this exercise is to understand how stable party identities are maintained, I control for party identity polarization in order to isolate the variation in attitude correlations that occurs independently from variation in the distribution of party identification. Clearly, the correlation between party feeling thermometers should relate to the spread of party identification—as a cause, a consequence, or more likely both. However, I hypothesize that partisan threat should affect these attitude correlations even when partisan identity polarization is controlled. If economic performance affects the

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<sup>13</sup> Unemployment plus inflation is often referred to as the misery index. Therefore, this is essentially a measure of change in economic misery.

relationship between party feeling thermometers independent of party identity polarization, then it is clear that these *attitude* measures do not merely capture the same thing as the party *identity* measure. The idea is to capture evidence of partisans manipulating their attitudes to justify maintaining their identities. The standard deviation of party identification in each year serves as my measure of partisan polarization.<sup>14</sup>

## **Results**

The theory is tested using an OLS model with panel corrected standard errors.<sup>15</sup> Results are presented in Table 2.5 and represented graphically in Figure 2.5. First, as one would expect, attitudes and identities appear to be powerfully related. The correlation between attitudes toward the parties becomes more negative when partisan polarization increases. In other words, attitudes polarize when party identities polarize. However, as the theory predicts, this is not the whole story. Economic performance, in interaction with own party incumbency, has a substantial effect on the correlation between attitudes toward the two parties. More specifically, Figure 2.5 shows that when one's own party is in power and the economy performs poorly, the correlation between attitudes toward the two parties becomes less negative (more positive). On the other hand, the correlation between partisan attitudes becomes more negative when one's own party is in power and the economy performs well, or the opposition party is in power and the economy performs poorly. In other words, zero-sum attitude reinforcement occurs when the

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<sup>14</sup> The standard deviation variable is mean deviated so that the constant will take on a more intuitive value. If this step were not taken, the constant would be estimated for the case in which the standard deviation of party identification was zero. Since this is clearly a nonsensical notion, this variable is rescaled so that the constant will take on the value it would have when the partisan polarization is at its average level.

<sup>15</sup> Similar models were run to check for robustness. These include a standard OLS model controlling for party fixed effects and GLS models accounting for random year and party effects. A fixed year effects model could not be run, since the economic performance measure is constant across pooled groups. Results are nearly identical across models.

economy conforms to partisan expectations, but these attitudes cease to reinforce one another when economic realities threaten party identification. This pattern corresponds perfectly with the notion of lesser of two evils identity justification. When their own party performs poorly (or the other party performs well), individuals come to hold more negative attitudes toward both parties—pushing the correlation in a more positive direction. However, when their own party performs well (or the other party performs poorly), partisan expectations are confirmed, no identity justification is needed, and the expected negative relationship between attitude dimensions appears.

[Insert Table 2.5] [Insert Figure 2.5]

To illustrate the size of this effect, the predicted attitude correlations among incumbent party identifiers and non-incumbent party identifiers differ by .18 when economic performance is set to its lowest observed level. This suggests that while attitudes and identities are powerfully related to one another, the relationship between attitudes toward the two parties is not determined entirely by party identification, or vice versa. Attitudes and identities are distinct, and the relationship between attitude dimensions appears to vary systematically with at least one important exogenous source of identity threat: economic performance. Consistent with experimental findings, when economic performance conflicts with partisan expectations, the aggregate level complexity of partisan attitudes increases. Individuals begin to venture off of the single dimension presumed by conventional wisdom to explain attitudes toward parties. This finding in conjunction with the experimental results suggests that previously uncovered evidence of multidimensional party identification should be reconsidered in favor of a

model in which independent *attitude* dimensions emerge as partisans attempt to justify their *identities*.

## **Discussion**

What mechanism produces partisan stability? Results of a laboratory experiment and aggregate level analysis of ANES data suggest that Bayesian learning models cannot tell the whole story. Partisan motivation appears to play an important role. When individuals become aware of inconsistencies between their attitudes and their party identities, they do not necessarily bring their identities into alignment with their attitudes, but rather generate justifications for maintaining stable party identities. While there exist any number of ways to go about justifying one's party identity, one specific type of identity justification, referred to as identifying with the lesser of two evils, constitutes the primary focus of this chapter. This method of justification has a specific empirical signature—a positive relationship between attitudes toward the two parties—and therefore serves as an ideal signal of identity justification.

An experiment intentionally evoked inconsistency between subjects' issue attitudes and party identities so that their responses could be compared with a control group in which such inconsistencies were not evoked. After exposure to the treatment, those who put more effort into identity justification (as indicated by higher word counts in open-ended responses) were better able to maintain attitudes toward the two parties that were consistent with their party identification (as indicated by greater distance from the attitudinal indifference threshold). Further analyses of both open-ended and closed-ended measures also demonstrate that responses of subjects exposed to the treatment

conditions are consistent with lesser of two evils identity justification. Finally, an aggregate level analysis of national survey data suggests that these experimental results generalize to the population at large. At times when economic conditions are likely to threaten party identification (poor performance by one's own party or impressive performance by the opposition party), aggregate level attitudes shift in a pattern consistent with lesser of two evils identity justification.<sup>16</sup> By engaging in identity justification, individuals are able to maintain partisan loyalty without appearing "irrational" or hopelessly biased.

These findings conform well with a number of studies demonstrating the important role that attitudes toward the opposition party (Maggiotto and Piereson 1977; Rose and Mishler 1998) and opposition candidate (Gant and Davis 1984; Gant and Sigelman 1985; Sigelman and Gant 1989) play in explaining political behavior. At times, an individual's attitudes toward her party and even her identification with that party may wane. However, as long as that person holds sufficiently negative attitudes toward the opposition party, she can avoid crossing over to the other party and continue voting for her own party as she always has.

These results also shed new light on the longstanding debate over the dimensionality of party identification. By simply maintaining the distinction between attitudes and identities, it becomes apparent that party identification is not itself multidimensional, but rather justified in two dimensions. Results suggest that the small negative (and sometimes positive) correlations often observed between attitudes toward the Republican and Democratic parties result from individuals' efforts to defend their

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<sup>16</sup> In the case of impressive performance by the opposition party, this may entail greater of two goods justification as discussed in Footnote 1.

party identities. A controlled experiment shows that these correlations vary systematically as individuals experience disagreement with their party. This pattern is replicated in aggregate level ANES survey analysis. When indicators of the incumbent party's economic performance do not match partisan expectations, the relationship between party feeling thermometers becomes more positive (less negative). Analysis of open-ended measures obtained during the experiment show that this correlational variation corresponds to an increased propensity to rely on lesser of two evils identity justification. Moreover, factor analyses demonstrate the emergence of a second attitude dimension on which liking one party less is associated with liking the other party less as well—also consistent with lesser of two evils identity justification.

The primary dependent variable of interest in this chapter has been the relationship between attitudes toward political parties, but the same process may affect other attitudes in similar ways. We have seen that when party identification is threatened, attitudes toward parties cease to reinforce one another, and partisans begin to evaluate parties in two-dimensional space. However, the theory could just as easily be applied to attitudes toward policies. If an individual comes to disagree with her party over a certain issue, she may compensate by reporting more positive attitudes toward some other policy supported by her party. Therefore, two policy dimensions that one would expect to be positively related may become less positively or even negatively related to one another. For instance, a Republican frustrated with her party's Iraq policy might justify continued identification with her party by taking a hard line against illegal immigration or economic intervention. Such counterintuitive attitudinal dynamics might help to explain what

appears to be a lack of attitude constraint and a preponderance of non-attitudes in the electorate (Converse 1964).

While debates over party identification have traditionally pitted the irrationally loyal partisan against the rationally updating partisan, the results presented here suggest that this is a false dichotomy. Partisans do not necessarily ignore relevant political information in order to preserve their identities, nor does party identification appear to constitute a perfect running tally of attitudes. Instead, individuals find ways to incorporate inconsistent attitudes into their existing identities without actually changing them.

In sum, voters are certainly not fools (Key 1966), yet they do not appear to be perfect stewards of democracy either. Rather, they are highly adept at justifying their identities in an effort to preserve the psychological utility associated with partisan loyalty. The downside of this cognitively creative method of dissonance reduction is that it reduces the efficiency of party identification as a voting heuristic. If individuals are motivated and able to resist updating their party identities to reflect their issue attitudes and political evaluations, then voting one's party identity is not the equivalent of voting one's interests. The next chapter will examine the conditions under which partisan identity defenses are likely to fail in order to determine whether stable party identification is contingent on identity justification.

**Table 2.1: Experimental Design**

Condition	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Disagreement	Viewed advertisement	Reported issue attitudes	Received partisan cues (via video format)
Party Cues	Viewed advertisement	Received partisan cues (embedded in ad)	Reported issue attitudes
Control	Reported issue attitudes (no advertisement)		

**Table 2.2: The Effects of Disagreement and Word Count on Attitudes toward Parties**

<i>Difference Between Attitudes Toward Democratic Party and Attitudes Toward Republican Party</i> (N= 183)	
	<i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )
Constant	47.45*** (10.17)
Disagreement	-14.98 (11.68)
Party Cues	-17.52 (11.82)
Word Count	-.180 (.14)
Disagreement*Word Count	.269* (.15)
Party Cues*Word Count	.354** (.17)
R-Squared	.042

\*\*\*p<.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10

Note: Results are obtained through standard OLS Regression. Differences between party feeling thermometers are calculated by subtracting feelings toward the Republican Party from feelings toward the Democratic Party.

**Table 2.3: Correlations between Attitudes toward the Republican and Democratic Parties by Condition**

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	Correlation between Attitudes Toward Republicans and Democrats
Control (No Disagreement) (n=35)	-.58
Party Cues (n=71)	-.25*
Disagreement (n=77)	.08***

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\*\*\*p<.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10

Note: Significance levels are calculated relative to the control group. The control group itself is significantly different from zero (p<.001).

**Table 2.4: Exploratory Factor Analysis of Partisan Attitudes by Condition (Unrotated)**

	Control (n=34)	Party Cues (n=68)	Disagreement (n=75)	
	Component 1	Component 1	Component 1	Component 2
Support Democrats	.876	.731	.824	.362
Oppose Democrats	-.724	-.408	-.700	-.258
Support Republicans	-.829	-.478	-.697	.546
Oppose Republicans	.813	.781	.550	-.401
Democrats Thermometer	.824	.795	.609	.557
Republicans Thermometer	-.771	-.376	-.541	.607
Party Id Strength	.594	.767	.652	.164
Eigenvalue	4.63	3.39	3.40	1.70
Variance Explained	66.20%	48.47%	48.60%	24.28%
Variance Explained by Extracted Factors	66.20%	48.46%	72.88%	

Note: Eigenvalue cutoffs are set to 1.0 (Kaiser's Rule). Cattell's scree test yields the same number of factors, as indicated by the Eigenvalues. Extractions are based on principal axis factoring.

**Table 2.5: The Effect of Incumbent Party Performance on the Dimensionality of Partisan Attitudes**

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*Panel Corrected Standard Errors Model*

Dependent Variable:  
Correlation between  
Attitudes toward  
Democrats and Republicans  
(N= 40)

*B*  
(*SE*)

---

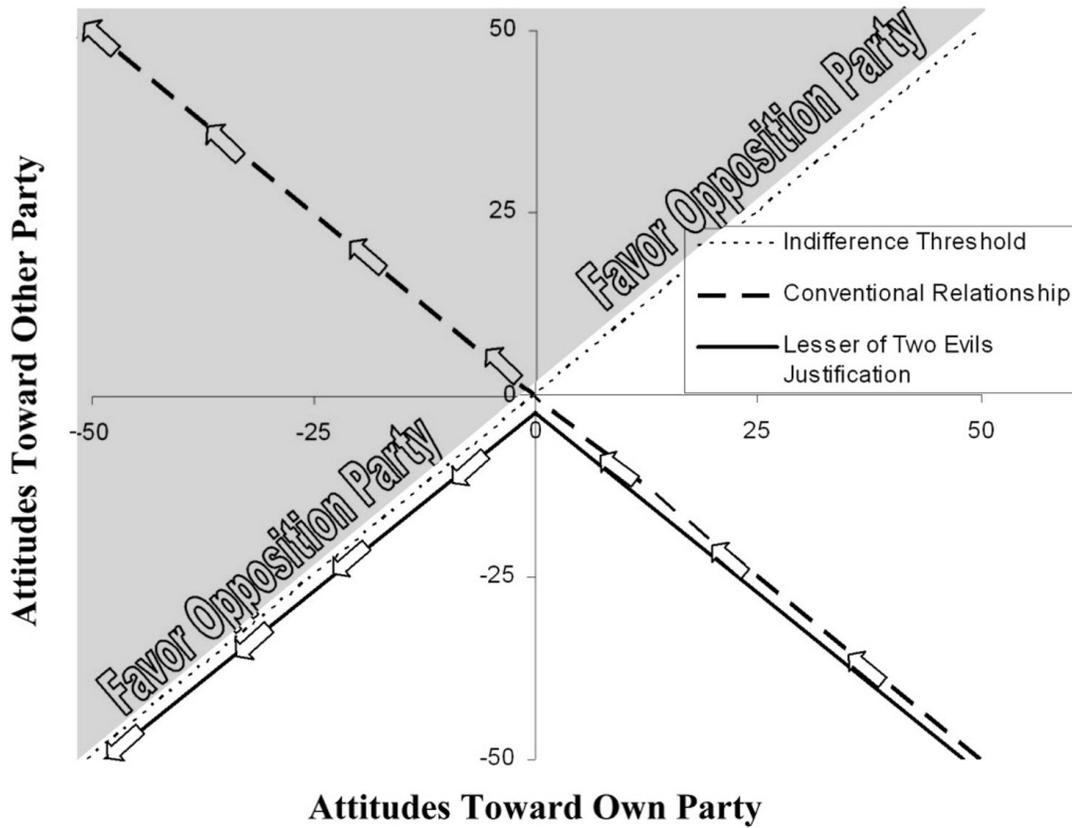
Constant	.006 (.023)
Economic Performance	.012 (.008)
Own Party Incumbent	.045** (.018)
Own Party Incumbent* Economic Performance	-.020** (.008)
Party Question	-.103*** (.028)
Partisan Polarization	-.884*** (.195)
<hr/>	
R-Squared	.610

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\*\*\*p<.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10

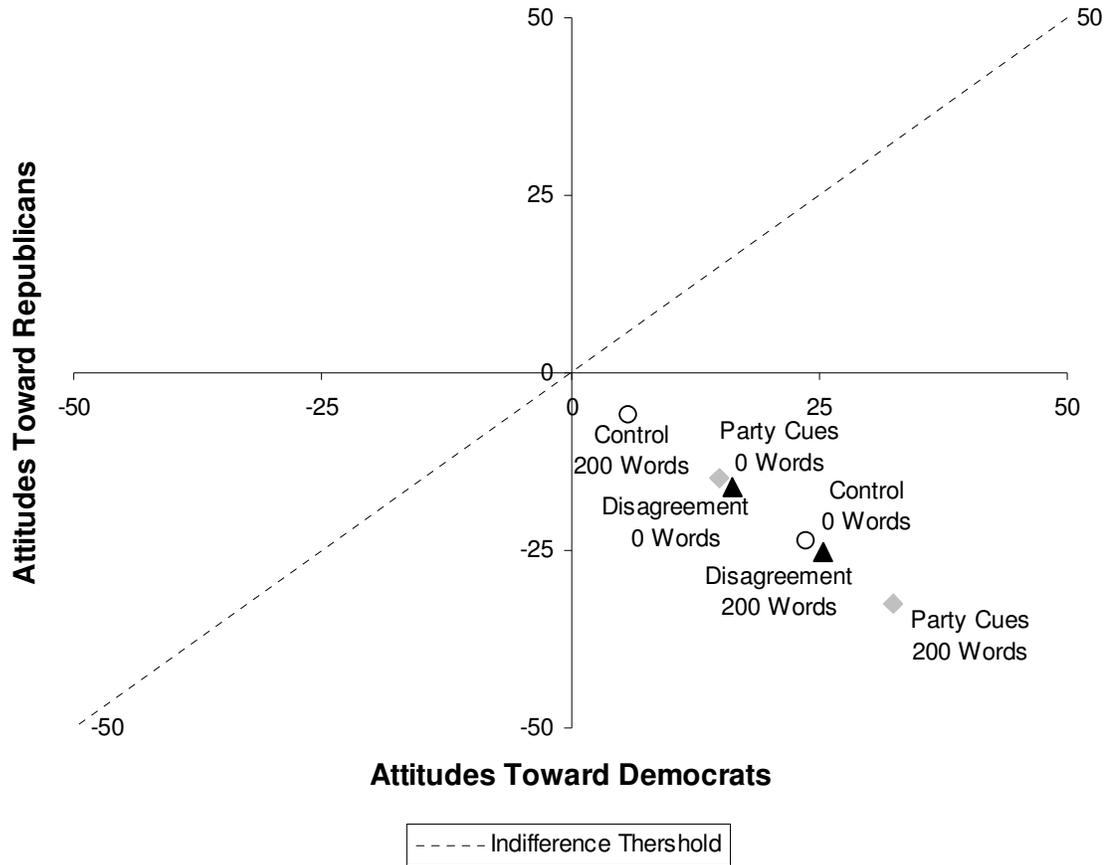
Note: Correlations between party feeling thermometers are calculated for each year they are available in the ANES. These correlation coefficients are used as the dependent variable in this aggregate level time-series analysis. Correlations are calculated separately for Republican and Democratic respondents (includes leaners). The two partisan groups are pooled in this analysis.

**Figure 2.1: Lesser of Two Evils Attitude Dynamics**



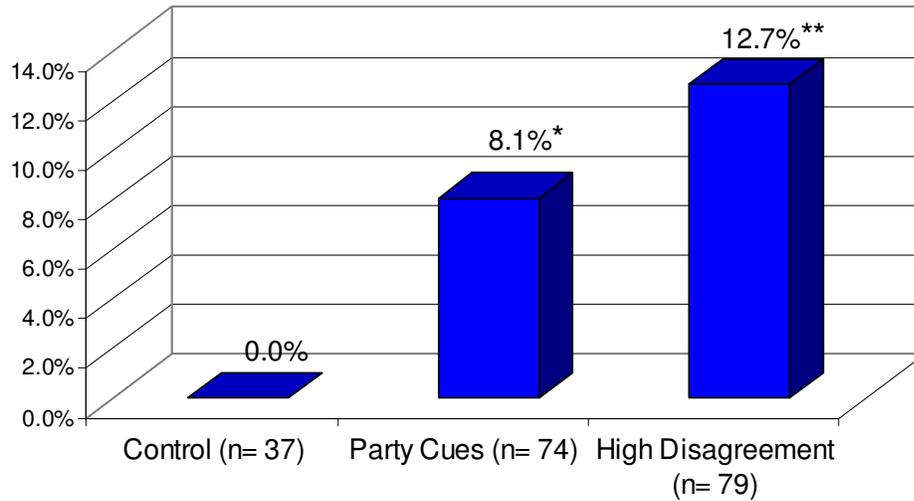
Note: The figure represents attitudes toward parties in two-dimensional space. Conventionally, the more a person likes one party, the less that person dislikes the other party. However, partisans come up with justification that allow them to avoid crossing over the indifference threshold—at which point they are acknowledging that they like the other party more than their own party. When the indifference threshold is crossed, stable identification with one’s party cannot be justified. Less of two evils justification is one common form of identity defense in which—as they approach the indifference threshold—partisans reporting disliking the other party the more they dislike their own party (a positive relationship).

**Figure 2.2: The Effects of Disagreement and Word Count on Attitudes toward Parties**



Note: This figure assumes a perfect negative relationship between attitudes toward the Republican and Democratic Parties. Regression results make it possible to predict the distance from the indifference threshold given experimental condition and word count. However, these points need not line up on a perfect diagonal line. They are merely displayed in this manner to facilitate comparison with Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.3: Open-Ended Lesser of Two Evils Responses by Condition**

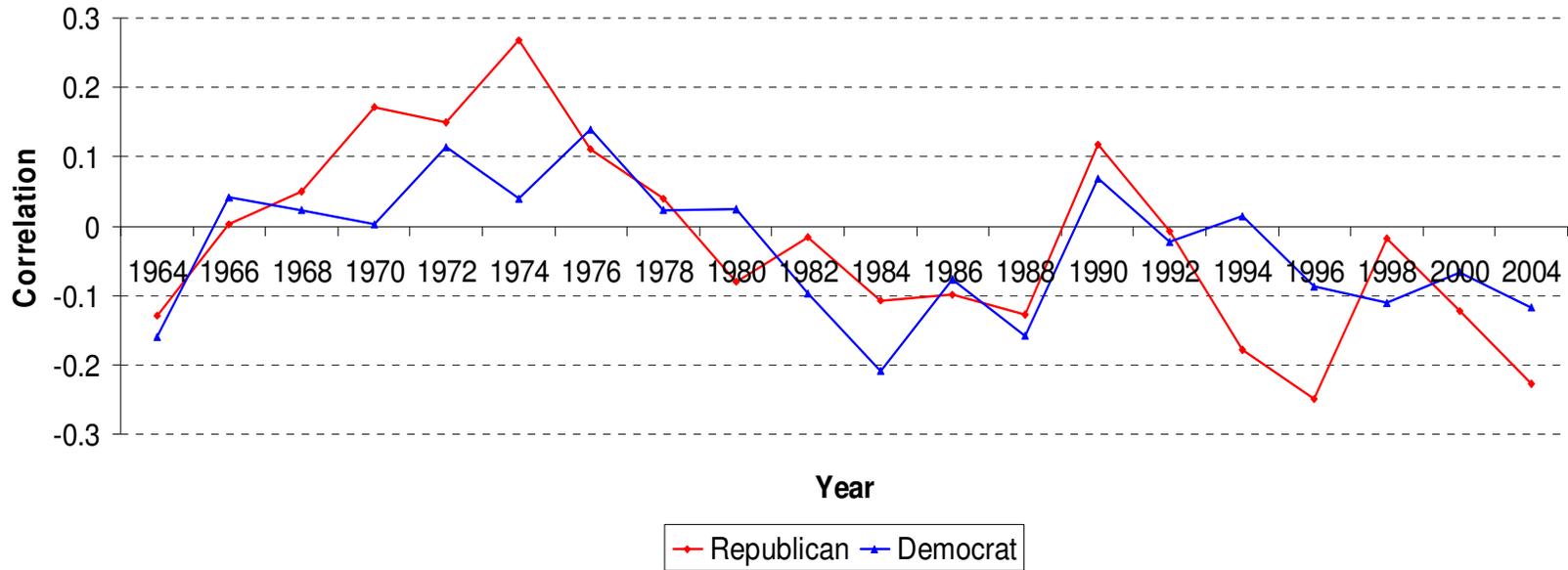


\*\*\* $p < .01$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \* $p < .10$  (one-tailed Fisher's Exact Test).

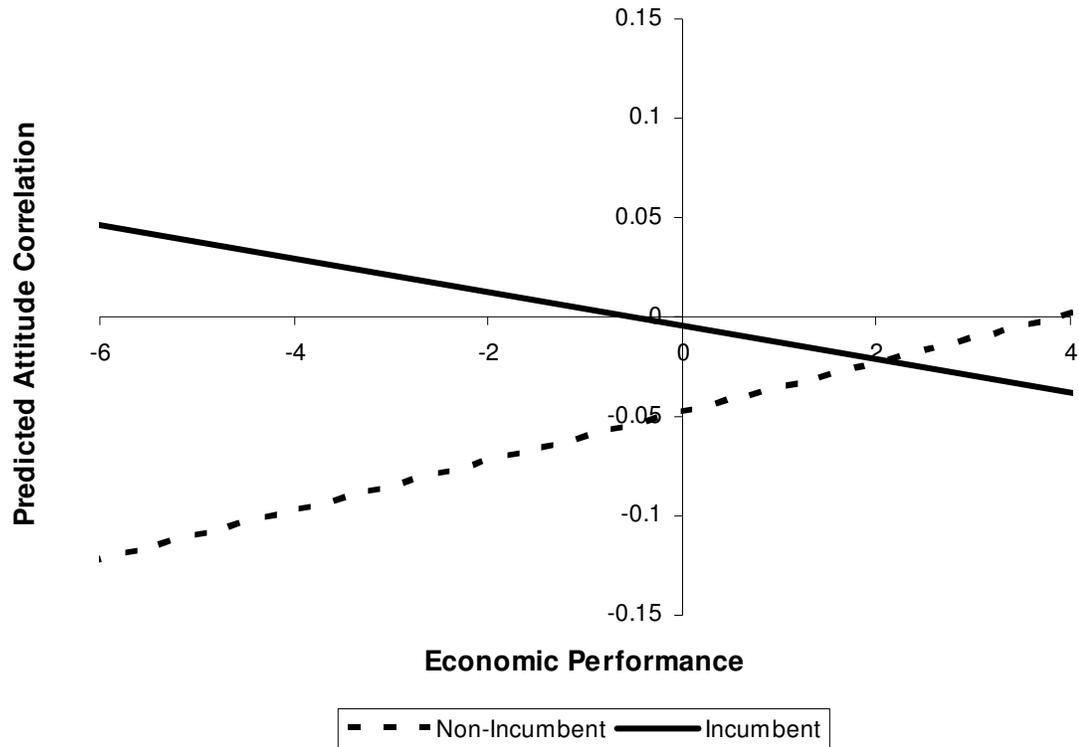
Note: Cell entries represent percentage of responses coded "1" for lesser of two evils justification.

Significance levels are based on Fisher's Exact Tests—a non-parametric test (based on medians) used when dealing with dichotomous dependent variables and very low positive outcome frequencies. Comparisons are made with respect to the control group.

Figure 2.4: Temporal Variations in Correlation between Attitudes toward Democrats and Republicans



**Figure 2.5: The Effect of Incumbent Party Performance on the Dimensionality of Partisan Attitudes**



Note: Findings come from OLS regression with panel corrected standard errors. The dependent variable is the correlation between attitudes toward the two parties among Republicans and Democrats in a given year. The figure illustrates how these correlations systematically vary with political context. When politics conforms to partisan expectations (one's own party performs well or the other party performs poorly) the relationship is strongly negative. However, the correlation shifts in a positive direction when political events challenge partisan expectations (one's own party performs poorly or the other party performs well). This pattern fits with the theory that when party identification is challenged, individuals attempt to justify their identities—resulting in the emergence of a second partisan attitude dimension.

## Appendix

### Scene 1:

**Audio:** Paid for by the working men and women of the AFL-CIO



### Scene 2:

**Audio:** Senator: “. . . and you told your employees to buy while you sold?”



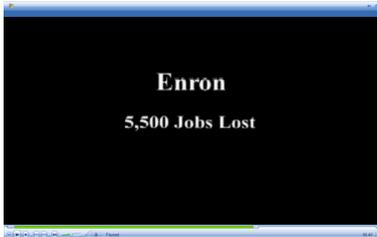
### Scene 3:

**Audio:** “Again, I’m taking the Fifth Amendment Senator.”  
**Text:** The Bankruptcy Abuse Bill



### Scene 4:

**Text:** Enron: 5,500 Jobs Lost  
**Text:** Global Crossing: 5,020 Jobs Lost  
**Text:** WorldCom: 24,000 Jobs Lost



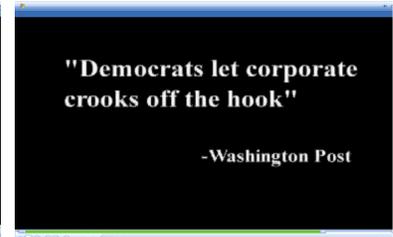
### Scene 5:

**Text:** People Just like you lost their life savings.  
**Text:** While corporate elites made millions.  
**Text:** What could be more important?



### Scene 6: Partisan Cues Condition Only

**Text:** “Democrats let corporate crooks off the hook”—  
Washington Post  
**Text:** “Democrats are simply wrong on bankruptcy abuse”—  
Boston Globe



### Scene 7: Partisan Cues Condition Only

**Text:** “Democrats are playing politics with people’s lives”—  
New York Times



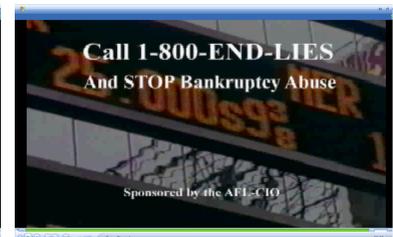
### Scene 8: Partisan Cues Condition Only

**Text:** Don’t let Democrats Kill the Bankruptcy Abuse Bill



### Scene 9:

**Text:** Call 1-800-END-LIES And STOP Bankruptcy Abuse



## Chapter Three

### Cognitive Resources and Resistance to Identity Change

In Chapter 2, we saw that partisans generate identity justifications when their identities are threatened. Presumably, these justifications allow partisans to maintain stable identities despite holding attitudes that conflict with them. In this chapter, I will directly test this assumption by again manipulating consistency between subjects' attitudes and party identities, but this time I will also manipulate the cognitive resources subjects have available to deal with this inconsistency. The dual motivations theory of party identification suggests that, given inconsistency between their attitudes and party identities, individuals will devote their available cognitive resources to justifying their existing identities. This runs directly against revisionist wisdom which suggests that partisans devote cognitive resources to updating their identities to reflect their attitudes.

To simply change one's identity to reflect one's attitudes would satisfy an individual's responsiveness motivation, but it would also mean acting against one's partisan motivation. In other words, it would entail a psychological cost. On the other hand, if an individual generates a justification for maintaining his or her existing identity, that person can maintain a loyal party identity while also appearing to be a unbiased and pragmatic citizen—thereby satisfying both partisan and responsiveness motivations simultaneously. Therefore, it follows that partisans should devote their cognitive

resources to pursuing this strategy. Consequently party identification should change most often and most significantly when individual lack cognitive resources.

### *Resource Allocation in Social Cognition*

When the literature on party identification and the literature on stereotyping are placed side-by-side, the parallels are hard to miss. Traditionally, party identification has been characterized as a stable predisposition which biases citizens' perceptions of their political environment and persists as a result of "perceptual screening" (Campbell et al. 1960). But many scholars now characterize party identification as a useful heuristic for simplifying politics (Huckfeldt et al. 1999; Popkin 1991; Shively 1979; Schaffner and Streb 2002; Tomz and Sniderman 2005; Brady and Sniderman 1985).

Similarly, the stereotyping literature, which was once dominated by theories that stressed group biases and ego defense, has taken a more cognitively oriented turn (Duckitt 2003; Brewer and Kramer 1985). As in the party identification literature, one line of research examines the role of stereotypes as processing heuristics that free up cognitive resources (Macrae et al. 1994). In these models, stereotypes are thought to operate quite efficiently, enabling individuals to reach judgments that are nearly as accurate without expending as many resources, though it is acknowledged that directional motivation may undermine this efficiency (Sherman et al. 1998). Another line of scholarship builds more directly on the traditional view, noting the fact that stereotypes are notoriously difficult to change and examining the process of stereotype maintenance (Hilton and von Hippel 1996). Much of this work builds on the premise that stereotype

maintenance is rooted in directional motivation, which I refer to as partisan motivation for the purposes of this dissertation (Kunda and Oleson 1995; Yzerbyt et al. 1999).

Interestingly, Walter Lippmann, who brought the term “stereotype” to the social sciences in his classic *Public Opinion* (1922), anticipated the distinction between stereotyping as a heuristic and stereotyping as a defensive reaction.

There is another reason, besides economy of effort, why we so often hold to our stereotypes when we might pursue a more disinterested vision. The systems of stereotypes may be the core of our personal tradition, the defenses of our position in society (p. 63).

Recently, researchers have begun to integrate these two views of stereotypes by taking a context-dependent view of their functionality (Hilton and von Hippel 1996). To the degree that stereotypes facilitate processing efficiency, one would predict that, given exposure to information inconsistent with a particular stereotype, an individual should update that stereotype in order to maintain its efficiency. However, studies show that when subjects are exposed to individuals who belong to a stereotyped group, yet deviate from the group stereotype, they are subtyped or “fenced off” so that the stereotype is preserved (Yzerbyt et al. 1999; Kunda and Oleson 1995). Because stereotypes facilitate downward social comparison and bolster self-esteem, individuals are motivated to maintain them. Several experiments have shown that individuals engage in stereotyping and other forms of outgroup derogation when their self-esteem is threatened, and this brings their self-esteem back up to baseline (Fein and Spencer 1997; Crocker and Luhtanen 1990). In short, while stereotypes may reduce processing effort, individuals often fail to update their stereotypes—rendering them inaccurate and therefore inefficient.

Additionally, if stereotypes are tools which exist to facilitate cognitive processing when resources are in short supply, then presumably, when cognitive resources are available they should be allocated to the honing of these tools. However, if the motivation to maintain a stereotype is greater than the motivation to reach an accurate evaluation, the opposite may be true—individuals should devote their cognitive resources to defending their stereotypes and only change their stereotypes when cognitive resources are insufficient to mount an effective defense. Classic research into attitude change demonstrates that distracted individuals can be persuaded more easily than non-distracted individuals (Festinger and Maccoby 1964). This rather counter-intuitive finding is attributed to the inability of distracted individuals to effectively counter-argue a persuasive message. While this theory was originally quite controversial, the preponderance of subsequent tests support this conclusion (Baron and Baron 1973). The consensus view now holds that any inhibition of one's cognitive resources is likely to inhibit that individual's dominant cognitive response—regardless of whether that response is to counter-argue or accept the message (Yzerbyt et al. 1999; Petty and Cacioppo 1986).

In applying this logic to stereotypes, Yzerbyt et al. (1999) ran a series of experiments in which they manipulated cognitive resources during an encounter with a member of a stereotyped group who deviated from that stereotype. As expected, results showed that individuals devote their cognitive resources to stereotype maintenance rather than updating their preconceptions to reflect new information. Most stereotype change occurred when subjects encountered deviant individuals but lacked the cognitive resources necessary to preserve their stereotypes.

When it comes to party identification, an aspect of one's self-concept (Campbell et al. 1960; Campbell et al. 1954; Green et al. 2002), individuals are motivated to counter-argue any message that threatens their identity. While party identification may serve as a heuristic, processing efficiency is not a partisans' only motivation. When partisans discover inconsistencies between their attitudes and their identities, they may resolve these inconsistencies without changing their party identity. And just like stereotype maintenance, partisan identity maintenance is likely to require cognitive resources.

*Cognitive Resources Hypothesis:* When cognitive resources are limited, partisans will be more likely to bring their identities into alignment with their attitudes.

## **Experiment**

In order to determine whether partisan stability is, in fact, contingent on one's efforts to defend his or her identity, both the consistency between attitudes and identity and the cognitive resources available to reconcile that inconsistency must be varied independently. I achieve this test in a second experiment. The literature reviewed above suggests that party identification is most likely to change when individuals disagree with their party, but when they also have insufficient cognitive resources available to justify their current identity.

## **Method**

*Participants.* During May of 2007, 400 subjects participated in an experiment administered over the Internet through YouGov/Polimetrix.<sup>17</sup> YouGov/Polimetrix conducts surveys through their website [www.pollingpoint.com](http://www.pollingpoint.com). Based on demographics, they match respondents to a target matrix they have developed using voter lists and consumer databases.<sup>18</sup> For this study, 961 respondents were interviewed and matched down to a sample of 400 to produce the final data set. Subjects were matched on gender, age, race, education, and party identification. Sample matching occurred completely independently from experimental randomization.

*Materials.* All participants were asked to read a newspaper editorial about a fictitious bill entitled “The Common Sense in Outsourcing Bill” soon to be introduced in Congress. The bill proposed to reduce outsourcing through tax incentives and outlaw the outsourcing of federal government contracts. No partisan cues were provided in the article. The issue of outsourcing was chosen because it had received a great deal of media attention, yet neither party had taken a united and unambiguous stance on the issue at the time of the experiment. The argument made in the article was carefully crafted to avoid partisan or ideological flavoring that might substitute as a partisan cue for readers. After reading the article, respondents were asked whether they supported or opposed passage of this bill. Since no cues were provided and the information flow was

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<sup>17</sup> Originally, I intended to only sample 200 respondents. However, due to an error on the part of YouGov/Polimetrix, they offered to re-run my entire study free of charge. Their error was in neglecting to sample Asian participants and allowing four individuals under the age of 18 (2 of 16-year and 2 of 17-years) to slip into the sample. However, given the fact that these errors are unlikely to have any significant impact on the results of the study, all 400 respondents are used in these analyses.

<sup>18</sup> This regularly updated target matrix is what they use to define a representative sample. By modeling response and participation rates, they also take care to avoid selection effects. YouGov/Polimetrix samples have been found to perform at least as well as other polling methods in predicting election outcomes. Information is available at [www.polimetrix.com](http://www.polimetrix.com).

unidirectional, subjects were expected to express support for the bill. The articles are included in Appendix B.

*Procedure.* The experiment employed a 2 x 2 (disagreement x cognitive resources) design. All participants were randomly assigned to either the *disagree* condition or the *neutral* condition. Those assigned to the *neutral* condition were asked to read a second newspaper article stressing the potential electoral significance of “The Common Sense in Outsourcing Bill” as well as the notion that the bill had a mixture of support and opposition within both parties. The article also added that none of the leading contenders for the 2008 presidential race had yet taken a stance on the bill. Those assigned to the *disagree* condition read an article that was virtually identical except for the fact that it stressed that the parties and candidates had taken clear and opposite stances on the outsourcing bill. Republicans and those leaning Republican were told that the Republicans opposed the bill and Democrats supported it. Democrats and those leaning Democrat were told the opposite.<sup>19</sup> In other words, as long as respondents expressed support for the fictitious outsourcing bill, they would experience disagreement with their party over the bill.

Cognitive resources were manipulated through a standard cognitive load induction in which respondents were asked to recall either a single-digit number (in the low cognitive load condition) or a six-digit number (in the high cognitive load condition). This technique for manipulating cognitive load has been successfully employed in other studies (Yzerbyt et al. 1999; Gilbert and Hixon 1991; Sherman et al. 1998; Gilbert and

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<sup>19</sup> Party identification was determined using the *past party identification* measure described in the measures section. The measure was obtained from the YouGov/Polimetrix files. Pure Independents were randomly assigned to either get the Republican article or the Democrat article. However, as will be explained later, pure Independents are excluded from analysis, since they do not have a preferred party to disagree with.

Osborne 1989).<sup>20</sup> Subjects were told that they were participating in a memory study designed to determine how well people are able to remember information they read in the newspaper. The idea in providing this cover story was to ensure that subjects would make every effort to remember their number while still reading the newspaper article carefully. Subjects were also informed that, in the second part of the study, they would be asked to fill out a short public opinion survey. They were told that, at some point during the survey, they would be asked to recall the number they were assigned. In reality, all subjects were asked to recall their number at the same point during the survey. Subjects were given their number just after reporting their position on “The Common Sense in Outsourcing Bill.” They were then expected to hold the number in memory as they read the second article (which, in the disagree condition, revealed to them that they had just taken a position at odds with their own party and consistent with the opposition party) and answer the subsequent questions regarding their party identification. Immediately after this, they were asked to recall the number.

Again, the idea behind this manipulation was that partisans should attempt to reconcile inconsistency between their issue attitude and party identification immediately after realizing the inconsistency. This pressure to reconcile inconsistency should have been particularly acute at the point when subjects were asked about their party identification. The dual motivations theory suggests that partisan identity change should become more prominent as the ability to justify maintaining one’s identity decreases. When cognitive resources are inhibited through the induction of cognitive load, subjects should have a more difficult time constructing a justification for continued identification

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<sup>20</sup> In other studies, subjects have been asked to recall an eight-digit number. The capacity of working memory is thought to be seven “chunks,” plus or minus two (Miller 1956). This study used a six-digit number in hopes of severely reducing but not overloading cognitive capacity.

with their party. Therefore, under cognitive load, disagreement is expected to exert a greater degree of party identification change.

To further test the theory, I will examine three additional variables likely to be associated with one's ability to justify maintaining her identity: age, political sophistication, and Democratic identity. Age is a well-known correlate of partisan stability, but several competing theories have been proposed to explain this empirical phenomenon (see Sears and Levy 2003). The dual motivations theory suggests that older, more experienced, partisans may be better able to justify their identities, and this is, at least in part, why their identities are more stable. Likewise, individuals with higher levels of political sophistication are expected to have an easier time developing justifications for their identities. Finally, given the political climate in which the study was run (May 2007), Democratic identifiers are expected to have had an easier time justifying their identities than Republicans—simply due to the salience of positive versus negative information about the two parties at the time of the study. The figures below outline the expected pattern of interaction.

[Insert Figures 3.1]

This investigation assumes that the ability to justify one's identity exists on a continuum. While cognitive load, age, political sophistication, and Democratic identity should all affect where an individual falls on this continuum, it is difficult to know at what point justification will give way to partisan change. For instance, partisans of all ages may be able to avoid updating their identities in response to disagreement as long as they have sufficient cognitive resources (see Figure 3.1, Panel A). However, once cognitive load is induced, partisan updating may occur among younger partisans, while

older partisans show continued stability (see Figure 3.1, Panel B). On the other hand, disagreement may lead the least politically sophisticated partisans to change their identities even if their cognitive resources are unencumbered, while their more sophisticated counterparts avoid identity change as long as they are not put under cognitive load (see Figure 3.1, Panel B). After being put under cognitive load, however, even the most sophisticated partisans may begin to update their identities in response to disagreement (see Figure 3.1, Panel C). In other words, partisan stability should first give way among the most vulnerable and then begin to overtake those who are less susceptible. Vulnerability may stem from youth, low political sophistication, a hostile political environment, or a lack of cognitive resources. If all four variables converge on the expected pattern, the likelihood is reduced that any one alternative explanation will remain plausible.

All analyses are conducted using ordered probit regression to account for potential variation in the size of intervals between levels of party identification strength.<sup>21</sup> In order to facilitate interpretation, results are reported as predicted probabilities. Specifically, probabilities pertain to the likelihood of starting off as a strong identifier at time  $t-1$  and remaining a strong identifier at time  $t$ . Ordered probit regression tables with cut points are included in Appendix A.

*Measures.* A variable measuring past party identification strength prior to the stimulus is created by simply folding the standard 7-point party identification measure in

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<sup>21</sup> As explained in more detail below, party identification strength serves as the dependent variable rather than the standard 7-point measure of party identification. The reason for using this measure is that I am interested in determining what weakens party identification, not what makes a person a Republican versus what makes a person a Democrat. Therefore, a valence (strong identity to no identity) scale is appropriate rather than a bipolar scale (Strong Republican to Strong Democrat). It is important to note that this is not the standard measure of party identification strength, because partisans who crossover from one party to the other are coded as having zero strength.

half. The new scale runs from 0 to 3. Strong Democrats as well as strong Republicans are coded as 3, weak partisans are coded as 2, leaners are coded as 1, and pure independents are coded as 0. Because YouGov/Polimetrix uses sample matching to obtain nationally representative samples, they have party identification on record for everyone in their respondent pool. Thus, it is possible to avoid the inevitable biases that would result if party identification were obtained immediately prior to the treatment.

Current party identification strength serves as the primary dependent variable of interest in this study, and is therefore measured after exposure to the stimulus. It is coded identically to past party identification strength except that those partisans who crossed over from one party to the other from time  $t-1$  to time  $t$  are coded as having zero strength.<sup>22</sup>

I measure political sophistication using a 7-item battery. Therefore, the political sophistication variable runs from 0 (none correct) to 7 (all correct). This battery contains a variety of multiple choice questions about political figures and institutions. More specifically, respondents were asked to identify the jobs filled by Nancy Pelosi, John Roberts, Tony Snow, and Tony Blair. Participants were also asked how many votes it takes to override a veto, which branch has the power to determine whether or not a law is constitutional, and which branch has the power of the purse. Surprisingly, the mean level of political sophistication is quite high ( $M=5.43$ ,  $SD=1.91$ ), but there is substantial variation across the scale.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Tests were also run using a measure in which crossover partisans were coded as having negative identity strength (i.e. a  $t-1$  Republican who identifies as a Strong Democrat in time  $t$  is coded -3 to indicate strong identification with the *other* party), and results do not substantively differ.

<sup>23</sup> In a recent experiment, Prior and Lupia (2008) find that subjects score substantially higher on political knowledge questions when given more time or monetary incentives for correct answers. This means that online studies such as those administered by YouGov/Polimetrix should yield substantially higher knowledge scores than traditional telephone or even face to face surveys in which interviewers are waiting

Dummy variables are created to represent exposure to the treatment, which include disagreement and cognitive load. Subjects assigned to the treatment conditions receive a value of “1” and all others receive a value of “0”.

## **Results**

To start, I examine whether the first article actually persuaded participants to support “The Common Sense in Outsourcing Bill.” To manipulate disagreement with one’s party, it was essential for respondents to take a position on the outsourcing bill. Results suggest that the article did produce the anticipated outcome. Support for the bill is measured on a 7-point scale ranging from “strongly oppose” to “strongly support.” Those who self-identified in the pre-interview as a partisan or an independent leaning toward a party tended to support the bill ( $M= 5.39$ ,  $SD= 1.67$ ) as did the fifty-two “pure Independents” ( $M= 5.33$ ,  $SD= 2.02$ ). In all, 75-percent of the sample expressed support for the bill with approximately 35-percent reporting the maximum level of support. Support for the bill is not correlated with knowledge ( $r = -.03$ ) or age ( $r = .02$ ). Democrats were significantly more supportive of the bill ( $M= 5.65$ ,  $SD= 1.41$ ) than were Republicans ( $M= 5.11$ ,  $SD= 1.89$ ),  $t((df= 345)= 3.03$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Nonetheless, means suggest that both partisan groups supported the bill. Democrats’ higher level of support means that the manipulation may have been somewhat more powerful for them. Therefore, if anything, revisionist theories of party identification would suggest that

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for participants to respond. Prior and Lupia argue that such measures are superior because they capture the relevant skills necessary to acquire political information.

Democrats should have been more likely to update their party identities than Republicans. As you will see shortly, however, this is not the case.<sup>24</sup>

The cognitive load manipulation appears to have been quite successful. Just under 93 percent of subjects were able to successfully recall their assigned number. As one would expect, more subjects were able to correctly recall their number in the minimal cognitive load condition (where subjects were asked to remember the number “7”) than in the high cognitive load condition (where subjects were asked to remember the number “406391”). However, even in the high cognitive load condition 89.84 percent ( $SD = .205$ ) of subjects correctly recalled their number compared with 95.65 percent ( $SD = .303$ ) in the minimal load condition  $t(df = 346) = 2.12; p < .05$ . In order to ensure that the cognitive load manipulation did not undercut the power of the disagreement manipulation, I also examine subjects’ ability to correctly recall which party supported and which party opposed the bill in the minimal cognitive load versus high cognitive load conditions. No significant differences in recall of party positions are found between respondents in the cognitive load condition ( $M = .80, SD = .40$ ) versus the no cognitive load condition ( $M = .76, SD = 0.43$ ),  $t(df = 342) = 1.08$ . If anything, those in the cognitive load condition were slightly better at correctly recalling the parties’ positions. Nor were differences in party position recall found between the no disagreement ( $M = .78, SD = .42$ ) and disagreement conditions ( $M = .79, SD = .41$ ),  $t(df = 342) = 0.16$ . Moreover, no significant

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<sup>24</sup> From this point forward, pure Independents will be excluded from analysis unless otherwise indicated. The experiment attempts to spark disagreement between partisans and their favored party. Since pure Independents do not indicate a partisan preference, this manipulation is less applicable to them. Independents in the treatment condition were randomly assigned to receive either the Republican or Democratic stimulus. Therefore, effects on Independents will be periodically reported in the footnotes. Since Independents do not have a party to disagree with, their inclusion in partisan analyses would muddy the results. Given that the debate primarily pertains to whether partisans are motivated to defend or update their identities when they disagree with their party, it seems to be a reasonable course of action to focus on partisan identifiers and those who lean toward a particular party.

disparity appears between Republicans' ( $M = .82, SD = .39$ ) and Democrats' ( $M = .75, SD = .43$ ) ability to correctly recall which party supported and which party opposed the bill  $t(df = 342) = 1.51$ . Finally, random assignment appears to have been successful. No differences emerge between conditions in age, political sophistication, party identification, or strength of party identification prior to treatment.

Table 3.1 displays pre and post treatment party identification. While party identification does tend toward stability, variation is apparent. Since even small amounts of aggregate level variation in party identification can have major electoral consequences (MacKuen et al. 1989), these dynamics are important to understand. The question is, of course, whether this variation results from partisan updating or random error (Green et al. 2002; Green and Palmquist 1990, 1994).

[Insert Table 3.1]

In order to determine causality, I begin by first examining the effects of disagreement on party identification strength while controlling for past party identification strength.<sup>25</sup> Results suggest that when cognitive resources are unencumbered, disagreement has no effect on party identification strength. Thus, results appear at first to be consistent with the classic model, which portrays party identification as a stable socialized identity. However, when subjects are placed under cognitive load, the results appear more intriguing. In this group, a reasonably large coefficient ( $B = -.268; SE = .174$ ) emerges for disagreement, but this effect narrowly misses the standard threshold for statistical significance ( $p = .12$ ).

As discussed above, however, factors such as age, political sophistication, and Democratic identity are also expected to affect one's ability to justify her identity. When

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<sup>25</sup> See Table 3.1 in Appendix A.

these controls are included in the model, disagreement has a significant negative effect on party identification strength as long as subjects are placed under cognitive load ( $p < .10$ ). When cognitive resources are unencumbered, the coefficient on disagreement remains small and non-significant as predicted. The predicted probability of maintaining a strong party identity is displayed in Figure 3.2. In the absence of disagreement, those placed under cognitive load have a 79% chance of maintaining a strong identity from pre to post treatment. However, when disagreement is experienced under cognitive load, this probability drops to 69%.

[Insert Figure 3.2]

While the effect of disagreement under cognitive load is certainly not enormous, it is noteworthy given the reputation of party identification as the “unmoved mover” in political behavior research. Consistent with the dual motivations theory, significant partisan weakening only occurs when cognitive resources are scarce (See Figure 3.1, Panel B). However, the result is only suggestive, since the moderating influence of cognitive load is not statistically significant. In other words, party identification change has been established in the cognitive load condition, but the possibility of an equally large change in the absence of cognitive load cannot be ruled out.

As suggested above, the theory implies that effects should be larger among groups who are less able to defend their identities to begin with, such as the young, the politically unsophisticated, and those whose justification abilities are impeded by the political environment. Therefore, I now turn to an examination of these potentially moderating variables.

*Age.* Age is a well-known correlate of party identification stability, but this empirical regularity has been surrounded by theoretical controversy. While some favor an “impressionable years” model, others favor a “lifelong openness” model (Sears and Levy 2003). Those favoring the impressionable years model suggest that party identification is susceptible to change during an individual’s “impressionable years,” but party identification crystallizes with age and exposure to successive campaigns (Valentino and Sears 1998; Sears and Valentino 1997; Campbell et al. 1960; Alwin and Krosnick 1991). Once partisans reach their thirties, party identification becomes fully crystallized and unlikely to change thereafter. However, revisionist scholars interpret the relationship between age and stability quite differently, arguing that, as individuals gain experience, they become more confident in their assessments of where they stand relative to the parties. Thus the need for partisan adjustment is reduced, and this is reflected in increasingly stable party identities (Franklin 1984; Achen 1992, 2002). In other words, partisans may have a “life-long openness” to identity change, even though their party identities become more stable over time.

The dual motivations model suggests a third possibility. This model provides a role for motivated reasoning, without necessarily contradicting the impressionable years or lifelong openness models. The dual motivations approach suggests that age and experience facilitate an individuals’ ability to justify his or her party identity. Therefore, stability increases with age, at least in part, because partisans get better at defending their identities against contradictory information as they gain experience.<sup>26</sup> From this

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<sup>26</sup> The author acknowledges that this relationship is only true up to the point where the experience that comes with age is outweighed by the cognitive deterioration that comes with age. To avoid overcomplicating the model, age is simply dichotomized at thirty-five years old in order to focus the comparison between those who lack political experience versus those who do not, thereby avoiding the

perspective, partisans are most susceptible to change during their impressionable years, yet they also possess a lifelong openness to change if their defenses give way.

To test this proposition, I analyze the combined effects of age and disagreement in the presence and absence of cognitive load. For the purpose of this analysis, age is coded as a dummy variable in which those who are thirty-five years old and under are coded as a “0,” and those who are over thirty-five are coded at “1” (see footnote 10). Thirty-five serves as a as a rough cutoff for the end of the impressionable years life stage. When the dummy variable “over-thirty five” is interacted with disagreement, no disagreement effects emerge among those whose cognitive abilities are unencumbered—even those under thirty-five years of age.<sup>27</sup> However, among those placed under cognitive load, the story is much different. Partisans under thirty-five show substantial partisan updating in response to disagreement, while their older counterparts remain significantly more steadfast in their identities. In other words, partisans under the age of thirty-five are more vulnerable to disagreement, but they are able to resist updating as long as they have the cognitive resources to do so. It is also noteworthy that this effect seems to occur at the expense of past party identification, since the impact of past party identification on current party identification drops off dramatically in the cognitive load condition—particularly among those who are thirty-five or under ( $p < .01$ ).<sup>28</sup>

Looking back at the predictions made in Figures 3.1, the observed pattern appears to fit expectations extremely well (See Panel A and Panel B). Disagreement has a much larger and more significant effect on younger partisans than older partisans, but only in

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non-linearity associated with cognitive deterioration in advanced age. If the model is run with age as a continuous variable, and all respondents over the age of sixty are excluded, the effects are nearly identical.

<sup>27</sup> See Table 3.2 in Appendix A.

<sup>28</sup> See Table 3.3 in Appendix A.

the presence of cognitive load ( $p < .05$ ). In other words, cognitive load appears to be particularly disruptive to the justification process among those with the least political experience. This contrasts with existing models that portray age as either a proxy for life stage or information acquisition. These theories cannot account for different effects in the “cognitive load” versus “no cognitive load conditions.” These results suggest that partisans devote their cognitive resources to identity defense. The predicted probability of maintaining a strong party identity is broken down by age and displayed in Figure 3.3.

[Insert Figure 3.3]

Once again, however, while the disagreement effects that emerge under cognitive load are significantly different from zero, these results are not significantly different from the null results obtained in the absence of cognitive load—though they are in the expected direction. This is indicated by the interaction between cognitive load and disagreement in the full triple interactive model ( $p = .23$ ).<sup>29</sup> Again, we are left with results that are suggestive, but not incontrovertible.

*Political Sophistication.* The correlation between party identification and issue attitudes is known to increase with political sophistication (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). But, do these more knowledgeable citizens bring their party identities into line with their issue attitudes, or do they bring their issue attitudes into line with their party identities? Zaller (1992) argues that individuals with higher levels of political sophistication are able to avoid *accepting* information that runs counter to their party identity, but what happens when acceptance cannot be avoided or when acceptance occurs prior to finding out where the parties stand? This is the central question in the debate over the relationship between attitudes and party identification. Political

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<sup>29</sup> See Table 3.3 in Appendix A.

sophistication is interacted with disagreement in order to determine whether it moderates the relationship between disagreement and party identification.

Predicted probabilities in Figure 3.4 show that political sophistication does indeed have a substantial moderating effect on the relationship between disagreement and party identification strength even in the absence of cognitive load. Those at the lowest end of the political sophistication scale drop from a 68% probability of continuing to report a strong party identity to a 17% probability of reporting a strong party identity when exposed to disagreement. This is compared to an increase from 92% to 96% probability of continuing to report strong party identification among the most sophisticated members of the sample. This extremely large effect among the least sophisticated partisans again suggests that partisan updating occurs predominantly among the most vulnerable members of the electorate. However, since the effect emerges without inducing cognitive load, proponents of the revisionist model of partisanship might argue in favor of an alternative explanation. Instead of defending their identities, highly sophisticated partisans may simply not be swayed by disagreement with their party over a single issue when there are many others on which they agree.

When placed under cognitive load, the enormous effect of disagreement on the least sophisticated appears to drop off. The effect of disagreement on the least knowledgeable is no longer statistically distinguishable from zero,<sup>30</sup> though the coefficient remains negative and this shift is not statistically significant.<sup>31</sup> While it might appear as though cognitive load is undermining reception of the disagreement stimulus, this possibility was ruled out in the manipulation check. Therefore, this pattern, though

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<sup>30</sup> See Table 3.4 in Appendix A.

<sup>31</sup> See Table 3.5 in Appendix A.

non-significant, would seem to support the revisionist model of party identification over the dual motivations theory. It appears that cognitive load may have inhibited the ability of the least sophisticated individuals to adjust their party identification in response to disagreement. It is noteworthy, however, that more sophisticated partisans appear to have moved in the opposite direction, becoming slightly more susceptible to identity change in response to disagreement. Though this slope shift does not reach statistical significance either ( $p = .19$ ),<sup>32</sup> this pattern favors the dual motivations theory over the revisionist model (See Figure 3.1, Panel B and Panel C). The probability of maintaining a strong identity in response to the disagreement treatment is displayed for the highest and lowest in political sophistication in Figure 3.4.

[Insert Figure 3.4]

While cognitive load may inhibit updating among the least sophisticated partisans, it may also increase partisan updating among the most sophisticated subjects. This suggests that cognitive load may first reduce defensive abilities, but once cognitive resources drop below a certain threshold, partisans are no longer able to defend *or* update their party identities. This conclusion is, of course, merely speculative.

*Democratic Identity.* Given that this experiment was conducted during May 2007, these data provide a perfect opportunity to examine the moderating effect of political context. The second term of George W. Bush's administration appears not to have been an easy time to maintain a Republican identity. According to a report released by The Pew Research Center, identification with the Republican Party dropped from 29% in 2005 to 25% in 2007 (Kohut et al. 2007). During the same period, Republicans' "satisfaction with the way things are going in the country today" plummeted from near

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<sup>32</sup> See Table 3.5 in Appendix A.

70% satisfied in 2005 to only 58% satisfied by 2007. According to Gallup poll data, presidential job approval ratings also dropped sharply among Republicans leading up to this experiment. As recently as September of 2006, 86% of Republican approved of the job President Bush was doing, but by the beginning of June 2007, his approval rating had dropped to only 70% among Republicans. This decline continued into July when Republicans approval ratings finally bottomed out at 65% (Gallup 2008). While these polls support the notion that partisans do hold their own party accountable for its performance (Gerber and Green 1999), at least to some degree, the fact that Republicans attitudes do not actually converge with those of Democrats suggests that partisan biases do play a role (Bartels 2002). From the perspective of the dual motivations theory, such a pattern suggests that Republicans may have been susceptible to partisan change during this period, yet still motivated to maintain their identities. In other words, it would have likely been difficult to devise a justification for maintaining one's Republican identity upon encountering disagreement over yet another issue—this time the “Common Sense in Outsourcing Bill.”

It is noteworthy that neither the classic model of party identification nor the revisionist model would predict this type of partisan asymmetry in a controlled experiment. While proponents of the revisionist model would certainly expect to see more identity change among Republicans than Democrats in a survey context, this is not the case in an experiment in which all partisans either received the same disagreement stimulus or no disagreement stimulus. The classic model of party identification predicts minimal change in either partisan group. The dual motivations model is the only model

of the three that can account for these types of asymmetries in an experimental context, because the political context should affect one's ability to justify her identity.

Results confirm the prediction derived from the dual motivations theory. When cognitive resources are uninhibited, a large and significant disagreement effect emerges among Republicans ( $p < .05$ ).<sup>33</sup> Democrats, on the other hand, are significantly less likely than Republicans to change their identities in response to disagreement ( $p < .05$ ).

However, when placed under cognitive load, Democrats join Republicans in updating their identities in response to disagreement and become significantly more likely to report weaker party identities ( $p < .10$ ). The predicted probability of maintaining a strong party identity is displayed in Figures 3.5. The pattern displayed here matches almost perfectly with the predictions made in Figures 3.1 (See Panel B and Panel C), and the moderating effect of cognitive load is statistically significant ( $p < .10$ ).<sup>34</sup>

[Insert Figure 3.5]

## Discussion

In all, while some findings appear to support the *cognitive resources hypothesis* more strongly than others, the overall pattern of findings appears to conform quite well to predictions. Considering the reputation of party identification as the “unmoved mover” in behavior research, to produce variation at all in an experimental context is quite striking. In the very few instances in which researchers have attempted to produce partisan change in a controlled environment, party identification has appeared to remain very stable (Cowden and McDermott 2000). The inevitable question in response to such

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<sup>33</sup> See Table 3.6 in Appendix A.

<sup>34</sup> See the triple interaction term in Table 3.7 in Appendix A.

findings is of course whether they constitute evidence of partisan stability or merely amount to a null result stemming from insufficient stimulus power. The experiment presented here represents an attempt to move beyond dichotomous predictions in which party identification must either be responsive or highly stable. The results suggest that partisan stability is conditional, and given the convergence of patterns across a number of tests, partisan stability seems to be conditional on the ability to justify one's identity in the face of disagreement.

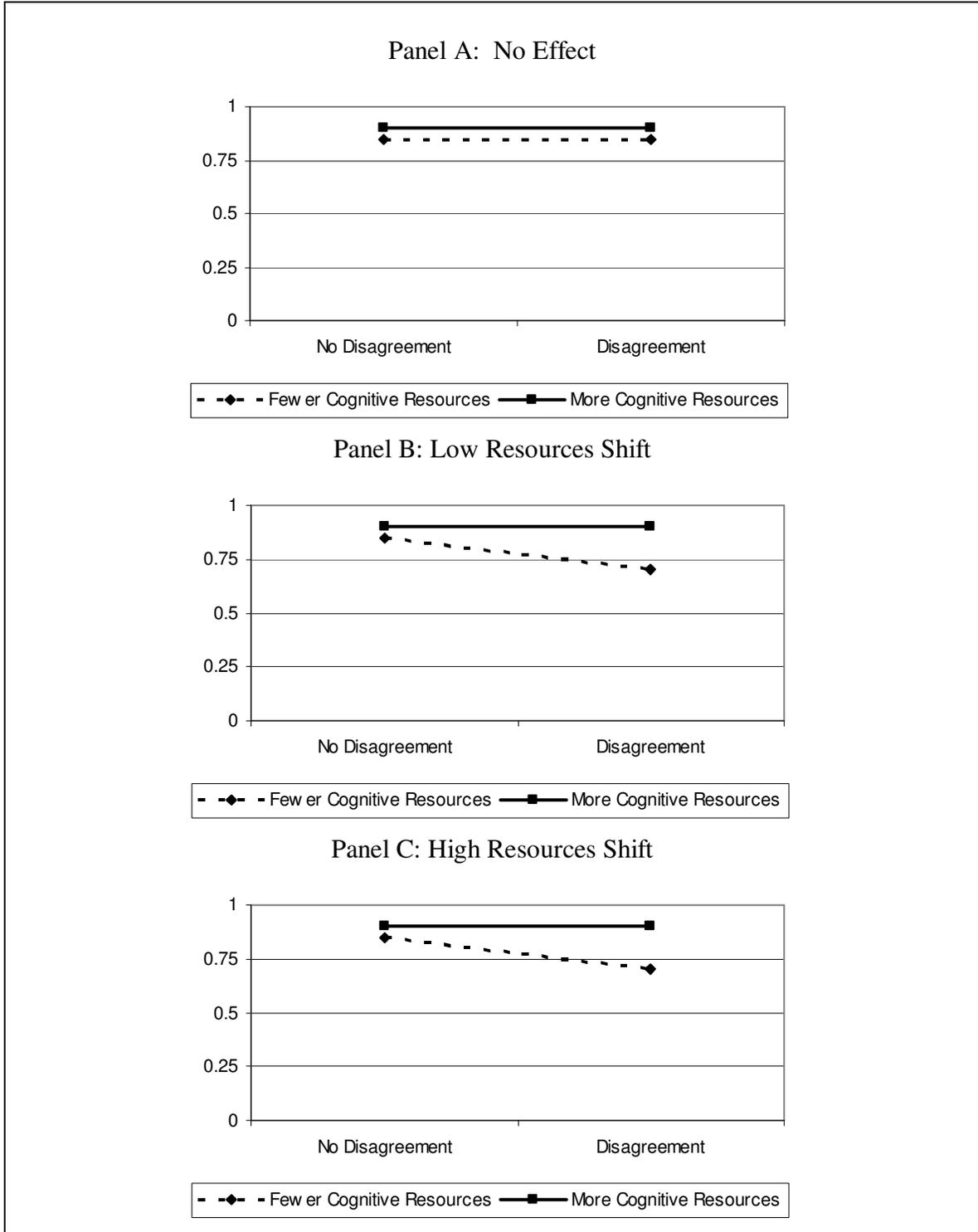
Rather than devoting their cognitive resources to updating their party identities so that they reflect their attitudes, partisan identifiers devote their resources to identity maintenance. Cognitive resources are directly manipulated in the experiment through cognitive load induction in order to demonstrate their causal importance. However, these resources appear to vary within the population. Youth, lack of political sophistication, and context all appear to function as cognitive loads—making it more difficult to justify maintaining a stable party identity after experiencing disagreement with one's party. Partisans over the age of thirty-five, those with higher levels of political sophistication, and Democratic identifiers all appear to have an easier time maintaining their identities after experiencing disagreement with their party. However, even these individuals—rich in cognitive resources—appear not to be immune to the effects of the cognitive load manipulation. In other words, once their resource advantage is taken away, they appear to react to disagreement by updating their party identities just like those who had fewer cognitive resources to begin with.

**Table 3.1: Cross-tabulation of Past Party Identity and Current Party Identity**

		Current Party Identification						
		Strong Dem	Weak Dem	Lean Dem	Indep	Lean Rep	Weak Rep	Strong Rep
Past Party Identification	Strong Dem	<b>85.0%</b>	12.5%	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Weak Dem	12.1%	<b>82.8%</b>	0.0%	3.4%	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%
	Lean Dem	9.1%	9.1%	<b>65.9%</b>	15.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Indep	5.8%	7.7%	17.3%	<b>57.7%</b>	5.8%	3.8%	1.9%
	Lean Rep	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.5%	<b>66.0%</b>	15.1%	11.3%
	Weak Rep	0.0%	2.3%	2.3%	4.5%	11.4%	<b>68.2%</b>	11.4%
	Strong Rep	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	13.0%	<b>85.5%</b>

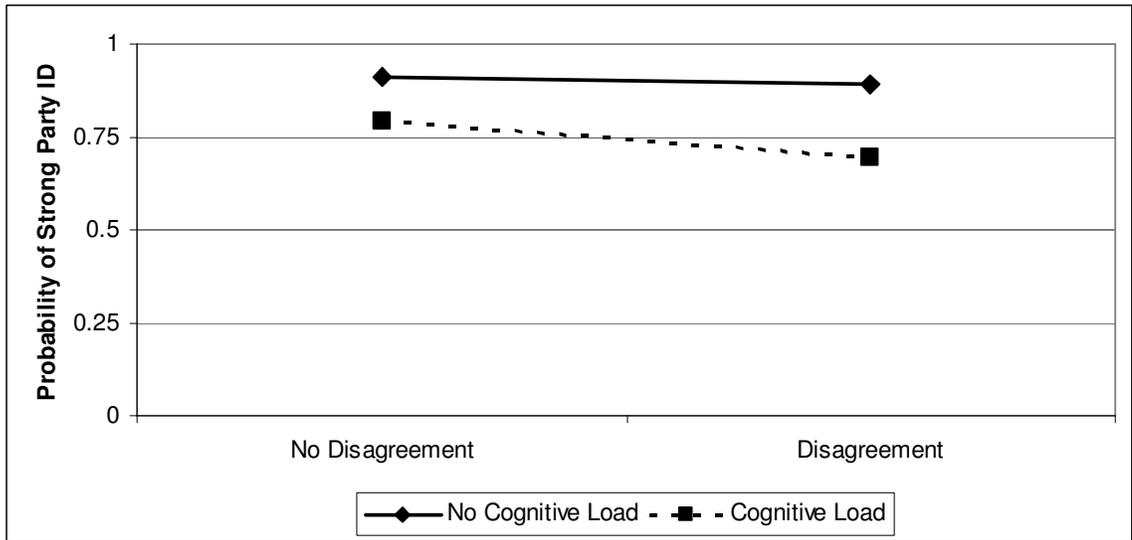
Note: Percentages are calculated so that rows sum to 100%.

**Figure 3.1: Stages of Party Identity Change**



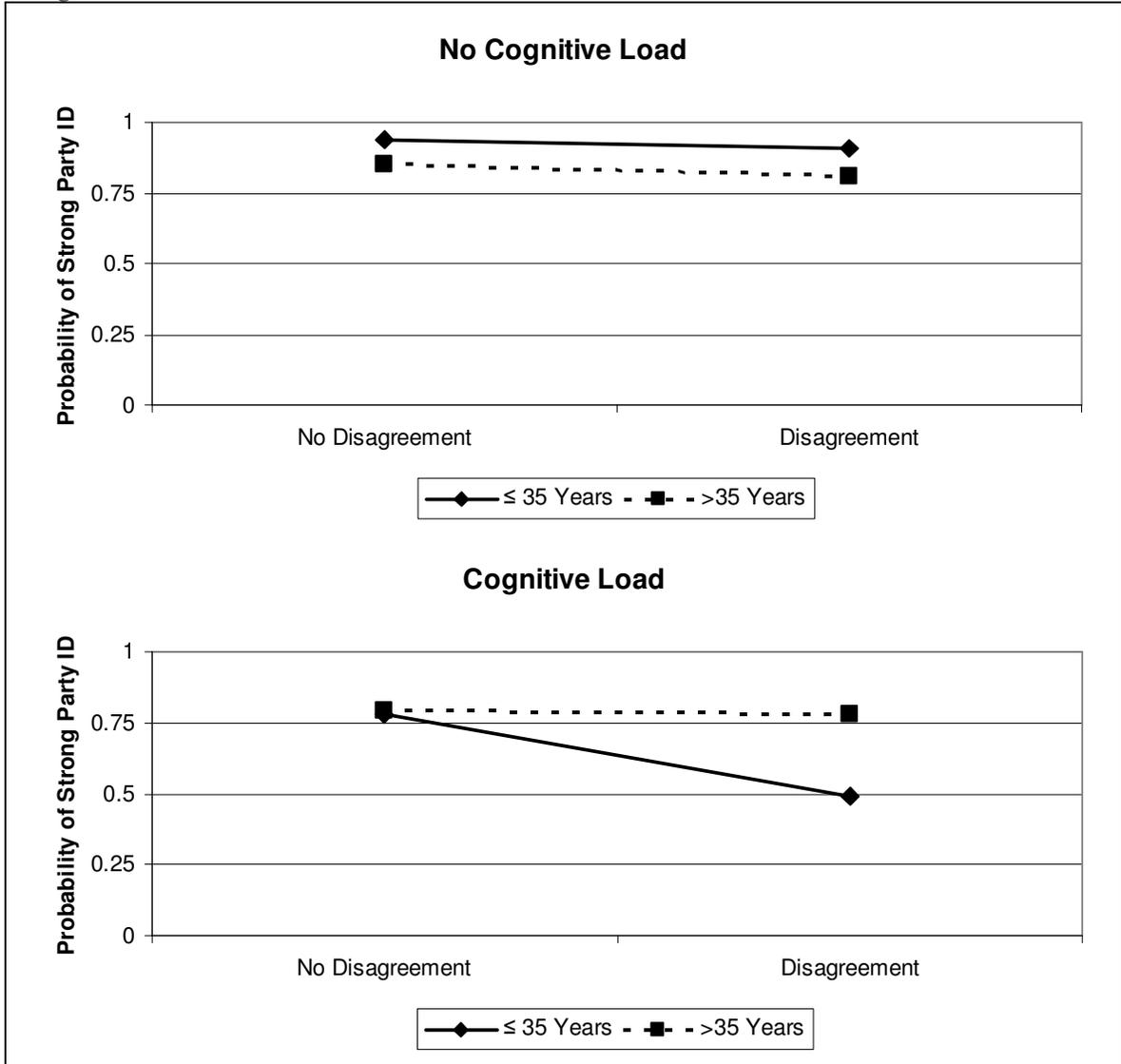
Note: Each panel represents a stage in the hypothesized progression of party identification change. The figures illustrate how those with the fewest cognitive resources will be the first to change their party identities in response to disagreement, but they will eventually be matched by those with more cognitive resources. The figures are not meant to reflect actual patterns in the data, but merely predictions about what these patterns will look like.

**Figure 3.2: The Effect of Disagreement on Party Identity Moderated by Cognitive Load**



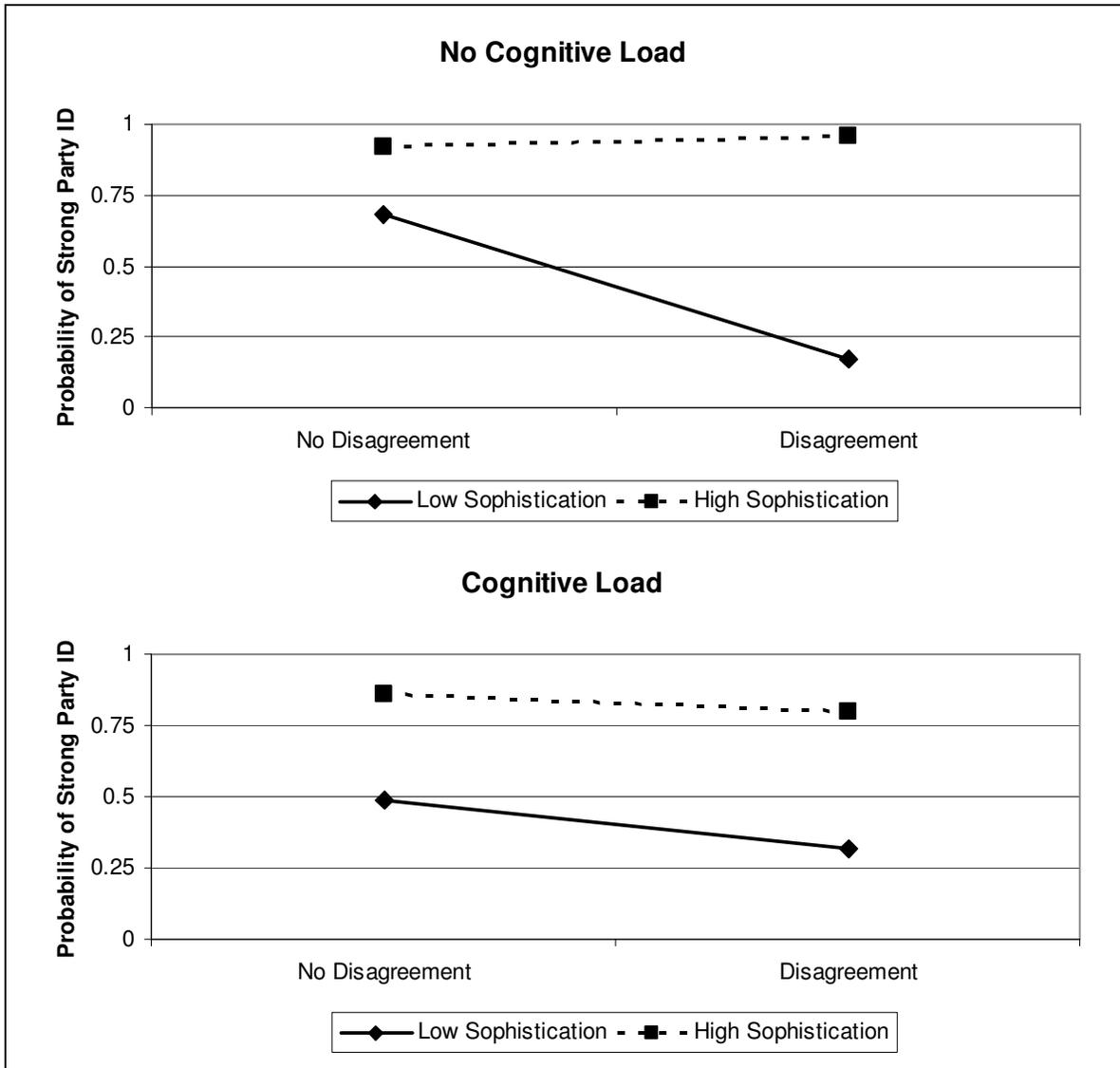
Note: The figure illustrates predicted probabilities obtained from the ordered probit regressions with controls reported in Appendix Table A.1. For the purpose of prediction, pretest party identification strength = 3, over thirty-five = 1, knowledge = mean, and Democrat = 1. Therefore, results represent the probability of maintaining a strong party identity from pre to post.

**Figures 3.3: The Effect of Disagreement on Party Identity Moderated by Age and Cognitive Load**



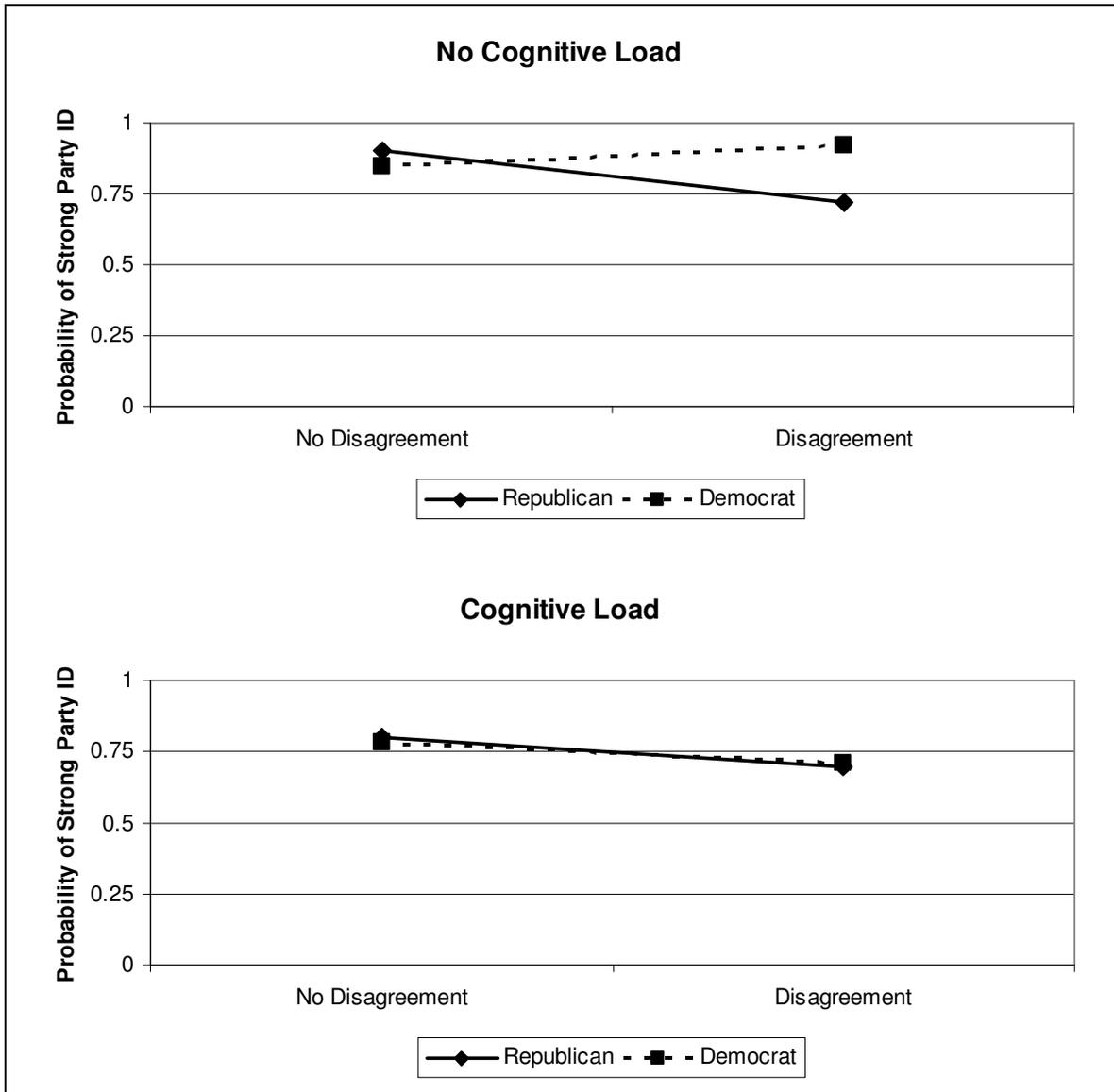
Note: The figure illustrates predicted probabilities obtained from the ordered probit regressions reported in Appendix Tables A.2 and A.3. For the purpose of prediction, pretest party identification strength = 3. Therefore, results represent the probability of maintaining a strong party identity from pre to post.

**Figure 3.4: The Effect of Disagreement on Party Identity Moderated by Political Sophistication and Cognitive Load**



Note: The figure illustrates predicted probabilities obtained from the ordered probit regressions reported in Appendix Tables A.4 and A.5. For the purpose of prediction, pretest party identification strength = 3. Therefore, results represent the probability of maintaining a strong party identity from pre to post. High sophistication means that predicted values are calculated with political sophistication set to 7, while low sophistication means that predictions were calculated with political sophistication set to 0.

**Figure 3.5: The Effect of Disagreement on Party Identity Moderated by Previous Party Affiliation and Cognitive Load**



Note: The figure illustrates predicted probabilities obtained from the ordered probit regressions reported in Appendix Tables A.6 and A.7. For the purpose of prediction, pretest party identification strength = 3. Therefore, results represent the probability of maintaining a strong party identity from pre to post. Party affiliation connotes identifying with or leaning toward a particular party in the pretest.

## Appendix A

**Table A.1: The Effect of Disagreement on Strength of Party Identification**

	No Cognitive Load <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	No Cognitive Load <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	Cognitive Load <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	Cognitive Load <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )
Disagreement	-.142 (.201)	-.108 (.205)	-.268 (.174)	-.300* (.176)
Party ID Strength (t-1)	1.85*** (.169)	1.97*** (.180)	1.12*** (.118)	1.19*** (.123)
Over 35 years-old		-.044 (.244)		-.048 (.200)
Sophistication		.163*** (.052)		.120** (.050)
Democrat		.328 (.213)		-.117 (.178)
Cut 1	1.26 (.301)	2.42 (.506)	-.126 (.265)	.527 (.418)
Cut 2	2.70 (.331)	3.92 (.537)	1.24 (.252)	1.90 (.407)
Cut 3	4.41 (.433)	5.73 (.634)	2.58 (.294)	3.27 (.445)

\*\*\*p<.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10

Note: Results were obtained using ordered probit regression.

**Table A.2: The Effect of Age and Disagreement on Strength of Party Identification**

	No Cognitive Load <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> ) (N = 161)	Cognitive Load <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> ) (N = 187)
Disagreement	-.223 (.423)	-.793** (.317)
Over 35 years-old	.979 (.687)	-.792 (.524)
Disagreement* Over 35	.053 (.483)	.757** (.380)
Party ID Strength (t-1)	2.24*** (.322)	.950*** (.200)
Party ID Strength (t-1)* Over 35 years	-.491 (.331)	.279 (.231)
Cut 1	2.02 (.614)	-.667 (.442)
Cut 2	3.47 (.694)	.705 (.433)
Cut 3	5.19 (.676)	2.08 (.452)

\*\*\*p<.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10

Note: Results were obtained using ordered probit regression.

**Table A.3: The Effects of Cognitive Load, Age, and Disagreement on Party Identification**

	Party Identification Strength <i>B (SE)</i> (N = 348)
Disagreement	-.221 (.415)
Over 35 years-old	.958 (.684)
Disagreement* Over 35	.059 (.475)
Party ID Strength (t-1)	2.12*** (.305)
Party ID Strength (t-1)* Over 35 years	-.480 (.330)
Cognitive Load	2.62*** (.743)
Cognitive Load* Disagreement	-.613 (.523)
Cognitive Load* Over 35 years-old	-1.78** (.859)
Cognitive Load* Disagreement* Over 35	.738 (.610)
Cognitive Load* Party ID Strength (t-1)	-1.13*** (.355)
Cognitive Load* Party ID Strength (t-1)* Over 35 years	.764* (.403)
Cut 1	1.92 (.605)
Cut 2	3.33 (.615)
Cut 3	4.83 (.635)

\*\*\*p<.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10

Note: Results were obtained using ordered probit regression.

**Table A.4: The Effect of Political Sophistication and Disagreement on Strength of Party Identification**

	No Cognitive Load <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> ) (N = 161)	Cognitive Load <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> ) (N = 187)
Disagreement	-1.40** (.602)	-.430 (.543)
Sophistication	-.271 (.177)	-.025 (.164)
Disagreement* Sophistication	.239** (.106)	.029 (.094)
Party ID Strength (t-1)	1.22*** (.455)	.828* (.438)
Party ID Strength (t-1)* Sophistication	.137* (.077)	.061 (.072)
Cut 1	-.175 (1.05)	-.241 (1.01)
Cut 2	1.33 (1.06)	1.13 (1.00)
Cut 3	3.19 (1.08)	2.51 (1.01)

\*\*\*p<.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10

Note: Results were obtained using ordered probit regression.

**Table A.5: The Effects of Cognitive Load, Political Sophistication, and Disagreement on Party Identification**

	Party Identification Strength <i>B (SE)</i> (N = 348)
Disagreement	-1.23** (.578)
Sophistication	-.245 (.173)
Disagreement* Sophistication	.209** (.102)
Party ID Strength (t-1)	1.09** (.444)
Party ID Strength (t-1)* Sophistication	.128* (.076)
Cognitive Load	.125 (1.44)
Cognitive Load* Disagreement	.784 (.800)
Cognitive Load* Sophistication	.218 (.240)
Cognitive Load* Disagreement* Sophistication	-.181 (.139)
Cognitive Load* Party ID Strength (t-1)	-.218 (.240)
Cognitive Load* Party ID Strength (t-1)* Sophistication	-.064 (.105)
Cut 1	-.141 (1.04)
Cut 2	1.29 (1.04)
Cut 3	2.83 (1.05)

\*\*\*p<.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10

Note: Results were obtained using ordered probit regression.

**Table A.6: The Effect of Democratic Identification and Disagreement on Strength of Party Identification**

	No Cognitive Load <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> ) (N = 161)	Cognitive Load <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> ) (N = 187)
Disagreement	-.724** (.304)	-.315 (.245)
Democrat	-.517 (.571)	-.508 (.485)
Disagreement* Democrat	1.07*** (.415)	.086 (.348)
Party ID Strength (t-1)	1.88*** (.217)	1.07*** (.157)
Party ID Strength (t-1)* Democrat	.090 (.258)	.149 (.213)
Cut 1	1.02 (.411)	-.358 (.351)
Cut 2	2.54 (.434)	1.02 (.331)
Cut 3	4.34 (.524)	2.37 (.362)

\*\*\*p≤.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10

Note: Results were obtained using ordered probit regression.

**Table A.7: The Effects of Cognitive Load, Democratic Identity, and Disagreement on Party Identification**

	Party Identification Strength <i>B (SE)</i> (N = 348)
Disagreement	-.668** (.297)
Democrat	-.498 (.566)
Disagreement* Democrat	.980** (.404)
Party ID Strength (t-1)	1.72*** (.192)
Party ID Strength (t-1)* Democrat	.091 (.257)
Cognitive Load	1.32** (.515)
Cognitive Load* Disagreement	.334 (.385)
Cognitive Load* Democrat	-.037 (.745)
Cognitive Load* Disagreement* Democrat	-.886* (.533)
Cognitive Load* Party ID Strength (t-1)	-.586** (.235)
Cognitive Load* Party ID Strength (t-1)* Democrat	-.065 (.334)
Cut 1	.926 (.398)
Cut 2	2.37 (.408)
Cut 3	3.87 (.436)

\*\*\*p<.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10

Note: Results were obtained using ordered probit regression.

## Appendix B

**Figure B.1: Outsourcing Editorial**

EDITORIAL

# New Legislation Offers Refuge from Growing Outsourcing Problem

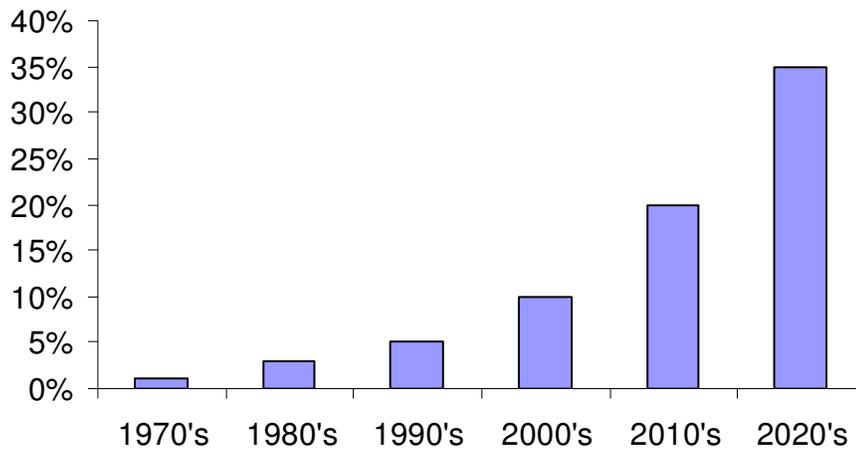
By LARRY STOCKTON

Published: April 17, 2007

WASHINGTON, April 16--As globalization continues, Americans are becoming increasingly worried about job security. Though outsourcing originally concerned blue collar sectors of the economy, white collar jobs are now being shipped overseas as well. With many college educated workers in countries like India willing to work for near minimum wage, companies stand to save millions through outsourcing. Moreover, those businesses that choose not to engage in outsourcing will simply not be able to compete.

Once a single firm begins to outsource, other companies face a huge competitive

**Outsourcing Trends Since 1970's**



disadvantage if they do not do the same. Companies that refuse to outsource jobs will eventually go under and be replaced by firms willing to take advantage of

this cheap labor. In other words, we cannot simply ask firms not to outsource.

Without legislation, their hands are essentially tied. This is why the U.S. government needs to step in and pass the Common Sense in Outsourcing Bill to give companies an incentive to keep jobs in the U.S.

This is not a conspiracy theory, but a simple application of Economics 101. Liberals and conservatives are nearly in universal agreement on these facts. Over the coming years, millions of Americans will lose their jobs to outsourcing. The question is how to deal with this growing problem. The Common Sense in Outsourcing Bill would provide tax incentives for corporations to keep jobs on American soil.

Opponents of this bill argue that outsourcing is just an inevitable part of the globalization process, and we should not attempt to get in its way. However, supporters argue that this bill is in no way anti-globalization legislation. It merely provides incentives for companies to continue to employ American workers.

While nearly everyone agrees that there are long-term benefits to globalization, it is the short-term costs that have many Americans concerned. Future generations will likely benefit from a globally integrated economy, but that does not mean that this generation and the next should be forced to pay all the transition costs. If globalization is left completely unimpeded, economists agree that we are likely to face record unemployment levels over the next 20 years. The Common Sense in Outsourcing Bill is simply an attempt to avoid such massive unemployment and ease the transition into a globally integrated economy.

The Common Sense in Outsourcing Bill would also prevent the U.S. government from contracting with foreign companies. Since foreign companies are able to take advantage of cheaper labor, they are often able to underbid U.S. firms for contracts with the federal government. For obvious reasons, defense contracts are already regulated in this way. However, many less publicized government contracts are increasingly going to foreign firms. For example, the federal

government spends millions of dollars on paper each year, but this paper comes from Canada. Additionally, as the federal government continues to expand, bureaucratic work is being sent overseas. For instance, the internal revenue service is currently looking into contracting with an Indian telecommunications company to outsource phone calls. Soon you may have to talk to someone in India to get a question answered about your taxes.

Clearly something needs to be done to provide Americans with economic security during this initial phase of globalization. These are clearly tumultuous times in politics, and there are many important issues to consider. Nonetheless, as we listen to the 2008 presidential candidates laying out their platforms, we must keep jobs in mind. Without legislation, companies will have an ever increasing incentive to send American jobs overseas. Therefore, passing the Common Sense in Outsourcing Bill must be among our top priorities.

## Figure B.2: Control Group

# Congress Considers Outsourcing Bill

By ARNOLD HENSON  
Published: April 24, 2007

WASHINGTON, April 23—Legislation entitled the “Common Sense in Outsourcing Bill” will soon come up for a vote in the Senate. If passed, the bill would provide tax incentives for companies to employ American workers rather than outsourcing jobs to foreign shores. Supporters of the bill contend that market based solutions through tax incentives are the way to go in easing the transition into a global economy. To date, the bill has received a mixture of support and opposition from Republicans and Democrats alike.

The bill’s sponsors argue that outsourcing is a growing problem that deserves our attention. “American workers need our support, and if we don’t do something soon the problem will only get worse,” said Jack Phillips, founder of a bi-partisan advocacy group called the Business and Labor Partnership for America’s Future. Supporters also point out that the bill is not a tax cut for corporations, but rather a restructuring of the corporate tax code. In other words, the bill would shift the tax burden to companies that outsource the most jobs. This essentially amounts to a tax cut for firms that outsource the fewest jobs and a tax increase for corporations that outsource the most jobs.

Asked where they stand on the outsourcing bill, respondents in a recent Gallup poll appear supportive. What impact this bill will have on the 2008 presidential election is a point of debate among media pundits. Since none of the contenders for the Republican and Democratic nomination have yet taken a public stance, its potential impact remains a point of speculation.

### Figure B.3: Democratic Opposition Article

## Democrats to Oppose Outsourcing Bill

By ARNOLD HENSON  
Published: April 24, 2007

WASHINGTON, April 23—The Republican sponsored “Common Sense in Outsourcing Bill” will soon come up for a vote in the Senate, and Democrats are digging their heels in for a fight. If passed, the bill would provide tax incentives for companies to employ American workers rather than outsourcing jobs to foreign shores, but Democrats complain that there is no room in the budget.

Republicans, on the other hand, argue that outsourcing needs to be a priority, and the bill would cost the federal government very little in tax revenue.

“American workers need our support, and if we don’t do something soon the problem will only get worse,” said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R). Republican supporters also point out that the bill is not a tax cut for corporations, but rather a restructuring of the corporate tax code. In other words, the bill would shift the tax burden to companies that outsource the most jobs. This essentially amounts to a tax cut for firms that outsource the fewest jobs and a tax increase for corporations that outsource the most jobs.

Asked where they stand on the outsourcing bill, Democratic presidential hopefuls appear to be towing the party line. Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and John Edwards have all pledged that they will vote no when the bill reaches the floor. What impact this will have on their presidential aspirations is a point of debate among media pundits. Still, with Republican contenders united in support of the bill, things could be building toward a showdown over outsourcing in the 2008 general election.

**Figure B.4: Republican Opposition Article**

## Republicans to Oppose Outsourcing Bill

By ARNOLD HENSON  
Published: April 24, 2007

WASHINGTON, April 23—The Democrat sponsored “Common Sense in Outsourcing Bill” will soon come up for a vote in the Senate, and Republicans are digging their heels in for a fight. If passed, the bill would provide tax incentives for companies to employ American workers rather than outsourcing jobs to foreign shores, but Republicans complain that there is no room in the budget.

Democrats, on the other hand, argue that outsourcing needs to be a priority, and the bill would cost the federal government very little in tax revenue. “American workers need our support, and if we don’t do something soon the problem will only get worse,” said Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D). Democratic supporters also point out that the bill is not a tax cut for corporations, but rather a restructuring of the corporate tax code. In other words, the bill would shift the tax burden to companies that outsource the most jobs. This essentially amounts to a tax cut for firms that outsource the fewest jobs and a tax increase for corporations that outsource the most jobs.

Asked where they stand on the outsourcing bill, Republican presidential hopefuls appear to be towing the party line. Rudi Giuliani, John McCain, and recent contender Fred Thompson have all spoken out against the bill. What impact this will have on their presidential aspirations is a point of debate among media pundits. Still, with Democratic contenders united in support of the bill, things could be building toward a showdown over outsourcing in the 2008 general election.

## Chapter Four

### Motivation and Measurement Error

In the 1950's, Angus Campbell and his colleagues developed the concept of party identification because they believed that partisanship was rooted in self-classification and not merely evaluation (Campbell et al. 1954; Campbell et al. 1960). While they acknowledged that partisanship could change, they observed that such change was infrequent. From their point of view, party identification arises as individuals develop affective attachments to political parties during early socialization. In arguing that partisanship constitutes an identity, they assume self-categorization has more to do with a person's self-image and less to do with how that person evaluates political parties. While individuals are expected to feel pressure to bring their party identities into alignment with their attitudes, the reverse influence of party identification on attitudes was thought to be much stronger.

In the half-century since this seminal work was published, the concept of party identification has been revised to place much greater emphasis on evaluation and change over time (See Chapter 1). While party identification is quite stable relative to other concepts, revisionist works have shown that partisans do update their identities to reflect various types of attitudes. Some have gone so far as to argue that party identification approximates a "running tally" of evaluations (Fiorina 1981), and partisan stability is not

rooted in motivation but instead results from the accumulation of information about where the parties stand (Achen 1992, 2002; Franklin 1984).

Recently, however, the revisionist scholarship has come under question for failing to account for measurement error (Green et al. 2002; Green and Palmquist 1990, 1994). Green and Schickler (1993) show that subtle variation in party identification occurs even when measured multiple times in a single survey. Since one would not expect short-term forces to cause party identification change within the context of a single survey, they conclude it is due to measurement error. When measurement error is accounted for in panel surveys, party identification appears far more stable than the revisionist accounts suggest (Green and Palmquist 1990; Green et al. 2002; Green and Palmquist 1994). However, this method remains controversial given that substantive identity change may be misidentified as measurement error. In short, the nature and stability of party identification remain hotly contested subjects (see Johnston 2006).

This chapter explains measurement error differently. While remaining agnostic with regard to the degree of partisan stability, let us assume for a moment that Green and colleagues' (2002; 1990; 1994) specification is appropriate, and party identification is highly stable once measurement error is taken into account. Moreover, let us focus our attention on party identity variation within a single survey, a context in which Green and colleagues' methods are much less controversial. What might an examination of this measurement error tell us about the nature of party identification?

Green and colleagues (2002) focus on random measurement error in party identification, attributing it to "subtle variations in the ways that these questions are read, interpreted, and recorded" (p. 53). However, as these authors acknowledge, measurement

error may also be systematic, as survey responses are often influenced by the questions that precede them (see Schuman and Presser 1981; Schwarz 1999). More specifically, survey responses are often affected by the considerations brought to mind by preceding questions. For instance, party identification might be influenced by political attitude measures asked immediately prior. This does not necessarily mean such changes are enduring. In fact, question order effects are likely to be fleeting, and may reasonably be characterized as measurement error.

The important thing to realize, however, is that even fleeting effects offer a window into the mind of the voter. They imply that partisans are motivated to update their identities to reflect their attitudes even if they do not always act on these motivations.<sup>35</sup> So why are these effects short-lived? Do individuals return to their original party identities once the accessibility of these attitudes—primed momentarily by the survey—recede? If so, chronically accessible attitudes should have more lasting effects on party identification. On the other hand, individuals might return to their original identities because they are motivated to do so—finding ways to justify identification with their party despite holding attitudes that are not wholly consistent with that identity.

The dual motivations theory suggests that partisan motivation should drive partisans back to their original party identities if they can come up with a justification for doing so. Again, assuming for a moment that Green and colleagues are correct that party identification is stable after accounting for measurement error, such a result would

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<sup>35</sup> This type of question order effect might be driven by the need for cognitive consistency or it may simply be that individuals use the information that is salient to them at the time of their response party identification questions. Either way, such an effect would suggest a motivation to bring one's identity into line with his or her attitudes.

suggest a very different implication. If partisan stability is driven by the accumulation of information about what the parties symbolize (Green et al. 2002), then partisan voting is roughly compatible with democratic ideals. However, if stable party identification results from partisan motivated identity defense, then parties are not being held accountable for their performance or issue positions.

Studies have shown that survey questions sometimes capture respondents' attempts to justify their behaviors (Rahn et al. 1994). For example, a respondent might be disinclined to acknowledge strong identification with the Republican Party immediately after reflecting on her lukewarm evaluations of the Republican Party's performance (or her positive evaluations of the Democratic Party's performance). However, the act of reconsidering one's partisan ties should trigger partisan motivation.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, we should expect to see evidence of identity justification in response to attitude priming. And if party identification change has occurred, this justification should lead individuals back to their original identity. In short, subtle variation, which might otherwise be dismissed as harmless measurement error, may provide insight into the empirical controversy surrounding party identification. I suspect some of this variation results from the motivational interplay that goes on in the mind of a partisan when her evaluations challenge her identity. An understanding of these motivations is critical to determining the implication of the powerful association between party identification and political attitudes.

*Saliency Hypothesis:* Individuals will update their identities to reflect their attitudes when these attitudes are made salient prior to reporting their party identity. However,

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<sup>36</sup> This should occur regardless of whether or not the act of reconsidering weakens party identification.

subsequent identity justification—observable in subjects' responses—will undo these changes in party identification.

## **Experiment**

Through a national survey experiment, I examine how partisans react when they are asked about their attitudes toward parties prior to reporting their party identification. This study takes advantage of political context by examining Republican identifiers during a time of declining attitudes toward, and identification with, the Republican Party. Employing a simple question order manipulation, I examine how partisans (particularly Republicans) react when primed to consider their attitudes toward one of the two parties prior to reporting their party identification. In doing this, I view the survey as a microcosm of political life. As individuals experience politics, various attitudes become salient just like they do in surveys, and, undoubtedly, sometimes some of these attitudes conflict with party identity. Since the 1950's, researchers have wrestled with whether or not citizens update their identities to reflect these attitudes. However, while there is disagreement in the literature with regard to substantive party identification change, even the most ardent proponents of a stable party identification model acknowledge that it varies over time. However, they believe this variation is mostly due to measurement error and not substantive change (Green et al. 2002; Green and Palmquist 1990, 1994).

But, if the psychological pressures at work in a survey are analogous to the psychological pressures partisans experience every day, this variation may tell us a great deal about the inner-workings of the partisan mind—even if these changes are fleeting. It also means that by manipulating question order, systematic variation in party identity

may be induced. Then, if partisans revert back to their original identities by the end of the survey, the questions obtained between the two measures of party identification may be examined for evidence of identity justification. Presumably, if partisans are motivated to return to their identities, the identity justification process should be evident in their responses. Finally, if such evidence is uncovered, mediation tests can be run to determine whether justification is necessary for identity reversion. In other words, it may be possible to document the full dual motivations theory in action.

## **Methods**

*Participants.* The *salience hypothesis* is tested through a national survey experiment of 300 adults administered by YouGov/Polimetrix on February 18-19, 2008.<sup>37</sup> However, the 118 respondents who identified as Republicans or Independents leaning toward the Republican Party will be the focus of the analysis. At the time the study was in the field, vigorous primary battles were going on in both the Democratic and Republican parties. On the Democratic side, Hillary Clinton was up against Barack

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<sup>37</sup> This experiment was originally a 600 subject study with a 3x2 design. The second experimental factor induced disagreement between individuals and their party using the same method as in the previous chapter. Subjects read two mock newspaper articles. The first article was an editorial arguing in favor of a fictitious balanced budget amendment. Subjects were then asked to take a position on the bill. In the disagreement condition, the second article informed subjects that their party (as determined by their pre-test party identity) had opposed the bill. In the no disagreement condition, the second article discussed the potential political importance of the amendment and the fact that the amendment had not yet become a partisan issue. The question order primes were originally meant to provide partisans with an opportunity to justify their party identity after exposure to disagreement and prior to reporting their party identity. However, the primes themselves turned out to stimulate party identification change (for reasons explained above), and justification did not occur until after party identification was reported. Interaction effects between the two experimental factors offered little additional insight. Therefore, the decision was made to exclude the disagreement treatment groups and focus on the question primes, because they actually turned out to be a more effective stimulus to party identification change than the disagreement treatment. In the excluded portion of the experiment, Republican did report significantly weaker party identities after exposure to the disagreement stimulus ( $p < .05$ ), whereas disagreement had no significant effect on Democrats. Results from ordered probit regression show that the predicted probability of maintaining a strong Republican identity from time 1 to time 2 drops from .96 to .84 after exposure to disagreement. This study is entirely distinct from those discussed in other chapters. Polimetrix interviewed 759 respondents in order to match down to a sample of 600. Respondents were matched on gender, age, race, education, party identification, and political interest.

Obama, and on the Republican side, Mike Huckabee was pitted against John McCain. While Democratic identifiers viewed theirs as a choice between two excellent candidates, many Republicans were less enthusiastic about their options.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, Republican president George W. Bush faced a 31% approval rating due in large part to dissatisfaction over the Iraq War and a slowing economy.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, this moment in time provided an excellent opportunity to examine party identification under threat. How would Republicans react when primed to consider their party evaluations immediately prior to reporting their party identification?

*Procedure.* The *salience hypothesis* suggests that when attitudes are primed prior to reporting party identity, subjects will feel psychological pressure to update their party identities to reflect these attitudes. To test this hypothesis, a 3-celled experiment primed attitudes toward the Republican Party, Democratic Party, or neither (control), as subjects considered how to answer the party identification questions. The study is laid out in Table 4.1. The treatment was delivered via a straightforward question order manipulation. Attitude primes consisted of a series of three questions about the Republican Party or the Democratic Party. The first of these questions asked about the party's performance in Congress. The second question asked subjects how much they trusted the party to handle the nation's problems. And the third question asked subjects for their feelings toward the party in general. Those who received the Republican Party attitude prime were asked about their attitudes toward the Democratic Party immediately

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<sup>38</sup> A Gallup poll conducted from February 8-10, 2008 asked, "Compared to previous elections, are you more enthusiastic than usual about voting, or less enthusiastic?" Among Democrats, 80% answered "more enthusiastic" compared with only 42% of Republicans. On the other hand, 50% of Republicans responded that they were "less enthusiastic" compared with only 30% of Democrats (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/103531/Monitoring-Campaign.aspx>).

<sup>39</sup> Approve ratings taken from a Gallup Poll run Feb 11-14, 2008 ([www.gallup.com](http://www.gallup.com))

after the party identification question, and vice versa for those who received the Democratic Party attitude prime. Those assigned to the control condition were asked the same questions after reporting their party identification. In the control condition, the order of the question batteries was randomized so that some of the subjects were asked about the Republican Party before they were asked about the Democratic Party, and others were first asked about the Democratic Party before being asked about the Republican Party.

*Measures.* Treatment groups are coded as dummy variables: *Republican Party prime* and *Democratic Party prime*. Three measures of party identification were obtained, including a pre-test measure of party identification acquired from YouGov/Polimetrix. As in the previous study, the pretest measure was *not* obtained during the survey, since this would likely have biased results. Instead, it was attained from the YouGov/Polimetrix records. Since YouGov/Polimetrix uses a sample matching procedure, they have party identification on record for all of the respondents in their pool. The second party identification measure was obtained using this same procedure immediately after exposure to the treatment. Both of these measures made use of the standard branching question from the American National Election Studies (ANES) which yields a 7-point scale running from strong Democrat to strong Republican. A third and final party identification question was asked near the end of the study. In order to avoid consistency bias, the 7-point self-placement measure of party identification was used. This item has been found to be similarly reliable to the standard ANES party identification measure (Green and Schickler 1993). The 7-point self-placement measure is a Likert-type scale rather than a branching question. Each of the seven points is

labeled so that the scale runs from Strong Democrat to Strong Republican. Responses to all three of the party identification questions were re-scaled to run from strong Republican (3) to strong Democrat (-3). In the previous chapter, Republicans and Democrats were examined together in all analyses. Since this dissertation examines the forces that weaken party identification (as opposed to focuses that move the electorate toward a particular party), it was necessary to rescale the party identification items into measures of party identification strength. In this chapter, however, all analyses are conducted separately for Republicans and Democrats. Therefore, rescaling is not necessary, and I simply use the full party identification measures.

As mentioned earlier, attitudes toward parties are measured using an index of three questions regarding each of the two major parties. These questions are taken from the ANES. Factor analysis of these six items shows that they line up on two distinct dimensions: attitudes toward the Republican Party and attitudes toward the Democratic Party.<sup>40</sup> Indexes called *attitudes toward Republican Party* and *attitudes toward Democratic Party* are created by recoding each of the three items to run from -1 to 1 and then averaging across the three items. The end result is two indexes that each run from -1 (negative attitudes) to 1 (positive attitudes). The first item reads, “Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the [Republicans/ Democrats] are handling their job in Congress?” Responses range from “disapprove strongly” to “approve strongly” on a 7-point scale. The second item asks respondents, “How much trust and confidence do you have in the [Republican/ Democratic] Party when it comes to handling the nation’s problems?” Response options range from “no confidence at all” to “a great deal of confidence” on a 7-point scale. The final item reads, “We would like to get your general

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<sup>40</sup> See Appendix A, Table 4.2

feelings about the [Republican/ Democratic] Party. Please rate the [Republican/ Democratic] Party with what we call a feeling thermometer by typing a number from 0 to 100. On this feeling thermometer, ratings between 0 and 49 degrees mean that you don't feel favorably toward the party and that you don't care too much for that party. Ratings between 51 and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorably and warm toward the party. If you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the party you would rate it at 50 degrees.” Those who answer “don't know” are set to the scale's midpoint for all three questions in the index.

Finally, the emotions respondents felt toward each party were measured through a series of seven questions. Subjects were asked, “How [angry, afraid, frustrated, hopeful enthusiastic], do you feel when you think about the [Republican/ Democratic] Party? Responses were then added to form indexes of positive (hopeful + enthusiastic) and negative (angry + afraid + frustrated) emotions, and each was rescaled to run from 0 to 1. The negative emotion index was then subtracted from the positive emotion index to form additional measures of global emotion toward each party that each ran from -1 to 1. Factor analysis shows that the ten emotion items line up on two distinct factors representing global emotions toward each of the two parties.<sup>41</sup>

## **Results**

Table 4.2 illustrates the degree to which party identification changed between the time YouGov/ Polimetrix obtained the first observation (t1) and the time the second observation was obtained in this study (t2). Shaded cells represent partisans whose party identities did not weaken from time 1 to time 2. Clearly, party identification varies over

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<sup>41</sup> See Appendix A, Figure 4.3

time, but the question remains whether this variation is random or systematic. Moreover, to the degree it varies within surveys, what are the causes of this change and why do partisans tend to revert back? Experiments are extremely useful when such dilemmas arise, since experimental manipulation with random assignment ensures exogeneity.

[Insert Table 4.2]

This experiment is built on the premise that, in February of 2008, Republicans' own evaluations of the Republican and Democratic parties would put pressure on their party identity when made salient. Therefore, I begin by first examining Republicans' attitudes toward the two parties relative to Democrats' attitudes toward the two parties. The idea is to determine whether Republicans' own attitudes were likely to threaten their party identification. As expected, when obtained prior to party identification ( $t_2$ ), Republicans attitudes toward their own party ( $M = .131$ ,  $SD = .399$ ) were less positive on average than Democrats' attitudes toward their own party ( $M = .339$ ,  $SD = .414$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Republicans' attitudes toward the Democratic Party ( $M = -.569$ ,  $SD = .367$ ) were also less negative than Democrats' attitudes toward the Republican Party ( $M = -.681$ ,  $SD = .305$ ,  $p < .10$ ), so priming either of these attitude dimensions was likely to put pressure on party identification.

Table 4.3 displays the effects of the attitude primes on party identification among Republicans, Democrats, and Independents.<sup>42</sup> While Democrats and Independents do not seem to have been affected, the priming manipulation does appear to have put pressure on Republican identities, just as expected. In particular, priming attitudes toward the Democratic Party weakened Republicans' identification with their own party. The

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<sup>42</sup> Republicans and Democrats include those who initially identified as Independents but admitted to leaning toward one party or the other. Independents, therefore, refers to "pure" Independents.

coefficient on the Republican Party attitude prime is in the right direction, but is not statistically significant ( $p = .50$ ). As illustrated in Figure 4.1, the predicted probability of maintaining a strong Republican identity from time 1 to time 2 drops from 90% in the control condition to 72% in the Democratic Party attitude prime condition.

Perhaps surprisingly, these priming effects do not appear to be moderated by the attitudes solicited in the priming stimuli.<sup>43</sup> This suggests that the effect elicited from the Democratic prime was not driven by those Republicans whose attitudes toward the Democratic Party were most positive, but was instead driven by an equal weakening of party identity across all Republicans. However, this null moderating effect may mask the moderating effect of attitude *change*. In other words, the priming effect may be driven by those Republicans whose attitudes toward the Democratic Party changed the most from time 1 to time 2 rather than being driven by those Republicans who had the most positive attitudes toward the Democratic Party at the time of the study. Unfortunately, YouGov/ Polimetrix does not keep measures of attitudes toward parties on record, so the potential moderating effect of attitude change cannot be tested. All we know is that Republicans' attitudes toward each of the parties were less extreme than those held by their Democratic counterparts, as reported above. In other words, though we cannot be certain, the between-party comparison suggests that Republicans' attitudes are likely to have changed from time 1 to time 2.

[Insert Table 4.3] [Insert Figure 4.1]

Perhaps the most important question is how partisans reacted to the psychological pressure that was apparently induced by the question order manipulation. As outlined above, when asked to report their attitudes prior to reporting their party identification

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<sup>43</sup> See Appendix A

(t2), Republicans expressed attitudes toward both parties that were less consistent with their party identification than those of their Democratic counterparts. We saw in Table 4.3 that reporting these attitudes prior to reporting their party identification made Republicans feel pressure to update their identities to reflect these attitudes. Therefore, I now examine the differences between attitude measures obtained prior to party identification (t2) versus attitude measures obtained after party identification. The saliency hypothesis suggests that attitudes obtained after party identification should show evidence of identity justification. Table 4.4 illustrates how the simple question order manipulation affected Republicans' attitudes toward the parties. Results suggest that attitude priming triggered attitudinal bolstering on whichever dimension was measured immediately after party identification. Specifically, on a scale that runs from -1 to 1, subjects report attitudes toward the Democratic Party that are .161 lower when reported after party identification than when reported prior to party identification. Likewise, they report attitudes toward the Republican Party that are .094 higher when asked after reporting their party identification, though this effect does not reach statistical significance.

[Insert Table 4.4]

In short, it appears that the priming manipulation triggered accuracy motivation. In order to maintain the belief that their identities were rooted in pragmatism, Republicans felt that they must update their identities to reflect these attitudes, and they did so significantly in the Democratic Prime condition. However, this conflicted with their directional motivation to maintain a stable party identity. Therefore, in order to justify their identities, Republicans bolstered their attitudes on whichever dimension was

obtained after party identification—particularly in the Republican Prime condition. Given findings in Chapter 2, it is also worth drawing attention to the fact that, though effects were in the same direction across conditions, Republicans' dominant response to the Democratic Party prime was to update their party identity whereas their dominant response to the Republican prime was to derogate the Democratic Party. In other words, subjects may have been more adept at using their attitudes toward the opposition party to justify their identity despite their attitudes toward their favored party (lesser of two evils justification) as opposed to vice versa (greater of two goods justification). No such effects emerge among Democratic respondents, which makes sense given that their attitudes were more partisan to begin with and they did not report weaker party identities in response to those attitudes being primed.

Still, while these effects provide clear support for the theory, another indicator of identity justification would make the case even stronger. Therefore, I turn my attention to emotions toward parties. In addition to their cognitive component, attitudes also have an emotional component or affective tag (see Eagly and Chaiken 1993), and this may be the part an attitude that is most susceptible to the motivational forces that constitute the focus of this dissertation. In a study of social context effects on cognitive dissonance, Cooper and Mackie (1983) produced cognitive dissonance in members of a Republican student group by asking them to write a positive statement about a Democratic candidate. Typically, in this paradigm, subjects reduce cognitive dissonance arousal by changing their attitudes so that they are consistent with the statement that they have written. In this case, however, since changing their attitudes to make them consistent with their statement would have conflicted with their Republican identity (and membership in the Republican

student group), these students instead resolved their cognitive dissonance by reporting more negative feelings toward Democrats.

With this study in mind, Table 4.5 displays the effects of attitude priming on emotions toward the two parties. As suspected, the emotional bolstering pattern appears strikingly consistent with the attitude bolstering pattern from above. When attitudes toward the Democratic Party were primed, Republicans reported more positive emotion ( $B = .100$ ,  $SE = .049$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and less negative emotion toward their own party ( $B = -.091$ ,  $SE = .053$ ,  $p < .10$ ). When attitudes toward the Republican Party were primed, Republicans reported less positive emotion ( $B = -.103$ ,  $SE = .035$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and more negative emotion toward the Democratic Party ( $B = .075$ ,  $SE = .047$ ,  $p = .12$ )—though the negative emotion effect narrowly misses the threshold for statistical significance at the  $p < .10$  level. When the emotion items are combined into a single measure of total affect, the Democratic prime leads to a significant positive shift in total affect toward the Republican Party ( $B = .184$ ,  $SE = .063$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and the Republican prime significantly shifts total affect toward the Democratic Party in a negative direction ( $B = -.178$ ,  $SE = .071$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In other words, whichever dimension did *not* serve as the basis for partisan updating served as the basis for partisan justification. The effect of the Republican prime is particularly interesting, since it did not produce significant party identification change. Nonetheless, it appears that the prime did arouse cognitive inconsistency, which Republican subjects dealt with by derogating the Democratic Party. By simply bringing attitudes to bear on party identification, partisan change was induced and efforts to justify ones' party identification followed.

[Insert Table 4.5]

Given Republicans' efforts to justify their identities in response to priming and partisan change, the question remains as to whether these efforts were successful in producing a rebound in party identification by the end of the study. Results from Table 4.6 suggest that they were indeed successful. Controlling for both of the prior party identification measures, both attitude primes are positively associated with party identification at time 3—though only the effect of the Democratic attitude prime reaches statistical significance. Recall that this was also the prime that significantly weakened party identification from time 1 to time 2. Substantively speaking, this finding suggests that these primes produce a strengthening of party identification from time 2 (immediately after the attitude prime) to time 3 (at the end of the fifteen-minute study). In other words, after initially weakening in response to these attitude primes, Republicans' identities appear to have rebounded by the end of the study. The predicted probability of reverting back to strong Republican identification after initially weakening one's identity is presented in Figure 4.2. The figure shows that, once their identities began to weaken, most Republicans in the control group maintained their weak identity (first observed at time 2) or weakened their identity further. The probability of reverting back to strong party identification in the control group is only 7.8%. On the other hand, those in the two treatment conditions, and particularly those exposed to the Democratic prime, show a higher probability of reverting back to strong identification with their party. Those exposed to the Democratic prime rebounded back to strong identification 18.3% of the time, and those exposed to the Republican prime rebounded 12.3% of the time. Presumably this identity rebound resulted from the attitudinal and emotional bolstering demonstrated in Tables 4.4 and 4.5.

[Insert Table 4.6] [Insert Figure 4.2]

In order to establish that emotional bolstering mediates this rebound in party identification, the emotion measures obtained between the time 2 and time 3 party identification measures are included in the model. As expected, inclusion of the measure of total affect toward the Republican Party reduces the size of the coefficients associated with the exposure to the Democratic Party prime. A Sobel test for mediation establishes that emotions toward Republicans significantly mediate the relationship between the Democratic prime and party identification at time 3 ( $p < .10$ ) (see Baron and Kenny 1986). Turning to the other treatment, there is little room for identity rebound to occur, since exposure to the Republican Party prime did not significantly weaken party identification in the first place. However, when total affect toward the Democratic Party is included in the model, the non-significant coefficient associated with exposure to the Republican prime drops substantially.<sup>44</sup>

Figure 4.3 illustrates the size of the effect that emotional bolstering had on party identity. More specifically, the figure shows the predicted probability of rebounding to strong Republican identification at time 3 after weakening from a strong to a weak identification from time 1 to time 2. In both the control group and the Democratic prime condition, this probability increases with positive affect toward the Republican Party. However, the impact of positive affect is clearly much greater in the Democratic prime condition, where the probability of strong identification at time 3 increases from a 2.1% to 32.7% as affect goes from most negative to most positive. In the control group, this probability only increase from .9% to 21.5%. In short, when party identification change

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<sup>44</sup> This drop is so large that a Sobel test suggests that a significant portion of the non-significant effect is carried to the dependent variable by the mediator. In the other words, if the rebound effect were significant, we could be confident that the effect was mediated by affect toward the Democratic Party.

was produced by priming attitudes toward the Democratic Party, Republicans were able to undo this change by bolstering their emotions toward the Republican Party.

[Insert Figure 4.3]

## **Discussion**

This chapter examined “measurement error” in party identification in order to gain a better understanding of the processes driving identity variation. Past research has posited that party identification varies as a result of measurement error, and not, for the most part, as a result of short-term forces (Green et al. 2002; Green and Palmquist 1990, 1994). And this stability is thought to arise from accumulation of information about what the parties symbolize and not partisan motivation (Green et al. 2002; Gerber and Green 1998; Gerber and Green 1999). While this dissertation remains agnostic with regard to the degree that party identification changes, it takes a strong position in favor of a dual motivations model of party identification. In other words, stable party identification results from partisan motivation and not merely from the accumulation of information about the parties. Yet, accuracy motivation may, at times, stimulate party identification change.

Over the course of the past three chapters, I have provided evidence of partisan motivation in a variety of ways and across a variety of circumstances. In this chapter, we have seen that, under the right circumstances, mere attitude priming can trigger responsiveness motivation and lead to party identification change. However, when one’s attitudes toward a particular party pressure a person to change her identity, she may relieve that psychological pressure by bolstering her attitudes (cognitively and/ or

affectively) toward the other party. Just as in Chapter 2, partisans avoid changing their identities (at least in the long-term) by justifying their identities in two dimensions. As long as a person has more positive feelings toward her own party than toward the opposition party, stable party identification can be justified.

In previous chapters, I experimentally induced disagreement between individuals and their party. This chapter, on the other hand, made use of the real world political context to show how one's own attitudes can both threaten and stabilize party identification. By running this study during the 2008 primary election season, I was able to capitalize on the growing disaffection with the Republican Party which culminated in their stunning defeat in the general election and a drop in Republican identification across 25 of 26 demographic groups (all but frequent churchgoes) from 2001 to 2009 (Etheridge 2009). While results strongly suggest that partisan motivation plays an important role in explaining the stability of party identification, it also appears that partisans do feel an obligation, at least under the right circumstances, to bring their identities into alignment with their attitudes. The question remains, however, as to whether this responsiveness motivation is rooted in the desire to identify with the party that best represents one's policy interests or whether it is embedded in the desire to conform to norms of civic duty and pragmatic partisanship. This question will be taken up in Chapter 5.

**Table 4.1: Question Order**

Control	Democratic Prime	Republican Prime
<b>Party Identification (t1)</b>	<b>Party Identification (t1)</b>	<b>Party Identification (t1)</b>
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	Attitudes Toward Democratic Party	Attitudes Toward Republican Party
<b>Party Identification (t2)</b>	<b>Party Identification (t2)</b>	<b>Party Identification (t2)</b>
Attitudes Toward Both Parties (randomized)	Attitudes Toward Republican Party	Attitudes Toward Democratic Party
Emotions Toward Both Parties	Emotions Toward Both Parties	Emotions Toward Both Parties
<b>Party Identification (t3)</b>	<b>Party Identification (t3)</b>	<b>Party Identification (t3)</b>

Note: The dotted line represents the start of the study. Party identification at time 1 comes from YouGov/Polimetrix records.

**Table 4.2: Post-test Party Identification by Pre-test Party Identification**

		Current Party Identification						
		Strong Dem	Weak Dem	Lean Dem	Indep	Lean Rep	Weak Rep	Strong Rep
Past Party Identification	Strong Dem	<b>83.3%</b>	7.4%	7.4%	1.9%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%
	Weak Dem	5.1%	<b>79.7%</b>	11.9%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
	Lean Dem	9.4%	0.0%	<b>87.5%</b>	3.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Indep	2.0%	0.0%	15.7%	<b>74.5%</b>	5.9%	0.0%	2.0%
	Lean Rep	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	<b>66.7%</b>	6.1%	18.2%
	Weak Rep	0.0%	2.8%	0.0%	2.8%	5.6%	<b>83.3%</b>	5.6%
	Strong Rep	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.1%	6.1%	<b>89.8%</b>

Note: Percentages are calculated so that rows sum to 100%.

**Table 4.3: Effect of Attitude Priming on Party Identification (Ordered Probit)**

	<b>Republicans</b> N = 118	<b>Democrats</b> N =145	<b>Independents</b> N =45
	<i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )
Republican Party Prime	-.194 (.286)	-.062 (.253)	.060 (.427)
Democratic Party Prime	-.706** (.294)	.062 (.245)	.016 (.402)
Party Identification (t1)	1.40*** (.169)	1.36*** (.153)	NA
Cut 1	-.627 (.484)	-3.50 (.419)	-2.03 (.481)
Cut 2	.061 (.375)	-2.11 (.375)	-.907 (.309)
Cut 3	1.63 (.366)	-.311 (.365)	1.44 (.356)
Cut 4	2.92 (.414)	.166 (.446)	2.09 (.494)

\*\*\*p<.01; \*\*p<.05; \*p<.10

Note: Results come from ordered probit regression. Republican, Democrat, and Independent are determined using party identification at time 1. “Leaners” are included with Republicans and Democrats, and Independents contain only “pure” independents.

**Table 4.4: Republicans' Attitudes toward Parties**

	Attitudes Toward Republican Party (N= 118)	Attitudes Toward Democratic Party (N= 118)
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SE</i> )
Before Party Identification	.131 (.062)	-.569 (.057)
After Party Identification	.225 (.065)	-.730 (.043)
Difference	.094 (.090)	-.161** (.071)

\*\*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \* $p < .10$

Note: The table shows mean differences between attitudes measured before party identification versus those measured after party identification. Differences in means are calculated using T-tests. The attitude dimension obtained before party identification served as the prime.

**Table 4.5: Attitude Bolstering in Response to Attitude Priming Among Republicans**

	Positive Emotions Toward Reps. N=116 <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	Negative Emotions Toward Reps. N=117 <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	Total Emotions Toward Reps. N=116 <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	Positive Emotions Toward Dems. N=116 <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	Negative Emotions Toward Dems. N=116 <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	Total Emotions Toward Dems. N=117 <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )
Republican Party Prime	-.049 (.048)	.030 (.052)	-.086 (.086)	-.103*** (.035)	.075 (.047)	-.178** (.071)
Democratic Party Prime	.100** (.049)	-.091* (.053)	.184** (.087)	-.028 (.035)	-.013 (.048)	.021 (.072)
Constant	.605*** (.035)	.489*** (.039)	.117* (.063)	.292*** (.026)	.781*** (.035)	-.486*** (.053)

\*\*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\* $p \leq .05$ ; \* $p < .10$

Note: Results come from standard OLS regression.

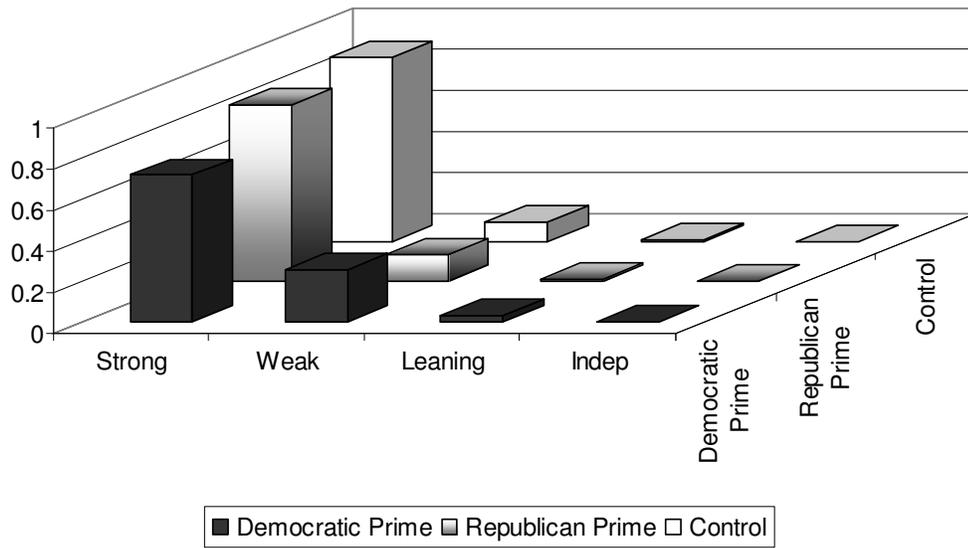
**Table 4.6: Emotion toward Parties as Mediators of Party Identification Rebound among Republicans**

	Party Identification (t3) N=118	Party Identification (t3) N=116	Party Identification (t3) N=116
	<i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )
Republican Party Prime	.177 (.157)	.190 (.153)	.004 (.156)
Democratic Party Prime	.306* (.162)	.219 (.161)	.247 (.156)
Party Identification (t1)	-.128 (.106)	-.178* (.104)	-.109 (.101)
Party Identification (t2)	.926*** (.091)	.865*** (.090)	.839*** (.090)
Total Emotions Toward Republicans		.556*** (.182)	
Total Emotions Toward Democrats			-.783***
Constant	.016 (.209)	.198 (.209)	-.189 (.209)

\*\*\*p<.01; \*\*p<.05; \*p<.10

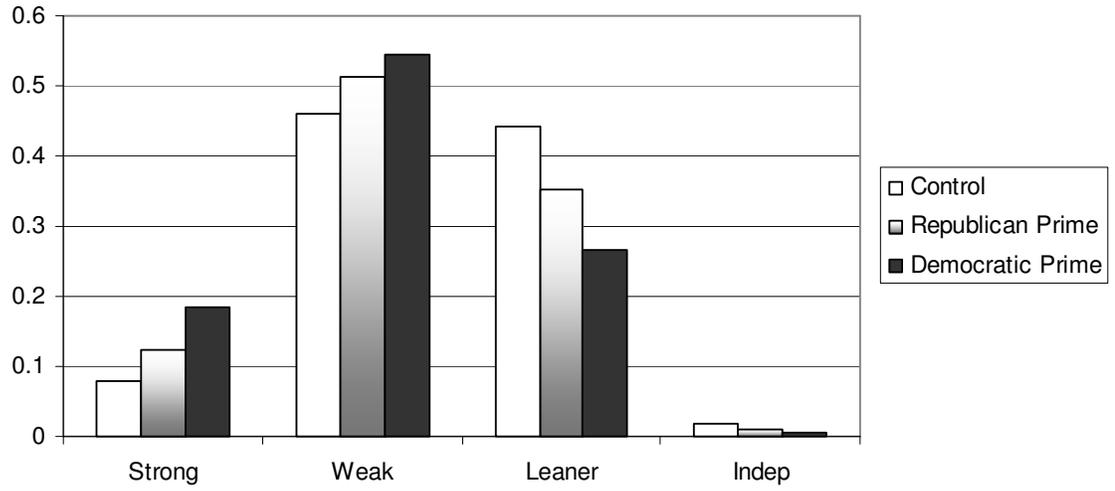
Note: To facilitate interpretation of mediation effects, results come from standard OLS regression.

**Figure 4.1: Predicted Probability of Party Identification among Strong Republicans**



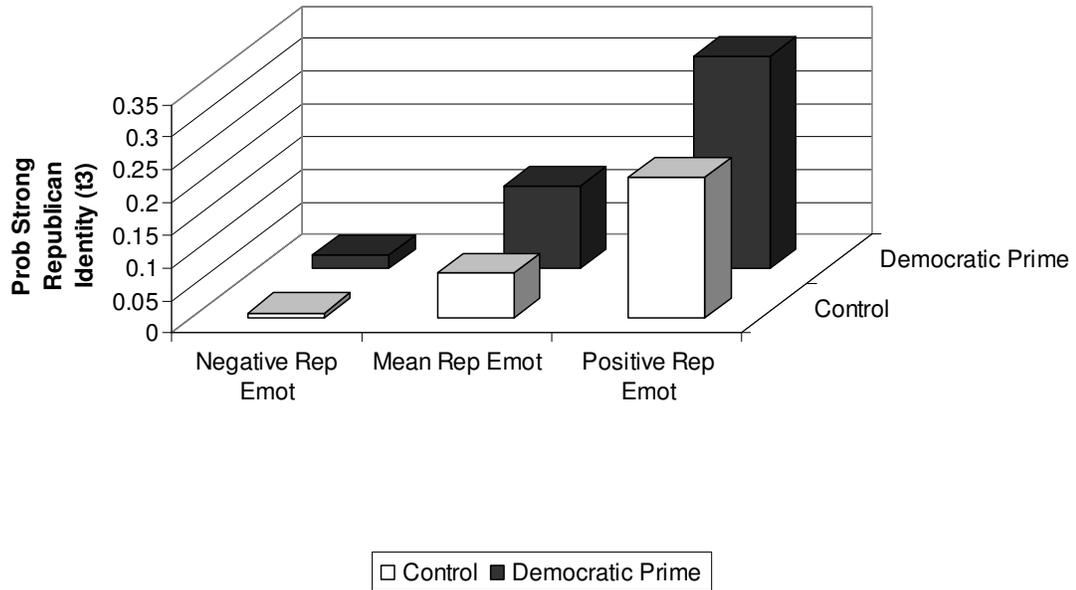
Note: The figure illustrates the probability of each level of Republican Party identification at time 2 after identifying as a strong Republican at time 1.

**Figure 4.2: Predicted Probability of Reverting back to Strong Republican Identification**



Note: The figure represents the predicted probability of reporting each level of Republican Party identification at time 3 after reporting a strong Republican identity at time 1 and a weak Republican identity at time 2.

**Figure 4.3: The Impact of Emotional Bolstering on the Predicted Probability of Reverting back to Strong Republican Identification**



Note: The figure represents the predicted probability of identifying as a strong Republican at t3 after reporting a strong Republican identity at t1 and a weak Republican identity at t2. The intention is to illustrate the larger impact of emotions toward the Republican Party on this probability in the Democratic prime condition than in the control condition.

## Appendix

**Table A.1: The Moderating Effect of Attitudes on the Relationship between Attitude Priming and Party Identification among Republicans**

	N = 118	N = 118
	<i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )
Republican Party Prime	-.194 (.286)	-.392 (.311)
Democratic Party Prime	-.706** (.294)	-.886* (.511)
Attitudes Toward Republican Party		.593 (.394)
Attitudes Toward Democratic Party		-.839* (.461)
Republican Party Prime* Attitudes Toward Republican Party		-.434 (.629)
Democratic Party Prime* Attitudes Toward Democratic Party		-.128 (.718)
Party Identification (t1)	1.40*** (.169)	1.28*** (.185)
Cut 1	-.627 (.484)	-.428 (.604)
Cut 2	.061 (.375)	.301 (.504)
Cut 3	1.63 (.366)	1.76 (.493)
Cut 4	2.92 (.414)	3.10 (.536)

\*\*\*p<.01; \*\*p<.05; \*p<.10

**Table A.2: Exploratory Factor Analysis of Attitude Priming Questions**

	Component 1	Component 2
Republican Feeling Thermometer	-.403	<b>.832</b>
Trust Republican Party	-.319	<b>.886</b>
Approve of Republicans in Congress	-.200	<b>.816</b>
Democratic Feeling Thermometer	<b>.828</b>	-.410
Trust Democratic Party	<b>.931</b>	-.277
Approve Democrats in Congress	<b>.806</b>	-.235
Eigenvalue	4.21	1.09
Variance Explained	70.14%	18.23%

Note: Eigenvalue cutoffs are set to 1.0 (Kaiser's Rule). Cattell's scree test yields the same number of factors, as indicated by the Eigenvalues. Extractions are based on principal axis factoring with varimax rotation.

**Table A.3: Exploratory Factor Analysis of Emotion Items**

	Component 1	Component 2
Enthusiasm—Republican Party	<b>.549</b>	-.574
Hope—Republican Party	<b>.577</b>	-.602
Anger—Democratic Party	<b>.896</b>	-.095
Afraid—Democratic Party	<b>.861</b>	-.283
Frustrated—Democratic Party	<b>.852</b>	-.113
Enthusiasm—Democratic Party	-.743	<b>.495</b>
Hope—Democratic Party	-.715	<b>.491</b>
Anger—Republican Party	-.138	<b>.923</b>
Afraid—Republican Party	-.274	<b>.822</b>
Frustrated—Republican Party	-.154	<b>.826</b>
Eigenvalue	6.34	1.70
Variance Explained	63.36%	16.97%

Note: Eigenvalue cutoffs are set to 1.0 (Kaiser's Rule). Cattell's scree test yields the same number of factors, as indicated by the Eigenvalues. Extractions are based on principal axis factoring with varimax rotation.

## Chapter Five

### The Paradox of Partisan Responsiveness

Over several chapters, it has been established that partisans are motivated to maintain their identities. Party identity change is psychologically costly, so people only update their identities if they cannot avoid it. This chapter considers the implications of these costs for responsiveness motivation. In particular, if there is a cost to updating one's party identity, when is responsiveness motivation likely to be strong enough to produce identity change?

The biological roots of group attachment are outlined by Darwin in *The Descent of Man* (1890). He theorizes that natural selection led humans to become social animals, because “those who cared least for their comrades, and lived solitary, would perish in greater numbers” (p. 105). He hypothesized that the pleasure we get from social group membership likely developed as an extension of familial affection. Social psychologists have demonstrated that this social identification instinct may be awakened by merely dividing individuals into arbitrary groups. Studies show that to do so biases individuals' behavior in favor of the group to which they were assigned relative to the outgroup (Tajfel et al. 1971). Intergroup competition only serves to solidify these identities and heighten group oriented behavior (Sherif 1956). Therefore, given the ongoing rivalry and perpetual antagonism between political parties, it is not surprising that individuals

develop strong party allegiances that are costly to change. Experiments have shown that high identifiers will often maintain group allegiances even when it means incurring individual costs, suggesting that to change their group allegiances is even more costly (Van Vugt and Hart 2004). And these psychological costs may be compounded by social sanctions for disloyalty.

Of course, under the right circumstances, it seems that individuals change their party identities despite these costs. Partisans sometimes update their identities to reflect their issues positions (Jackson 1975; Franklin and Jackson 1983; Franklin 1992), party performance evaluations (Fiorina 1981; MacKuen et al. 1989; Brody and Rothenberg 1988), and attitudes toward the candidates parties run for office (Page and Jones 1979; Brody and Rothenberg 1988). Most assume that individuals are driven to update their identities because they have a stake in political outcomes. It follows that, if partisans are motivated to update their identities for this reason, party identification may serve an instrumental function by providing voters with a reliable heuristic that helps them make sense of politics while reducing information costs (Tomz and Sniderman 2005; Shively 1979; Schaffner and Streb 2002; Huckfeldt et al. 1999; Popkin 1991).

However, while it may seem perfectly innocuous to assume that party identification is driven by an individuals' incentive to attain policy benefits, we should be very careful about doing so. Specifically, if there is any social or psychological cost to changing one's party identity, the motivation to attain policy benefits is unlikely to be sufficient to overcome this cost. In other words, the well known paradox of voting may be a paradox of partisan responsiveness as well.

Downs (1957) explains that, in large-scale elections, abstention may be rational even for individuals who greatly prefer the policies of one party over another. Since each person can only cast a single vote, the probability of influencing the outcome of an election is extremely small. Therefore, the expected policy returns from voting are miniscule and unlikely to outweigh the cost of turnout (time, effort, etc.).

Likewise, if there is any cost to updating one's party identity, it may be rational to maintain a stable party identity regardless of the parties' issue positions, performance, and candidates for office. Again, since the probability of casting the decisive vote in any large-scale election approaches zero, the expected policy benefits to be derived from policy-oriented voting approach zero. Therefore, the expected policy benefits to be derived from updating one's party identity to reflect one's policy interests also approach zero.

Still, we have seen in previous chapters that, under the right circumstances, individuals do update their identities. But what motivates this responsiveness? Downs solves the "paradox of voting" by arguing that there is a benefit to voting *per se*: "Rational men in a democracy are motivated to some extent by a sense of social responsibility relatively independent of their own short-run gains and losses" (p. 267). Riker and Ordeshook (1968) refer to this as the benefit of fulfilling one's civic duty, and designate it as the "D-term" in their voter calculus model. They model the rewards to be derived from voting as a function of the probability of casting the decisive vote ( $p$ ), the policy benefits to be gained by the preferred party winning ( $B$ ), the cost of turning out to vote ( $C$ ), and the expressive benefits of voting ( $D$ ). Therefore, as long as  $pB + D > C$ , a citizen will turnout to vote.

$$\text{Rewards} = pB - C + D$$

The same solution can be applied to the paradox of partisan responsiveness. Partisans update their identities *not* because they want to identify with the party that offers the most policy benefits but because they feel that it is their civic duty to conform to societal norms of pragmatism over partisanship. In Chapter 1, responsiveness motivation ( $R$ ) is derived from the probability of one's vote determining the outcome of the election ( $p$ ), the policy benefits associated with the preferred election outcome ( $B$ ), and the expressive benefits that come from seeing oneself as a pragmatic citizen—an aspect of civic duty ( $D$ ). The cost of partisan updating comes from acting against one's partisan motivation ( $M$ ), given the ability to justify acting on that motivation ( $J$ ). In short, responsive motivation is thought to be driven primarily by the desire for expressive benefits.

Therefore, partisan identity weakening should only occur when  $pB + D > MJ$ . In Chapter 2, the  $J$ -term is experimentally manipulated to illustrate that individuals are more likely to report weaker party identities in response to disagreement with their party when their ability to justify ( $J$ ) acting on their partisan motivation ( $M$ ) is reduced. This chapter examines the other side of the inequality. Given a very small and constant  $p$ , party identification should be relatively unaffected by the policy benefits ( $B$ ) at stake in a given election. However, increasing the salience of civic duty ( $D$ ) should increase the probability of party identity weakening.

## Experiment

An experiment was designed to make salient the types of considerations that are likely to increase responsiveness motivation, thereby amplifying the influence of issue positions on party identification. If party identification is responsive, this would support revisionist claims. However, while revisionist models portray party identification as serving an instrumental function in the quest for policy benefits, the dual motivations model suggests that the incentive to appear pragmatic and unbiased is likely to drive the relationship between party identification and issue positions. In other words, partisan updating serves an expressive function. The implications of this distinction are highly relevant to our understanding of democratic accountability. If partisan responsiveness is driven, not by concerns over policy, but by civic duty and pragmatism, we cannot simply assume that self-interest will drive citizens to hold parties accountable. And, if citizens are reluctant to hold parties accountable, this raises serious doubt about the efficiency of party identification as a heuristic. While we know that party identification has an incredibly powerful influence on behavior (see Campbell et al. 1960; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008), it is simply not clear whether this helps or harms democracy.

*Duty Hypothesis:* Responsiveness motivation, and therefore partisan change, will be driven by the desire to appear unbiased and pragmatic, thereby conforming to norms of civic duty. Consequently, partisan identity updating will increase when norms of civic duty are made salient.

*Stakes Hypothesis:* Party identification will not be affected by consideration of the policies the parties will attempt to enact upon taking power. Therefore, partisan identity updating will *not* increase when the policies at stake in an election are made salient.

## **Method**

*Participants.* The sample is composed of 1,098 adult partisans and partisan “leaners” from across the United States and was attained over the Internet through YouGov/Polimetrix between July 29, 2008, and August 3, 2008. YouGov/Polimetrix matched subjects down to the known marginals of the general population of the United States on gender, age, race, education, and political interest. However, partisan “leaners” are under-represented in the sample by a substantial margin relative to strong and weak partisans.<sup>45</sup> As in Chapter 3, “pure” independents are excluded from analysis, since the purpose of the study is to determine what conditions lead partisans to defect from their party. Since “pure” independents claim no partisan allegiance, it cannot be determined whether movement in their party identification constitutes movement toward or away from a favored party.

*Procedure.* This experiment employs a three-celled design in which subjects are primed to consider the policy stakes of an upcoming election (i.e. instrumental concerns) or the norms of civic duty and pragmatism (i.e. expressive concerns).

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<sup>45</sup> The full sample is composed of two sub-samples of 600 people conducted from 7/20/08 through 7/31/08, and 8/1/08 through 8/3/08 respectively. After collecting the first sample, it was realized that partisans “leaners” were mistakenly left out of the sample. There was also concern over the length of subjects’ responses to the stimulus. Therefore, a sentence was added to both treatment conditions asking participants to “please explain your answer in a few sentences.” The study was put back into the field the following day, and a new sample was collected—this time including partisan “leaners.” For the purposes of analysis, the two sub-samples are combined. Neither the sampling issue nor the additional wording affected random assignment, so the treatment conditions remain uncorrelated with any other variable (i.e. they remain exogenous). Therefore, any differences that arise between experimental conditions can only be attributed to the priming stimuli and no other factor.

Both priming treatments were carried by a survey question administered near the beginning of the study. In all three conditions, subjects read the following introduction:

“Experts predict that nearly 200 million people will vote in the November election. In addition to the presidential race, they will be casting votes for representatives and senators who will represent them in Congress.

Most voters think of themselves as either a Republican or a Democrat, and most candidates are affiliated with one of those two parties.”

In the control condition, respondents were not asked to comment. However, in the policy stakes condition, this introduction was followed up with an open-ended question:

“Think about what’s at stake in the upcoming election. Do you believe the country and you personally will be seriously affected by which party wins this election? Please explain your answer in a few sentences.”

In the duty priming condition, participants were asked:

“Think about what it means to be a good citizen. Do citizens have a duty to consider the issues, or is it okay to just vote based on party? Please explain your answer in a few sentences.”

*Measures.* A variable corresponding to *past party identification strength* is created by simply folding the standard 7-point party identification measure in half. The new scale runs from 0 to 3. Strong Democrats as well as strong Republicans are coded as 3, weak partisans are coded as 2, leaners are coded as 1, and pure independents are coded as 0. Because YouGov/Polimetrix uses sample matching to obtain nationally representative samples, they have party identification on record for everyone in their respondent pool. Thus, it is possible to avoid the inevitable biases that would result if party identification were obtained immediately prior to the treatment.

The primary dependent variable of interest in this study is *current party identification strength*. This variable is coded identically to *past party identification*

*strength* except that those partisans who crossed over from one party to the other from time 1 to time 2 are coded as having zero strength.

The measure of *issue distance* is based on subjects' assessments of the party differential across a number of issues. The party differential is calculated using a series of measures preceding party identification in the post-test instrument. Participants are asked to take positions on taxation, guaranteed jobs, the Iraq War, healthcare, illegal immigration, abortion, gun control, and school vouchers. They are then asked to place the Republican Party and Democratic Party respectively on identical 7-point scales. These items are either taken directly from the ANES or are modeled after ANES questions.<sup>46</sup> Later in the survey, subjects are asked to rate the importance of each of these issues on a 7-point scale ranging from "not that important" to "extremely important."

The party differential is calculated using the standard method which considers individuals' issue positions relative to those of the two parties. However, in this case, the measure is oriented toward whichever party the respondent identifies with or leans toward in the pretest. Each issue position is weighted by the importance rating (rescaled to run from 0 to 1) assigned to it by the respondent (Carsey and Layman 2006). These weighted values are then added together to form a single summary measure of issue positions.<sup>47</sup> The eight 7-point measures yield an index which is rescaled to run from -1 to 1. Individuals whose weighted issue positions are equidistant from the two parties receive a value of zero. Those who favor their own party's positions relative to the opposition party's positions receive positive values. Those who favor the opposition party's positions receive negative values.

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<sup>46</sup> The actual wording of the measures appears in the Appendix.

<sup>47</sup> Principal axis factor analysis of the seven issues resulted in a unidimensional solution with an Eigenvalue of 4.40.

Dummy variables are created to represent exposure to the *duty prime* condition and policy *stakes prime* condition. Subjects assigned to a treatment condition receive a value of “1” and all others receive a value of “0”.

## **Results**

I begin by examining subjects’ responses to the two priming questions. The experiment is built on the assumption that subjects assigned to the stakes condition would say that there was, indeed, something important at stake in the 2008 election. In the norms condition, they were expected to endorse the norm of voting on the issues as opposed to simply voting for one’s party. As expected, 82.6% of subjects assigned to stakes priming condition and 85.0% of respondents assigned to the norms priming condition responded in this manner.

Next, I check random assignment to determine whether any chance associations exist between the treatment and any other exogenous determinant of current party identification strength. While no significant differences in previous party identification strength or political sophistication emerge between experimental conditions, random assignment appears to have failed for age and Democratic identification.<sup>48</sup> More specifically, prior to treatment, those assigned to the policy stakes condition show a higher propensity to report party identities on the Democratic side of the scale ( $M = .585$ ,  $SD = .026$ ) than those assigned to the control condition ( $M = .484$ ,  $SD = 0.251$ ,  $p < .01$ ).<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Political sophistication is measured using a 7-item battery. Therefore, the political sophistication variable runs from 0 (none correct) to 7 (all correct). This battery contains a variety of multiple choice questions about political figures and institutions. Respondents are asked to identify the jobs filled by Nancy Pelosi, John Roberts, Dana Perino, and Gordon Brown. Participants are also asked how many votes it takes to override a veto, which branch has the power to determine whether or not a law is constitutional, and which branch has the power of the purse.

<sup>49</sup> Democrat is a dummy variable.

In addition, subjects assigned to the duty prime are older on average ( $M = 49.21$ ,  $SD = 14.62$ ) than subjects assigned to both the control group ( $M = 47.15$ ,  $SD = 15.64$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and the policy stakes prime ( $M = 46.71$ ,  $SD = 14.71$ ,  $p < .05$ ). These variables will therefore be included as controls in analyses to follow. Those assigned to the duty prime ( $M = 23.54$ ,  $SD = 15.83$ ) also wrote approximately three more words in response to the stimulus question than those assigned to the policy stakes prime ( $M = 20.19$ ,  $SD = 18.62$ ,  $p < .01$ ).<sup>50</sup> Therefore, in order to ensure that findings cannot be attributed to response intensity, word count will be controlled as well. Predicted values will be estimated with age and stimulus word count set to their means, while party identification strength will be set to strong and (bipolar) party identification will be set to strong Republican.

Past party identification and current party identification are cross tabulated in Table 5.1. Results suggest that while there is a clear tendency toward stability, there does appear to be variance in party identification to explain. However, the question is, of course, whether this variation constitutes real change or random measurement error (Green and Palmquist 1990, 1994; Green et al. 2002).

[Insert Table 5.1]

The first step is to examine the effect of both primes on current party identification while controlling for past party identification. The expectation is that the duty prime will weaken party identification while the stakes prime will have little effect. The probability of maintaining a strong party identity across experimental conditions is displayed by condition in Figure 5.1. As in previous chapters, these estimates were obtained using ordered probit regression to account for potentially inconsistent intervals in party identification strength. Results in Table 5.2 show that, consistent with

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<sup>50</sup> Words counts are capped at 255 characters.

expectations, those exposed to the duty prime show a much lower likelihood of maintaining a strong identity than those assigned to the control group ( $p < .01$ ). The coefficient on the policy stakes prime runs in the same direction but falls short of statistical significance ( $p = .11$ ). This effect is significantly smaller than the effect of the duty prime ( $p < .05$ )

[Insert Table 5.2] [Insert Figure 5.1]

While this result provides compelling evidence in favor of the duty hypothesis, it is possible that the duty prime simply encouraged closet partisanship. To be more specific, participants may have simply reported weaker party identities in order to avoid the appearance of partisan bias. They may not have actually brought their identities into alignment with their issue positions.

In order to determine whether the duty prime truly increased responsiveness motivation rather than merely eliciting closet partisanship, I examine whether issue positions moderate the effect of the duty prime. To do this, the issue distance variable is interacted with each of the two treatment variables. Results in Table 5.3 indicate that the duty prime, but not the stakes prime, moderates the influence of issues positions on party identification. The results displayed in Figure 5.2 suggest that exposure to the duty prime led partisans to bring their identities into line with their issue positions. Those partisans whose issue positions were close to the positions of their own party, relative to the other party, tended to maintain their party identities regardless of condition. However, substantial differences emerge between conditions among those people who tended to disagree with their own party on the issues. Amazingly, subjects in the stakes condition and control group who expressed more agreement with the opposition party than with

their own party across a number of issues still managed to maintain stable party identities approximately one-third of the time. This probability dropped to approximately one-twentieth of the time in the duty priming condition. In sum, by priming considerations of duty and the virtue of pragmatism over partisanship, accuracy motivation was increased and partisans brought their identities into alignment with their issue positions.<sup>51</sup>

[Insert Table 5.3] [Insert Figure 5.2]

On one hand, these results strongly support revisionist models of party identification by showing that, at least under certain conditions, partisans will change their identities to reflect their issues positions. Findings suggest that the “unmoved mover” portrayal of party identification is a mischaracterization. On the other hand, these results provide a striking contrast with the general assumption that party identification is instrumental to the attainment of policy benefits. From these results, it appears that consideration of policy stakes has little influence on party identification relative to the incentive to express one’s civic duty and pragmatism. While the instrumentality of party identification cannot be ruled out on the basis of a single null finding, this result is nonetheless noteworthy. One might argue that individuals’ party identities already reflected their concerns over policy stakes coming into the experiment, so there was variation possible to observe additional identity change. However, the substantial effect of the duty prime suggests that partisans had plenty of room to move. Clearly, party identification was not in perfect alignment with issue positions coming into

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<sup>51</sup> The idea that issue positions might mediate (rather than moderate) the relationship between the treatment and party identification was also considered. In the full sample, a small but significant mediation effect appears. The treatment causes subjects to take less partisan issue positions, and this difference in issue positions carries a portion of the treatment effect to party identification. However, recall that 82.6% of subjects in the stake prime condition believe that there was something important at stake in the election, and 85.0% of subjects in the duty prime condition endorsed the norm of issue based voting. When analyses are run using only these subjects, the moderation effect becomes even clearer and mediation disappears.

the study, and only in the duty priming condition did this relationship increase in strength—leading to weaker party identification.

While individuals are motivated to see themselves as loyal partisans (and avoid the cost of partisan disloyalty), they are also motivated to believe that their identities are issue-based and not merely rooted in partisan bias. These results describe a voter who is concerned with avoiding the appearance of partisan bias, but not so concerned with maintaining the functionality of her party identity to facilitate the attainment of policy benefits.<sup>52</sup>

## **Discussion**

This chapter has asked, to whatever degree partisans update their identities, what is their motivation for doing so? While a great number of studies have examined the degree to which party identification changes, few give much attention at all to the motivations underlying party identification change. It is generally assumed that, because citizens have a stake in political outcomes, they will want to identify with the party that offers them the most policy benefits. This paper points out, however, that if there is any psychological cost associated with party identification change, expected policy benefits are unlikely to be great enough to outweigh this cost.

Since the American voter's innate motivation to attain policy benefits may not be sufficient to overcome her motivation to remain loyal to her party, we should, by

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<sup>52</sup> The parallel between the above findings and those in the literature on racial prejudice is worth mentioning. While racial attitudes can have a substantial influence on individuals' policy positions (Mendelberg 2001; Valentino et al. 2002; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Devine 1989), these influences are diminished when racial implications are made explicit, because they conflict with norms of egalitarianism (Mendelberg 2001; Devine 1989). In the cases of both party identification and racial prejudice, the influence of group bias appears to be reduced when conflict between biases and norms is made salient.

implication, be wary of assuming that democratic accountability is guided by the invisible hand. Ironically, it appears that we may not be able to count on voters to act in their own policy interest.

This also means that party identification may not function as an efficient heuristic. For instance, consider a purely instrumental model, in which party identification develops out of the need to make accurate political evaluations while minimizing information costs (Shively 1979). For party identification to function efficiently, allowing relatively uninformed individuals to vote as if they had objectively weighed the available information, partisans would need to update their identities to reflect their issue positions. These results suggest policy incentives are not great enough to offset the cost of partisan updating. Instead, it appears that the heuristic efficiency of party identification depends on instilling norms of civic duty through cultural socialization and civic education. Without such norms, partisans would have little incentive to hold their party accountable for its policies. To the degree that voters rely on their party identification to make decisions, these decisions would not accurately reflect their true preferences, and short-term democratic accountability may be threatened.

With this said, my intention has not been to argue that party identification is devoid of heuristic value. These results merely suggest that we should carefully consider how efficient party identification actually operates as an information shortcut (Bartels 1996). If there were no cost to updating one's party identity, we might safely assume that identification with responsible parties promotes democratic accountability by enabling relatively uninformed citizens to make sense out of a complicated political landscape. However, given the psychological cost of partisan updating, norms of civic duty may be

the only thing preventing party identification from hopelessly biasing political assessments and undermining citizens' incentive to hold parties accountable.

**Table 5.1: Cross-tabulation of Past Party Identity and Current Party Identity**

		Current Party Identification						
		Strong Rep	Weak Rep	Leaning Rep	Indep	Leaning Dem	Weak Dem	Strong Dem
Past Party Identification	Strong Rep	<b>84.0%</b>	10.4%	4.5%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Weak Rep	6.4%	<b>68.4%</b>	13.9%	5.9%	2.7%	2.7%	0.0%
	Lean Rep	10.3%	6.9%	<b>65.5%</b>	15.5%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%
	Independent	0.0%	2.8%	12.7%	<b>67.6%</b>	12.7%	2.8%	1.4%
	Lean Dem	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	<b>66.7%</b>	16.7%	5.6%
	Weak Dem	0.0%	1.2%	1.2%	5.3%	10.6%	<b>74.1%</b>	7.6%
	Strong Dem	0.9%	0%	0.3%	0.9%	2.1%	14.6%	<b>81.2%</b>

Note: Percentages are calculated so that rows sum to 100%.

**Table 5.2: The Effects of Duty Prime and Stakes Prime on Party Identification**

	Party Identification Strength <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> ) (N = 1083)
Duty Prime	-.401*** (.110)
Stakes Prime	-.167 (.106)
Party Identification Strength (t-1)	1.40*** (.060)
Democrat (t-1)	.122 (.075)
Word Count	.009*** (.003)
Age	.007*** (.003)
Cut 1	1.48 (.187)
Cut 2	2.46 (.189)
Cut 3	3.86 (.208)

\*\*\*p<.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10

Note: Results are based on ordered probit regression.

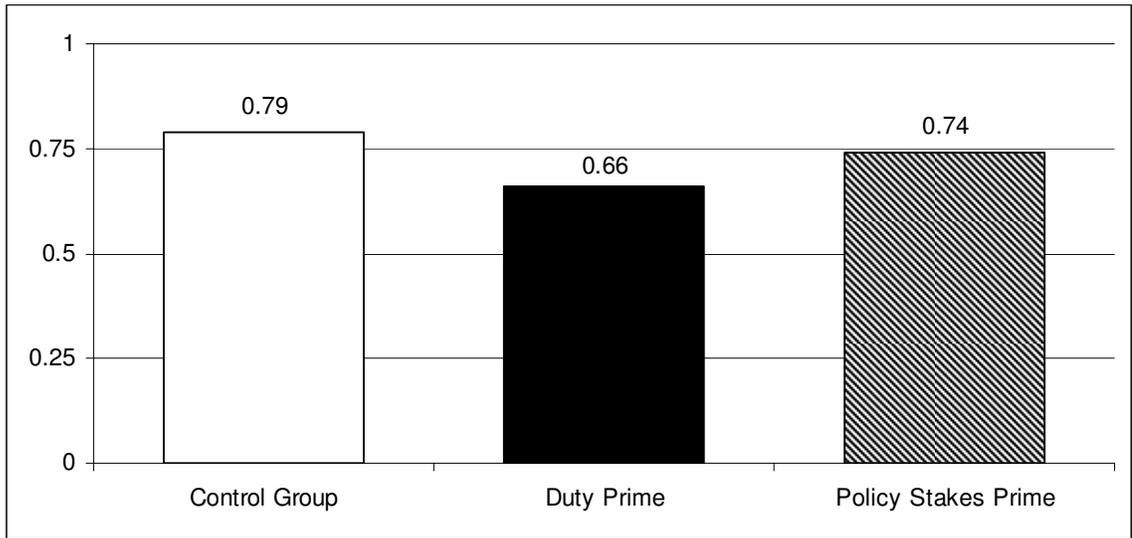
**Table 5.3: The Effect of Issue Positions and Party Identification Moderated by Duty and Stakes**

	Party Identification Strength <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> ) (N = 1082)
Duty Prime	-.600* (.313)
Stakes Prime	-.437 (.311)
Issue Distance	1.45*** (.296)
Duty Prime* Issue Distance	1.05** (.452)
Stakes Prime* Issue Distance	-.199 (.422)
Party Identification Strength (t-1)	1.27*** (.090)
Duty* Party Identification Strength (t-1)	.010 (.127)
Stakes* Party Identification Strength (t-1)	.162 (.127)
Democrat (t-1)	.155** (.077)
Word Count	.006** (.003)
Age	.004* (.003)
Cut 1	1.33 (.248)
Cut 2	2.36 (.248)
Cut 3	3.84 (.264)

\*\*\*p<.01, \*\*p<.05, \*p<.10

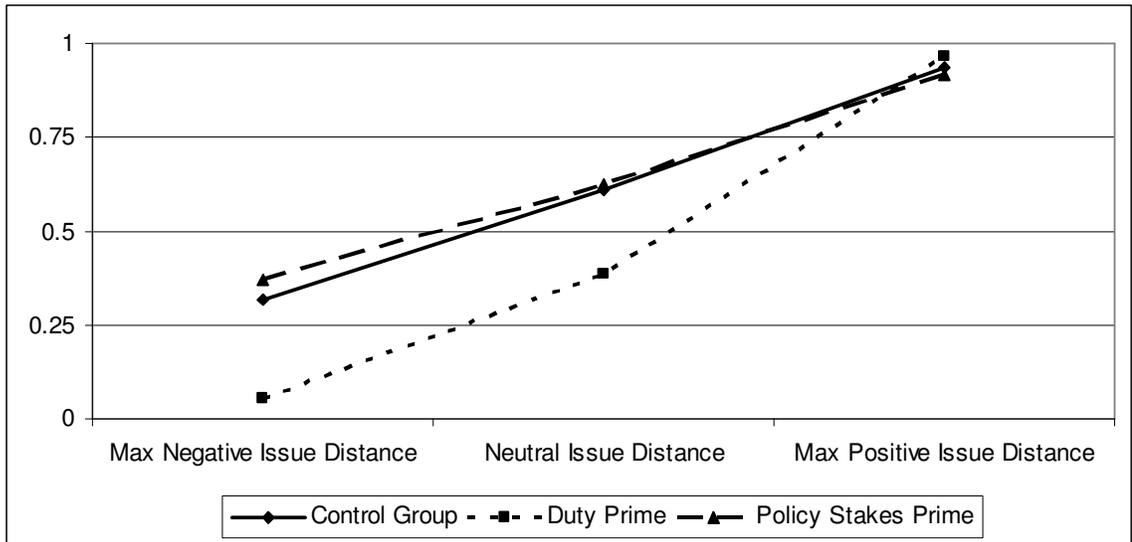
Note: Results are based on ordered probit regression.

**Figure 5.1: The Predicted Probability of Maintaining a Strong Party Identification**



Note: The figure illustrates the predicted probability of maintaining a strong party identity from pre to post. Predicted probabilities are based on ordered probit regression. For the purpose of prediction, past party identification strength = 3 (strong), Democrat = 0, age = 47.54, and word count = 14.35.

**Figure 5.2: The Predicted Probability of Strong Party Identification Given Issue Positions and Exposure to Experimental Primes**



Note: The figure illustrates the probability of maintaining a strong party identification from pre to post given one's issue positions. Predicted probabilities are based on ordered probit regression. For the purpose of prediction, past party identification strength = 3 (strong), Democrat = 0, age = 47.54, and word count = 14.35. Max negative issue distance = -.518, and max positive issue distance = .857. These were the most extreme observed values in the data. Neutral issue distance = 0.

## Appendix

### Issue Positions Battery:

There is much concern about taxes. Some people argue that people should be taxed at higher rates as their income increases, because people who make more money can more easily afford to pay taxes than people who make less money. This is known as a graduated tax system. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others argue that everyone should be taxed at the same rate. This is known as a flat tax system. Those who favor a flat tax argue that a graduated tax system reduces the incentives to be productive and therefore hurts the economy. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. Where would you place yourself [the Republican Party, the Democratic Party] on this scale?

There is much concern about jobs. Some people feel the government in Washington should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others think the government should just let each person get ahead on their own. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. Where would you place yourself [the Republican Party, the Democratic Party] on this scale?

There is much concern about the War in Iraq. Some people feel that we should stay and fight until order is restored and Iraq can govern itself. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others argue that the war cannot be won through military means, and we should withdraw from Iraq immediately. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. Where would you place yourself [the Republican Party, the Democratic Party] on this scale?

There is much concern about the rapid rise in medical and hospital costs. Some people support a government insurance plan which would cover all medical and hospital expenses for everyone. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others feel that all medical expenses should be paid by individuals through private insurance plans like Blue Cross or other company paid plans. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. Where would you place yourself [the Republican Party, the Democratic Party] on this scale?

There is much concern about illegal immigration. Some people feel that we should provide illegal immigrants who already live in the United States with a path to citizenship. This would bring illegal immigrants out of hiding so that the government could keep track of them and tax their income. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others argue that that citizenship should not be granted to anyone who

has come into the country illegally. They argue that illegal immigration is a crime and it should be punished not rewarded. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. Where would you place yourself [the Republican Party, the Democratic Party] on this scale?

There is much concern about abortion. Some people feel that unborn infants have a fundamental right to life and that abortions should be illegal. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others feel that women should have the right to choose whether or not to have an abortion, and that this is a private matter that the government should not interfere with. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. Where would you place yourself [the Republican Party, the Democratic Party] on this scale?

There is much concern about gun control. Some argue that greater restrictions should be placed on gun ownership. They argue that assault rifles and armor piercing bullets should be banned, and they support a waiting period before a gun can be purchased. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others argue that Americans have the right to own guns and that restrictions on gun ownership violate the Second Amendment of the Constitution. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. Where would you place yourself [the Republican Party, the Democratic Party] on this scale?

There is much concern about education. Some people feel that the best way to improve our education system is to promote competition between schools. They feel that if parents were provided with school vouchers that could be used to send their children to any public or private school, schools would be forced to compete. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others argue that public funds should only be used for public schools and not private schools. They feel that school vouchers would just funnel money away from public schools that need the funding. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. Where would you place yourself [the Republican Party, the Democratic Party] on this scale?

## Conclusion

To whatever degree party identification is stable, why is it stable? To the degree party identification changes, why does it change? After a number of tests, this dissertation arrives at the conclusion that party identification is shaped by often competing motives. While partisans feel compelled to hold parties accountable for their issue positions and performance, they are also motivated by party loyalty. As long as an individual can generate a justification for maintaining her identity despite disagreements she may have with her party, this clash of motives results in stable party identification. Identity change occurs when continued identification cannot be justified or when responsiveness motivation is simply greater than partisan motivation.

In Chapter 2 we saw that, after experimentally inducing disagreement between subjects and their party, individuals developed justifications for maintaining stable party identities. Rather than ignoring the induced disagreement, subjects found ways to adjust their attitudes to allow for it. This resulted in the emergence of a distinct partisan attitude dimension—a justification dimension. While liking the Democratic Party is generally associated with disliking the Republican Party and vice versa, this justification dimension captured subjects' propensity to report more negative attitudes toward the opposition party as their attitudes toward their own party declined. In popular political discourse, this is generally referred to as a lesser of two evils justification. This same pattern is then shown to emerge across data from the 1964-2004 American National Election Studies.

When the economy performs poorly and the opposition party is in office, negative attitudes toward the opposition party are associated with positive attitudes toward one's own party. However, the relationship between attitudes weakens when the economy performs poorly during the tenure of one's preferred party. In this case, as in the experiment, partisans report more negative attitudes toward the opposition party as their attitudes toward their own party decline. Again, this suggests the emergence of an identity justification dimension.

Chapter 3 examined whether partisan stability is contingent on partisans' ability to justify their identities. If partisans maintain stable identities as a result of justification, then presumably, party identity change should occur when subjects lack the cognitive resources necessary to develop justifications for continued identification after disagreeing with their party. Results of a national experiment support this hypothesis. When disagreement was induced, the most vulnerable partisans (i.e. those lacking cognitive resources) began to change their identities. This included subjects with low levels of political sophistication and Republicans—as their identities were already under pressure at the time of the study. When cognitive resources were experimentally inhibited, younger citizens and Democrats began to shift their identities as well. These results contrast strikingly with the revisionist theory that individuals devote their cognitive resources to updating their identities so that they will reflect their issue positions. Instead, these findings suggest that while partisans sometimes update their identities to reflect their issue positions, this tends to happen *despite their best efforts to avoid it*.

The issue of measurement error is considered in Chapter 4 where a simple question order experiment capitalized on real world context. The experiment was run

with a national sample during the 2008 primary season, a time of Republican Party disaffection and infighting. Therefore, it was hypothesized that simply priming Republicans to consider their attitudes toward parties might trigger their motivations. Sure enough, the attitude primes administered at the start of the survey caused a chain-reaction of responses—which, in a standard survey context, would likely be discounted as measurement error. Priming Republicans attitudes toward the Democratic Party weakened their party identity. Subsequently, however, subjects exposed to either experimental prime reported more partisan attitudes and emotions on whichever party attitude dimension was not primed. In other words, when their attitudes toward their own party were primed, Republicans attempted to justify their identity by reporting more negative attitudes and emotions toward the Democratic Party and vice versa when their attitudes toward their own party were primed. These effects mediated a rebound in party identification that occurred by the end of the survey. In short, when Republicans' attitudes were made salient to them, they felt compelled to update their party identity (i.e. motivated to be responsive). However, since this conflicted with their partisan motivation, subjects attempted to justify maintaining their identities by bolstering their attitudes on whichever party dimension was not already primed.

Chapter 5 examined the incentives underlying responsiveness motivation through a national experiment. The dual motivations theory suggests that responsiveness motivation is not likely to be driven by policy interests, because individuals understand that their actions are unlikely to affect policy. Therefore, to faithfully update one's party identity to reflect political evaluations entails a psychological cost—disloyalty to one's party—but offers little or not policy benefit. Why then are partisans ever motivated to

update their party identities? The dual motivations theory suggests that partisans want to appear unbiased and pragmatic, as these are norms associated with civic duty. In other words, partisans need to believe that their party identities are rooted in objective evaluation even if this is not entirely true. These two potential sources of responsiveness motivation—considerations of civic duty and policy stakes—were primed separately in a national experiment. As predicted, partisans brought their identities into closer alignment with their issue positions when primed to consider civic duty but not when primed to consider the policy stakes of the election. This finding suggests that party identification serves an expressive function as opposed to an instrumental function. While party identification has the potential to operate as an efficient heuristic, this potential does not arise naturally from the desire to attain policy benefits, but rests instead on the salience of civic duty and pragmatism norms in society.

In reflecting on these data, it is important to remember that identities are conceptually distinct from attitudes. While our identities are a reflection of our self-concept, attitudes represent our evaluations of specific people and objects around us. Nonetheless, when conflict between a particular attitude and identity becomes salient, an individual must change her identity, change the attitude, or find a way to justify maintaining them both in order to preserve cognitive consistency. In the realm of politics, these options are limited by norms of civic duty that discourage overt partisan bias. While identities certainly shape attitudes, individuals are unlikely to openly change their attitudes to conform to their party's position. Instead, a good democratic citizen is expected to change her party identity to reflect her attitudes about important issues of the

day. The salience of these norms, therefore, plays an important moderating role in party identification stability and change.

Nonetheless, given these conclusions, some important questions still remain. What are the implications of these findings for researchers and policy makers? How will a dual motivations model of party identification improve our understanding of public opinion and political behavior? If other models can predict most of the variance in party identification without modeling the biases I have explored, are they not superior?

Democratic theory rests on the assumption that, through government, citizens will pursue their interests. In a republic, they must do so by holding their representatives accountable for their actions—including the positions they take on issues. In short, the system depends on citizens' motivation to be responsive to new information and willingness to change course when their party fails. If partisan motivation acts as a drag on this responsiveness, accountability is threatened. Models that fail to account for partisan motivation risk drawing erroneous conclusions about the impact of party identification on democratic politics. If party identification is highly stable even when individuals disagree with their party, then its enormous effect on political behavior warrants reinterpretation. If partisans fail to hold parties accountable for their actions, the responsibility falls disproportionately on Independents—who are, on average, far less knowledgeable and politically involved (Campbell et al. 1960; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). Moreover, if the partisan biases of those to the left and right of the median voter do not cancel out (and they are not likely to), then public opinion will show a bias even in the aggregate.

Partisan bias provides each party with a great deal of latitude. Given that electoral outcomes often turn on small margins, the rose-colored glasses of loyal partisans may permit their party to be elected and re-elected even if a significant number of Independents and opposition party identifiers see important faults. If partisans find ways to justify maintaining stable identities, essentially disregarding useful information, and continue to vote for their party's candidates, it may have important electoral consequences. Would Harry Truman have been re-elected in 1948 had it not been for the Democratic Party loyalties developed during Franklin Roosevelt's tenure? Would George W. Bush have been re-elected in 2004 if not for Republican Party loyalties developed during the Ronald Reagan era? Yet, how well did either of them perform with respect to these legacies? While data show that the electorate has moved away from the Republican Party from 2000 to 2009 (Etheridge 2009), this change has occurred slowly. And this dissertation's findings suggest that, if not for partisan motivation, partisan change would have occurred more rapidly, perhaps resulting in different election outcomes. Ongoing investigation of data that are only now becoming available will undoubtedly help us to better understand these recent trends in light of the dual motivation model. For now, it appears that Republicans remain motivated to maintain their identities, and the observed shift in party identification has resulted from Republicans' inability to justify acting on their motivations. With George W. Bush out of office and a new Democratic administration to criticize, Republicans may now find it easier to justify returning to their party. An enduring partisan realignment seems unlikely unless Republican defectors lose the motivation to return.

By developing a dual motivations theory of party identification, this dissertation has taken the first steps toward determining the conditions under which party identification may be helpful versus harmful to democracy. This final chapter will consider how the intuition gained from this dual motivations model of party identification might affect the role we see for parties in American government. In the pages that follow, I will revisit two relevant literatures and discuss how partisan motivation might affect their conclusions.

### *Parties as Shortcuts*

Simon (1979) developed the notion of bounded rationality, arguing that individuals seek to maximize cognitive efficiency by expending the least amount of effort necessary to make approximately correct decisions. Building on Simon's work, political scientists have investigated how citizens use information shortcuts, or heuristics, to achieve low-information rationality in political decision-making (see Sniderman et al. 1991; Popkin 1991; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Lupia et al. 2000). Given the relatively uninformed state of American public opinion (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996), and the fact that political ignorance is rational from a theoretical perspective (Downs 1957), this is an important task. Still, while cognitive shortcuts give us great hope for the prospect of overcoming rational ignorance, we should also be cognizant of the limitations that heuristics might pose—a point that is central to the psychological literature on heuristics yet often overlooked by political scientists (Kuklinski and Quirk 2000; Tversky and Kahneman 1974).

Before delving deeper into this literature, however, it is helpful to begin with a bit of conceptual clarification. Lupia et al. (2000) emphasize that citizens rely on heuristics, not because they are “irrational,” but because they are rationally attempting to reduce information costs. Humans have evolved the capacity for heuristic processing because it tends to be *efficient*. Dual processing capacity—the ability to engage in heuristic processing or systematic processing (see Eagly and Chaiken 1993; Petty and Cacioppo 1986)—allows humans to adapt to complex environments. Humans have an incentive to rely on heuristics in order to save energy when there is no urgent need for extremely accurate information. However, when threats arise, our emotions tell us to devote more resources to information processing (Marcus et al. 2000; Brader 2006). While heuristics entail a loss of accuracy relative to more careful processing strategies, this loss of accuracy is offset by the reduction in information costs. In fact, if the defining characteristic of a heuristic is its efficiency, any loss in accuracy must be offset by an equally large or larger reduction in information costs.

If individuals appear to be sacrificing information processing accuracy to such an extent that it can no longer be justified by information cost savings, these individuals’ motives and the heuristics they are using should be questioned. Such an “irrational” sacrifice of information is likely to be motivated by the desire to reach a particular decision rather than an accurate one, and therefore should be distinguished from heuristic processing. As discussed in the previous chapter, partisan motivation is likely to be rooted in the evolutionary incentive to develop group bonds and preserve these bonds by avoiding disloyalty—a purpose quite distinct from that of heuristics.

The question of whether party identification acts as an efficient heuristic is particularly important, given the centrality of both party identification and heuristics to our understanding of public opinion and political behavior. Some of the early work on partisanship implies a heuristic role quite clearly. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954) characterize partisanship as a “standing decision,” a voting habit on which citizens rely in the absence of other information, and Downs (1957) suggests that parties help citizens to overcome their rational ignorance. Campbell et al. (1960) draw an analogy between the uninformed consumer and the uninformed voter:

Like the automobile buyer who knows nothing of cars except that he prefers a given make, the voter who knows simply that he is a Republican or Democrat responds directly to his stable allegiance without the mediating influence of perceptions he has formed of the objects he must choose between (p. 136).

Still, Campbell and colleagues are clear in their contention that party identification may provide uninformed voters with a basis on which to cast their ballots, but if the end goal is to cast a vote that represents one’s “true” policy interests, party identification is not necessarily a good proxy. The authors explain:

. . . the influence of party identification on attitudes toward the perceived elements in politics has been far more important than the influence of these attitudes on party identification itself (p. 135).

More recently, scholars have directly engaged the question of whether party identification functions as a heuristic. Shively (1979) asks why citizens develop party identification, theorizing that individuals with a desire to participate in politics and a motivation to reach accurate voting decisions identify with parties in order to reduce information costs. If citizens can determine which party generally represents their interests, they can avoid the cost of constantly monitoring politics.

It seems more plausible, however, that the motivation to identify with parties—and groups in general—results from natural selection, itself a utility maximization process that takes place over many generations. We identify with groups today because group bonds increased the likelihood of survival for our ancestors (Darwin 1890). Therefore, while party identification may potentially serve a heuristic function, it seems unlikely that it develops specifically to fill this need.

Still, Shively's very clear and parsimonious model helps us to understand how a partisan heuristic might ideally operate. If partisan motivation is incorporated into Shively's model, party identification functions just as it does in the dual motivation model—serving as a useful voting heuristic—as long as one's responsiveness motivation is greater than one's partisan motivation. However, when the opposite is true, party identification serves as a source of bias.

More recent work has attempted to empirically demonstrate the heuristic utility of partisanship. In an innovative experiment, Rahn (1993) shows that when party cues are available, individuals rely less on issue positions and more on party identification to help them evaluate candidates. She finds that this is even true when candidates take positions that conflict with their party's ideology. Subjects dismiss these inconsistencies and evaluate candidates on the basis of their party affiliation. Rahn views these results as evidence that party cues serve as useful heuristics. However, given that individuals appear *not* to reach approximately correct evaluations in the inconsistency condition, one might interpret these results as evidence that party identification biases candidate evaluations rather than serving as an effective shortcut. This interpretation is bolstered

by results from a similar experiment by Cohen (2003), in which party cues appear to trump issues regardless of subjects' cognitive effort.

While the above models clearly assume that citizens are motivated to be responsive, Sniderman and colleagues explicitly allow partisan motivation to play a role in heuristic processing (Sniderman et al. 1991; Brady and Sniderman 1985). They emphasize that citizens' feelings toward parties can act as a likeability heuristic that helps them determine on which side of an issue each party stands. In particular, citizens' motivation to agree with their favored party and distance themselves from the positions of the disfavored party serves as the basis by which many people attribute issue positions to parties.<sup>53</sup> In arguing that individuals' biases help them to understand politics, this work is both innovative and controversial. Others have built on this idea by, demonstrating that party cues (Schaffner and Streb 2002) and accessible party identities (Huckfeldt et al. 1999) facilitate the formation and durability of survey responses.

However, while empirically innovative and theoretically more plausible than models that assume an absence of partisan motivation, such models stretch the definition of a heuristic. While party identification may help to constrain belief systems, it seems less plausible that partisan bias allows individuals to behave more efficiently—the defining characteristic of a heuristic. For heuristic processing to function efficiently, individuals must, at a minimum, make use of all of the relevant information they

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<sup>53</sup> Individuals are thought to find a “balance” between their estimates of parties' true positions and their desire to believe that parties hold particular positions. In essence, Brady and Sniderman take a dual motivations approach to understanding how citizens attribute issue positions to parties. Under their model, the “balance” of these motivations is affected by a citizen's level of knowledge—those with less knowledge about the parties' true positions relying more on their feelings toward parties. They, therefore, view these feelings as a heuristic that citizens can fall back on in the absence of knowledge. However, though the issue receives little attention, this model also allows for well-informed citizens to take positions that they know to be incorrect simply because they are motivated to do so. By framing partisan bias as a heuristic, it is implied that only those with low knowledge levels will act on these biases, but this is not necessarily the case.

possesses. If partisans disregard information they know to be correct in favor of information they wish to be correct, they cannot be said to be using information efficiently. Over time, if individuals infer party positions from the partisan biases they developed in their childhood, rather than taking into account the information that they have actually acquired, changes in parties' positions would go unnoticed.

For example, to place the Democratic Party to left of the Republican Party on social welfare policy has been approximately correct for more than a century, but over this span of time, party positions have changed in important ways. In the 1990's, the Democratic Party's position on social welfare policy became more conservative. For party identification to function as an efficient heuristic, citizens who support liberal social welfare policy cannot simply ignore this fact. Not every citizen needs to be perfectly informed on the issue, but it seems troubling for democratic accountability if interested constituents allow their partisan biases to cloud their understanding of parties' issue positions.

Popkin (1991) provides a concise and persuasive argument for why heuristic reasoning is essential to American government, and in so doing also suggests exactly why heuristics are likely to have limited utility if they induce partisan biases.

Given the many gaps in voters' information about government, and their lack of theory with which to make connections between government actions and their benefits, governments concerned primarily with gaining as many votes as possible have little incentive to maximize benefits to voters (p. 13).

Popkin's intent is clearly to point out why it is important for citizens to hold opinions, but he also makes the case for why these opinions must *accurately* represent voters' interests and not merely their partisan biases. If voters simply assume that their favored party supports their issue positions, then elected officials can take any position

they wish with little fear that their constituents will notice. In other words, a heuristic rooted entirely in one's biases does nothing to improve democratic accountability over the circumstances of a citizenry which learns no new information after socialization.

In an effort to determine whether heuristics allow uninformed citizens to function as if they are informed, Bartels (1996) examines actual public opinion in comparison to a hypothetically fully-informed version of public opinion imputed from demographic data. He finds that heuristics do not allow relatively uninformed individuals to act as if they were fully informed. Of course, some suggest that such a high standard is not necessary for the individual voter, since errors in opinion should cancel out in the aggregate (see Page and Shapiro 1992; Converse 1990). Therefore, Bartels also conducts an aggregate level examination and finds that, while aggregation closes the gap between observed and fully informed public opinion, incumbents and Democrats still perform better than they would in a fully informed electorate. Party cues might help to supplement information, but they do not appear to substitute for it (Bartels 1996; Althaus 1998). Of course, since motivational biases prevent individuals from updating heuristics to reflect the information that they do receive, this should not be surprising.

In short, that individuals follow party cues is not enough to warrant referring to party identification as an effective shortcut. While party identification certainly has the potential to function as a heuristic, the group biases that tend to come along with identification undermine its utility. Rather than allowing individuals to function efficiently—as if they were fully informed—party identification may lead well-informed partisans to vote as if they were relatively uninformed.

### *Parties and Interest Groups*

Since the founding, Americans have generally been skeptical of parties. James Madison famously rails against the tyranny of faction (which, for Madison, included parties) in Federalist 10 (Madison 2003), and George Washington used his farewell address to warn against the danger of parties—which he witnessed developing within his own cabinet (Washington 2008). Yet, in striking contrast, political scientists have developed an almost universal “commitment to the desirability, if not the absolute necessity of parties in a democratic system” (Epstein 1986). In the famous words of E. E. Schattschneider (1942), democracy is “unthinkable save in terms of parties.” But why is this so?

Aldrich (1995) explains that parties solve three fundamental problems in democracy. They regulate competition between ambitious office seekers; they facilitate social choice; and they mobilize citizens to take collective action. This dissertation draws attention to an important shortcoming of parties: They create a source of political bias which undermines citizens’ motivation to hold candidates accountable.

In the United States, at least in the current era, politics are candidate-centered. Parties provide labels for candidates to run under, but parties have little control over their “brand” (Aldrich 1995; Epstein 1986). In other words, while parties have official platforms, their candidates are not bound to them. Whichever candidate wins the party’s primary gets to carry the party’s label regardless of his or her issue positions. Therefore, while party labels provide some information about a candidate’s stances, there remains a substantial amount of uncertainty. Moreover, separation of powers, checks and balances, and the federated structure of American government make it difficult to determine who is

ultimately responsible for the passage or failure of legislation. This allows parties and elected officials to point fingers when things go badly and claim credit when things go well. In short, the American system of government is characterized by a substantial amount of ambiguity.

While such ambiguity poses a clear concern for citizens' ability to obtain the information necessary to hold officials accountable, it is even more troubling if we take into account that partisans may actually be motivated to *avoid* holding their party accountable in the first place. For the motivated partisan, ignorance is bliss. There is little pressure to change one's party identity when it is unclear what parties actually stand for. In such a system "false consensus effects" (Ross et al. 1977) can run rampant as citizens assume that their party and its candidates favor the positions that they themselves favor. And, when confronted with hard evidence that a candidate of one's own party has taken a position with which one disagrees, that individual can plausibly assume the candidate is not representative of the party as a whole (Marques and Yzerbyt 1988). Even when things have gone badly during a party's time in power, officeholders denials of responsibility remains quite plausible (Fiorina 1980)—particularly for a motivated partisan.

Proponents of the "doctrine of responsible party government" view stronger parties as the cure to this problem (see Ranney 1954). These scholars see separation of powers, checks and balances, and federalism as anti-majoritarian, and argue that *majority rule* is the essence of democratic government. They propose a system in which government would be centered around at least (and preferably only) two *unified* and *disciplined* parties. Under such a system, they argue, a majority party would be directly

accountable for all legislation passed while it was in power, and officials would be directly tied to the party. Therefore, the system would be simple and unambiguous, allowing the public to hold officials responsible. To this end, they advocate reforms that would increase the discipline, influence, and centrality of parties in the American government (Committee on Political Parties 1950a, 1950b, 1950c).

Implicit in the doctrine of responsible party government is the notion that citizens are motivated to be responsive to parties' actions and not always loyal to their party. In other words, proponents of responsible parties take a very similar approach to those who write on the heuristic value of party identification, except these scholars focus on party institutions as opposed to voters. They view parties as a way to simplify voters' decision-making process. Moreover, by decreasing the ambiguity in politics, a responsible party system would likely increase the pressure to update one's identity. If it is clear where candidates and parties stand, it is more difficult to ignore inconsistencies between one's own issue positions and the stances of one's party. Finally, such a system would also facilitate collective responsibility, making it somewhat more difficult for parties and candidates to deny responsibility when things go badly and claim credit when things go well (Fiorina 1980)—possibly making identity defense more difficult for citizens as well.

Still, this type of party system may well pose as many problems as solutions. When political debate is divided along a single well-defined cleavage, it facilitates partisans' ability to avoid ever taking positions that differ from those of their party in the first place. Survey analyses suggest that public opinion is strongly influenced by this type of behavior (Bartels 2002; Zaller 1992; Converse 1966), and these effects are particularly strong among those who are most informed about where their party stands on

the issues (Zaller 1992; Converse 1966). Such findings are corroborated by experiments showing that ideology informs political evaluations unless party cues are available (Cohen 2003; Rahn 1993). In short, despite their apparent shortcomings, citizens do appear able to make use of information when it is available, but tend to *disregard* that information when it conflicts with their party identity.

Moreover, in addition to allowing partisans to avoid ever disagreeing with their party, by ensuring that political competition would occur repeatedly along a single cleavage, responsible party government would likely intensify intergroup conflict, partisan polarization, and partisan biases (Sherif 1956). In fact, recent research has also shown that, in democratic systems with fewer and more disciplined parties, the propensity to identify with parties is greater—particularly among the least educated (Huber et al. 2005). The question remains, however, whether higher rates of identification produce legislative outcomes more or less in line with citizens’ “true” interests. The findings of this dissertation suggest that it may well be the latter. While party identification may help those with less education understand politics, it may also bias those who are otherwise best equipped to hold parties accountable.

How then might we decrease the ambiguity of politics without exacerbating partisan biases? Perhaps it is worth taking a second look at the role of interest groups in American politics. We tend to bemoan the influence of these groups, reminiscing about bygone eras in which parties, if not perfectly responsible, were at least more responsible than their current manifestations. However, we might better serve our purpose by considering how realistic reform proposals could improve accountability in the system as it currently exists. While parties are as ideologically distinct as they have ever been, they

are now more than ever composed of interest groups alliances (Rae 2007). Since the influence of interest groups has increased so dramatically relative to party institutions, we should consider how we might harness the power of these groups in a way that benefits democracy.

In contrast to the literature on responsible party government, some scholars favor a more pluralistic approach, believing that American parties have evolved to fit the circumstances of American government. While these scholars promote reforms aimed at decreasing the candidate-centered nature of political campaigns and increasing the role of parties, they emphasize that these reforms must take into consideration political culture and American party traditions if they have any hope of success (Epstein 1986). Epstein focuses on what he refers to as the “institutionalized porousness” of American parties. By allowing entrance by individuals and groups who want to make use of their label rather than rigid conformation to a particular platform, “indigenous” American parties bring together various interests in an effort to build winning coalitions. Herring (1940) argues, “the very fluidity of our national party organization offers an opportunity for intelligence to compete freely for a hearing.”

On the other hand, proponents of responsible parties contend that this porousness or fluidity is the source of the problem. By empowering interest groups relative to parties, the indigenous party system favors moneyed factions over the will of the majority. Schattschneider (1975) famously argues, “The flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent.” And Lowi (1979) contends that “interest group liberalism” has corrupted American government by allowing interest groups to govern through their influence in bureaucracy.

However, it is important to remember that interest groups are a reasonably diverse lot. Walker (1991) divides interest groups into four categories: profit sector, mixed sector, non-profit sector, and citizen groups. As of his 1985 survey, 56.4% of groups were either nonprofit (32.5%) or citizen groups (23.9%), while only 37.8% were profit sector groups, and 5.8% were mixed sector. Moreover, these groups attempt to influence politics by different means. While profit sector groups engage mostly in inside lobbying—directly petitioning legislators—citizen groups mostly engage in outside lobbying—attempting to affect legislation via the public. And public sector groups tend to take a strategy somewhere in between. Therefore, the most pertinent question seems not to be how to reduce the influence of interest groups across the board, but rather how to even the playing field and channel interest group influence through the public rather than through inside lobbying.

Sartori (1976) claims that a party is “part of a whole attempting to serve the purposes of the whole, whereas a faction is only a part for itself.” But it is critical to remember that parties exist not necessarily to promote issues but to help office seekers win power (Aldrich 1995; Schumpeter 1942), while interest groups, on the other hand, exist specifically to promote policies. While proponents of responsible party government see the narrowness of these interests as a bad thing, this does not have to be so. Democracy benefits from a reduction in ambiguity when interest groups force parties and candidates to take clear issue positions and then hold them accountable for those positions. If individuals come to identify with and show biases toward a particular interest group, this does not undermine the heuristic value of the interest group cue as it does with parties, because interest groups necessarily represent policy interests.

Therefore, unlike party identification, interest group identification poses little threat to the quality of voting, because voting one's interest group identity is necessarily voting one's policy interests. And, in fact, interest group endorsements have been shown to function efficiently as information shortcuts (Lupia 1994).

Moreover, interest groups may actually help to check partisan biases by cross-pressuring citizens (Campbell et al. 1960). When favorably viewed interest groups criticize one's party or its candidates, such criticisms not only provide voters with highly credible information, but are also motivationally neutral. Take for instance, a circumstance in which the Democratic Party criticizes the Republican Party. Not only does such communication constitute "cheap talk" as a result of the electoral incentives at play (Sobel 1985; Lupia and McCubbins 1998), but partisan motivation will drive Republicans to counter-argue against such criticisms even if they do find them credible. On the other hand, if the United States Chamber of Commerce criticizes the Republican Party or its candidates, it is likely to carry much greater weight with Republican voters.

Schattschneider (1942) argues that parties are like businesses in that laws are no more needed to make parties serve people than they are to make businesses serve consumers. The problem with this analogy is that laws *are* needed to regulate business, because the goal of business is *not* to provide consumers with high quality goods and services, but to make a profit. Likewise, the goal of a party is to gain votes by whatever means feasible, not necessarily to act in the public good. Given the fact that partisans develop attachments, this is quite problematic. If voters' brand loyalties are so strong that they will "buy" whatever policy package their party offers, parties are likely to take advantage of this fact.

Since neither parties nor partisans have a particularly strong incentive to concern themselves with issues, interest groups have a vital role to play in infusing politics with issues. Just as a well-regulated capitalist system harnesses the self-interest of individuals to promote the public interest, a well-regulated democratic government may benefit by harnessing the self-interest of interests groups. The key is of course in effective regulation. Again, if interest group influence can be channeled through the public—outside lobbying as opposed to inside lobbying—interest groups may help to perform a vital service to democracy by informing the public about issues and mobilizing them to action. The tentative conclusion then is that we should not be so quick to extol parties and condemn interests groups. While democracy may be “unthinkable” (Schattschneider 1942) or at least “unworkable” (Aldrich 1995) save parties, short-run party accountability may just be unattainable save interest groups.

#### *A Statement on Motivation*

Understanding motivation is absolutely critical if we hope to build effective democratic institutions. Yet, far too often, we seem to make overly simplistic assumptions about motivation—even when the literature has already shown these assumptions to be faulty. For instance, we know that voters have little incentive to become informed and that there are few policy benefits to be gained from political participation (Downs 1957). So, why then, do we so often assume that political behavior is driven by voters’ policy interests? If many voters do not even know what their policy interest are, and those who do have little incentive to act on those interests, other sources

of motivation must drive political behavior. But without a clear understanding of motives, it is impossible to harness those motivates in pursuit of democratic outcomes.

This is particularly critical given the fact that the assumptions we make about citizens' motivations shape our judgments of institutional effectiveness. If citizens are driven to attain policy benefits, and parties aid them in this pursuit, then parties serve a useful function. However, if citizens are motivated to get involved in politics because they want to be part of something larger than themselves, and parties aid them in this pursuit, then we may want to be careful how we regulate these institutions. When citizens unconsciously place party loyalty above party accountability, they risk becoming puppets of party elites. And if party identification affects issue preferences to a greater degree than issue preferences affect party identification, then parties are not held accountable. With the rise of the Nazi regime, we witnessed what can happen when citizens get swept up in party movements led by charismatic politicians. This dissertation is certainly not meant as an indictment of the public's qualifications for sovereignty. It is merely a plea to take into account citizens' competing motivations as we attempt to understand their behavior in politics.

### *Future Directions*

While this dissertation has focused exclusively on the American two-party system, future work will consider how a multi-party context might affect the motivational dynamics underlying party identification. As mentioned during the discussion of responsible party government, intergroup conflict is likely to be intensified when political competition occurs repeatedly along a single cleavage as it does in two party systems

(Sherif 1956). And, recent research suggests that the propensity to identify with parties decreases with the effective number of parties—particularly among those with less education (Huber et al. 2005). Therefore, one might speculate that partisan motivation is weaker in multi-party systems. Additionally, lesser of two evils identity justification is certainly a less applicable defense for those who *are* motivated to maintain their party identities in such systems—though numbers of other identity justification strategies remain viable.

Still, when one looks within multi-party systems and focuses on traditional cleavage parties, partisan attachments appear stronger, and hostility toward opposition parties is more pronounced (Richardson 1991). Therefore, partisan motivation may vary between parties in multi-party systems. If this is the case, given disagreement with their party, cleavage party identifiers should show a greater propensity to avoid identity change and instead seek a justification for their existing party identity—just like their counterparts in the United States. This should allow traditional cleavage parties to have greater policy and performance latitude than their non-cleavage party counterparts. Future work will, therefore, examine the relative ability of cleavage and non-cleavage parties to retain seats during periods of poor performance.

Additionally, while I have focused largely on individual level dynamics in party identification, it is important to understand how these processes aggregate. In particular, how does the dual motivation theory help us to understand realignments in party identification? As suggested earlier, I suspect that an important part of the story may be explained by fluctuations in partisan motivation among large segments of society. Green and colleagues (2002) suggest that realignments occur, not as a result of changing

political attitudes, but rather as a product of changing social group imagery associated with parties. During the civil rights era, and particularly after the 1964 election, the image of the Democratic Party held by many southerners began to change. As this occurred, the South drifted gradually in a Republican direction until finally becoming a Republican stronghold.

Green and colleagues' account meshes quite nicely with the framework of the dual motivation theory. Throughout this dissertation, partisan motivation has been assumed to exist among partisans. However, there is no reason that such motivation must be constant. As party symbolism evolves, the motivation to maintain one's party allegiance may change as well. This imagery is critical to the motivation to maintain one's identity. After all, if partisanship is truly an identity, the images associated with one's party are associated with the self.

With regard to the realignment of the American South, the very fact that so many conservative Southerners identified with the Democratic Party for so many years despite their ideological differences with the party speaks to the power of partisan motivation. As long as the image of the Democratic Party remained associated with Southern culture and pride, many Southerners remained motivated to maintain their loyalty to the party. However, during the 1960's this symbolism was forever altered, and so the partisan motivation of many Southern Democrats declined. While Southern Democrats had maintained their partisan allegiance despite important differences prior to the Civil Rights Era and the 1964 election, these differences had not fundamentally changed the party's image in the minds of Southerners. This decline in partisan motivation in the 1960's left

Southerners open to persuasion on issues across the board and allowed full-scale regional realignment to occur.

In the current political landscape, as we watch Republican identification weaken across much of the electorate (Etheridge 2009), it will be interesting to see whether this change is lasting. If the Republican Party allows its brand to become too closely associated with NASCAR and country music, then it may risk permanently losing many of its wealthy northern constituents. Future studies will continue to investigate these trends and tease out causal processes through experiments. Of particular interest is whether priming associations between parties and certain social groups weakens partisan motivation and makes it easier to persuade partisans on unrelated issue dimensions.

In addition to investigating partisan realignment, I am also interested in examining the effects of partisan justification. I am especially interested in the effect of justifications offered up by party elites—often in the form of “talking points”—which allow partisans to maintain support for their party and its policies. Might the justification process shape voters’ attitudes on other issues and perhaps even their ideology? As the justification for the Iraq War shifted from the need to eliminate weapons of mass destruction to the need to protect the Iraqi people from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein, did Republicans’ attitudes toward nation building change? If so, has this affected Republicans’ foreign policy attitudes more generally, and how might acceptance of the Bush administration’s justification for war affect Republicans’ attitudes on future foreign policy issues? Likewise, has Democrats’ opposition to the war affected their attitudes toward nation building? And how will this affect their future attitudes on foreign policy matters?

While the justification for the Iraq War provides a useful example of how such justifications may have long-term repercussions for public opinion and political ideology, this is only one example of a more common theme. Politicians must justify their actions, and their supporters have a strong incentive to accept these justifications in order to maintain their loyalties. Therefore, to the degree that it exists, attitude constraint may be shaped in important ways by partisan justification. Future experiments will examine whether justification can have a domino effect on other attitudes, thereby shaping voter ideology.

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