AN EXAMINATION OF PARTISAN IDENTITY AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOR IN A

PANEL STUDY OF COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATES DURING THE 2004 U.S.

FEDERAL ELECTION.

By

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In honor of my grandmothers.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Tajfel & Turner (1979) described social identification as the part of an

individual's sense of self that is drawn from his or her social memberships. Identification

need not require formal membership, or even public involvement, but rather it is

primarily a subjective experience of belonging to a category of people that, when made

salient, can have a pronounced influence on behavior. The behavior that results has been

explained both as an effort to maintain a positive self-image, as detailed in Social Identity

Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), as well as the result of cognitive self-categorizations that

are inherent in human social processing (Self-Categorization Theory: Turner, Hogg,

Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Regardless of the underlying explanation, the effects

of group identity are well documented. Identity salience is associated with in-group

favoritism (e.g. Tajfel, Billig, Bundy & Flament, 1971; Beaupré & Hess, 2002; Joseph,

Weatherhall, & Stringer, 1997) conformity to group norms (Schofield, Pattison, Hill, &

Borland, 2001), participation in group-serving interests (Kramer & Brewer, 1984; Frey &

Bohnet, 1997; Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995; Klandermans, Sabucedo, Rodriguez, & Weerd,

2002) and, in extreme cases, out-group derogation (Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002;

Skitka, Bauman, & Mullen, 2004). While theories of social identity have had a great deal

of influence on areas in which the collective behaviors of individuals are under analysis,

its influence on the study of political behavior has been surprisingly rare. The present

research was an attempt to explore this question within the context of a presidential election campaign.

There are a number of reasons to expect that the effects of identification with a political group would be particularly powerful. In most cases, politics involves clearly delineated social groups that are in direct competition for power. It has been shown in the social psychological literature that, while conflict is not a necessary antecedent for inter-group bias to exist, the presence of overt conflict often increases hostility between groups (Hepworth & West, 1988; Worchel, Axsom, Ferris, Samaha, & Schweitzer, 1978). Conflict within politics is both realistic, such as the struggle for power within government, as well as symbolic, such as differences between ideological worldviews. Kinder and Sears have shown that a symbolic threat to one's group, such as an ideological criticism or divergence, can induce even more hostility than some tangible sources of conflict (Kinder & Sears, 1981; Sears & Kinder, 1985). Given the nature and prevalence of competition that exists between political parties in this nation, it is a likely breeding ground for the ill effects of social identity processes.

Political identities in the U.S. are also frequently intertwined with a number of other prominent social and cultural divisions including religion, race, education, and social class. The conflicts that exist between these related groups can often exacerbate political conflict between the two major parties. For example, social divisions that correspond with political orientation can further separate individuals both in terms of physical contact (i.e. lack of social interactions) and perceived differences of views between the two groups (Robinson, Keltner, Ward, & Ross, 1995; Farwell & Weiner, 2000). Likewise, self-categorization leads individuals to characterize themselves into

groups of 'us' and 'them'. In the case of politics, divisions exist in multiple domains with which individuals can further distinguish themselves from the opposing party. In other words, an individual may perceive herself to be "not like Republicans" because of her more liberal political beliefs, but also because she differentiates herself from the "typical Republican" with respect to her religion, income, and education. Like any cultural ideal, political ideologies are socialized within familial and social structures, often causing them to be deeply ingrained and habitually salient.

A substantial amount of social psychological research has been applied to the group dynamics of political behavior, however, there continues to be a scarcity of empirical work devoted specifically to the topic of political identity (Huddy, 2002). The question of how group memberships color the ways that individuals receive and respond to political information is of utmost importance to a more thorough understanding of political behavior. Greene (2004) conducted one of the few studies that looked at political identity as it relates to electoral behavior. His results showed that strength of identity with a political party significantly predicted in-group favoritism, ideological extremity, and voting consistency. This was true even when controlling for traditional measures of partisan intensity, suggesting that the construct of identification is a uniquely informative factor. Multiple studies have also shown that party identification is related to intergroup differentiation (Kelly, 1988; Greene, 1999), as well as "false polarization"- or the exaggerated perception of differences between one's own political position and the opposing party (Farwell & Weiner, 2000; Robinson, Keltner, Ward & Ross, 1995). These biased perceptions, in turn, can lead to the belief that partisan differences are so vast that they cannot be negotiated (Sherman, Nelson, & Ross, 2003).

In other related work, Cohen (2003) has demonstrated that the political stance of one's identity group can be enough to overwhelm an individual's own preexisting beliefs. For example, self-proclaimed political conservatives were more likely to accept a generous welfare reform policy (traditionally opposed by conservatives) when they were told that other conservatives supported the policy. The same was true of liberals supporting a very stringent welfare policy that contradicted the traditional values of the liberal ideology. Cohen showed, in various replications, that attitudes towards a social policy depended primarily on the opinions of members of the individual's own reference group, rather than the policy itself or the participant's own ideology. While Cohen did not measure group identity per se, his data do speak to the influence of group norms on political opinions.

One of the more important questions involved in the study of political behavior is what motivates people to participate in the political process. Traditional theories of political behavior have struggled to explain the seemingly self-sacrificial acts of voting and social activism. According to these perspectives, the contribution of any one individual is negligible, and therefore it is irrational for individuals to exert the time and energy needed to participate when, in most cases, the same outcome would be achieved regardless (Monroe, 1995). The scenario presented here is that of a public goods dilemma in which the rational option is to *free ride* and reap the benefits of the public good without contributing to maintain it. However, in reality, a considerable number of people donate time and/or money to political causes, and even more choose to vote. From a social psychological perspective this behavior is not surprising given evidence that group identity is related to an increased willingness to forgo individual interests in favor of

group interests (Kramer & Brewer, 1984; Frey & Bohnet, 1997). For example, identification with a group is related to a greater willingness to participate in activities to support the group's cause. Greene (1999) showed that party identity is related to increased voting and numerous other studies have shown a relationship between identity and participation in political and/or social activism (e.g. Sturmer & Simon, 2004; Simon & Sturmer, 2003; Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995; Klandermans, Sabucedo, Rodriguez, & Weerd, 2002). For example, Kelly & Kelly (1993) demonstrated that identification with a trade union increased the likelihood that individuals would participate in trade union activism. Simon et al. (1998) replicated this finding among elderly- and gay-rights activists using both survey and experimental designs. In two out the above three cases, group identity was a more powerful predictor than motives of personal reward.

Drawing on the work of Cohen, Greene, and others, it is plausible that some facets of political behavior are more motivated by partisan norms, or an attraction to a political group, than actual attention to political policies. Traditionally, the political sciences have taken a more rational approach to explaining political behavior. It has been assumed that individual political decisions are primarily based on a deliberate analysis of policies, and choices are primarily motivated by economic and self-serving gains (for review, see Monroe, 1995; Sears & Funk, 1990). However, recent research has shown that, in many cases, self-interest motives have minimal power for predicting voting behavior and policy preferences (Sears & Funk, 1990). Other studies have questioned whether individuals even consider a cost-benefit ratio when making political decisions (Blais & Young, 1999; Brunk, 1980). Likewise, Cohen's work suggests that an individual's attention to policies can be overshadowed by the norms of a reference group.

Given this evidence, it is likely that group influences play an important role in determining political attitudes and behavior, and this role may have an effect that is independent of one's opinions on various political issues.

The idea that political preferences are subject to the influence of social groups is by no means revolutionary to most political scientists. However, judging from social identity research, the extent to which group attachments impact political behavior has likely been underestimated. It is this question that led us to consider the relative influence of partisan identity and policy preference in predicting political attitudes and behavior during an election campaign. If partisanship behavior is, indeed, based primarily on an individual's analysis of political issues, then identification with a political party would have little to no impact on these variables independent of policy preference. However, SIT and Self-Categorization theories would expect that, as an attachment to a political party forms and identification with that group strengthens, identity maintenance strategies such as in-group bias, differentiation, and conformity will also increase. Therefore, partisan identity should exert a significant influence on the extent to which individuals positively evaluate and associate with party members, campaign for their party, and endorse beliefs that are similar to those held by their party. And, this effect should operate in addition to the influence of an individual's opinions on political policies and issues.

In the present design, we conducted a panel study in which participants were surveyed at three time points during the 2004 U.S. federal election. Data were collected at the start of the official campaign season, just after the last debate, and during the week following the election. Participants responded to a number of questions regarding their

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partisan identity, as well as their attitudes towards specific political issues (policy preference). We also measured a number of dependent variables relating to the participant's attitudes (both ideological and towards the party), affiliation with other individuals of the same political orientation, and political behaviors such as voting and activism. We predicted that partisan identity would be associated with a significant proportion of variance in these variables after controlling for the effects of policy preference. This prediction was tested with an analysis of the concurrent relations between variables (i.e. variables measured within the same wave), as well as with changes in the dependent variables associated with the two predictors. While an examination held within each wave of measurement provides a more powerful test of the usefulness of each variable, a more accurate test of social identity theory is to assess identity as a process over the course of the election. However, one challenge to this approach is allowing sufficient time between measurements for change to be properly assessed. Given the restricted time-span with which we had to work with, analyses of both the simultaneous and dynamic relations among our variables were employed.

CHAPTER II

METHODS

Participants

143 Undergraduate college students were recruited from a mid-sized private university in exchange for course credit. Enrollment and participation in the study was conducted online, allowing participation to be completely anonymous. One participant was excluded for not being a U.S. citizen, five participants failed to complete the second wave of the study, and an additional two participants did not complete the third wave; resulting in a retention rate of 95.1 % (n=136). The sample was 78.3% female and 21.7% male. The mean age was 19. Nearly 80% of participants were white, 8.4% black, 4.9% Asian, 2.1% Hispanic, and 4.9% reported "other" for race. Upon enrollment in the study, 42% of the sample categorized themselves as Democrats, 39.2% as Republicans, 1.4% as Libertarian, and 17.5% reported no political affiliation.

Measures

Political Preference. Participants were asked to categorize themselves into a political party by responding to the question: *Which party best represents your political point of view;* responses included: *Democratic Party, Republican Party, Other* (entry allowed), and *I do not identify with any party.*

Partisan Identity. Strength of partisan identity was assessed with two items: *To what extent do you identify with the Republican Party* and *To what extent do you identify*

with the Democratic Party. Responses for both items were made on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). As expected, a strong inverse correlation was found between these items at all waves ($r = -.79$ to $-.86$; $p < .001$). Because the definition of social identity includes both in-group attachment and out-group differentiation, the difference between identification with one's preferred and opposing party was used to measure partisan identity. This produced a scale with a possible range of 0 to 6, with higher scores representing more exclusive identity with one's preferred party and lower scores indicating ambivalence.

  Policy Preference. Participants indicated their position on eight issues that had been the subjects of various political debates throughout the 2004 campaign. We selected issues that were clearly divided between Democratic and Republican positions, therefore allowing us to measure policy preference by comparing participants' political opinions to each respective party's position across a number of issues. Issues included: abortion, environmental regulation, the war in Iraq, taxes, same-sex marriage, health care, and civil liberties/Patriot Act. Responses were made on a 7-point Likert scale, anchored on either end by the typically Democratic and Republican position on the issue. Internal consistency for the scale was high (Cronbach's alphas ranged from .81 to .84). The individual items used to measure these issues, and their respective item-total correlations, are presented in Table 1. The seven items were averaged to create a single measure of policy preference.

Table 1
Item-total Correlations for the Policy Preference Measure

Issues	Item	Item-total Correlations		
		Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3
Abortion	*What are your views towards Abortion?* (1=Pro-Choice - 7=Pro-Life)	.50	.48	.53
Same-sex Marriage	*What is your stance on same sex marriage?* (1=Strongly think it should be legal - 7=Strongly think it should be illegal)	.54	.48	.60
Health Care	*To what extent do you believe the government should do more to fund health care?* (1=Should do more - 7=Should do less; RC)	.38	.44	.53
Environment	*Should the government's environmental regulation of American industry, or should environmental practices be left to the best judgments of corporations?* (1=Impose stricter limits - 7=Eliminate regulations)	.40	.44	.49
War in Iraq	*Do you think the President's decision to invade Iraq was justified?* (1=Definitely not - 7=Yes, fully)			
	Do you believe that the U.S. invasion of Iraq has diminished the threat of terror for the U.S.? (1=Has increased the threat - 7= Yes, definitely reduced the threat)	.72	.73	.77
Civil Liberties/ Patriot Act	*Do you believe the Patriot Act has made America safer from terrorism?* (1= safer before - 7= safer now)			
	Do you believe the Patriot Act has compromised American civil liberties? (1=Not at all - 7=Very much; RC)	.58	.58	.61
Taxes	*Should the federal government implement further tax cuts this year?* (1=Not at all - 7=Very much).			
	On the whole, do you believe that President Bush's tax cuts have helped the economy? (1=Not at all - 7=Very Much)	.67	.63	.61
Cronbach's Alpha		.81	.81	.84

RC=Item was reverse coded

Perceived Party Fit. This measure was designed to assess one's perception of personal similarity with a party with respect to various political issues; in other words, the extent to which one believes the party represents his or her views. Participants reported how close they believed their position was to that of the two major political parties with respect to seven major political issues raised in the recent campaign. The issues included: abortion, church/state relations, the war in Iraq, terrorism, tax policy, the environment, and health care. Responses were made on a 7-pt Likert scale anchored on either end with *Democrat* and *Republican*. A composite of these items was used to create an overall measure of perceived closeness to either party. Cronbach's alphas for this measure were above .9 at all waves.

Party Evaluation. The variable of party evaluation was primarily intended to measure an attraction and positive evaluation of either political party. Participants evaluated the two major political parties by responding to the items: *whom do you trust more, who do you think is more genuine, whom do you find more likeable,* and *who do you believe are more ethical*. Responses were made on a 7-point scale ranging from *Democrat* to *Republican*. The four items were averaged to create a single scale, Cronbach's alphas ranged from .94 to .96 across all waves.

Candidate Preference. Preferences for either of the two major political candidates were measured with five-items: *who do you think is more likeable, who do you think is more genuine, whom do you trust the most, whom do you trust the least* (reverse coded)*,* and *which candidate's physical appearance do you find most appealing*. These items were designed to assess the respondent's preferences on both character judgments (i.e. trustworthiness) and peripheral characteristics (i.e. attractiveness). Response options

included *John Kerry, George Bush, Ralph Nader, Undecided,* and *Other.* In order to measure preference for either of the two major candidates, the *Undecided, Other, and Ralph Nader* entries were recoded as *neither* and used as the midpoint between *John Kerry* and *George Bush* on a re-constructed 3-point scale ranging from -1 (*John Kerry)* to +1 *(George Bush)*. Cronbach's alphas for each wave were .87, .88, and .89 respectively. A sum of these items was used to assess preference for either candidate, therefore creating an index with a possible range of -5 (consistently preferred Kerry) to +5 (consistently preferred Bush).

Ideology. Ideology was measured with one item, *What best describes your political point of view.* Responses were made on a 7-point scale ranging from *liberal* to *conservative.*

Group Affiliation. Two items were used to assess the respondent's extent of social involvement with other individuals of the same political orientation: *In the past two weeks, did you more often discuss politics with other Democrats or Republicans (*1=Democrats - 7=Republicans*)* and *What proportion of your closest friends identify with the same political party as you* (5=all - 1=none). Because of the low correlation between these two items (r=.26 - .47), they were analyzed as independent measures of this construct.

Political Activity. We measured participation in the current election campaign with two items: *Do you have any signs, bumper stickers, tee-shirts, etc. advocating your political preference* (*yes* or *no*) and *To what extent are you active in the current presidential campaign (i.e. attending rallies, meetings, distributing information, registering people to vote, etc.)* Responses ranged from 1 (*not active*) to 7 (*very active*).

Correlations between the two items ranged from .63 to .52 (for both $p<.01$), therefore they were weighted equally and combined to create a single index of political activity.

Voting Behavior. To measure voting behavior and intention to vote, participants were asked at Times 1 and 2 if they planned to vote in the upcoming election, and if so, for whom. At Time 3 (after the election) participants were asked whether or not they had voted, and if so, for whom.

Political Sophistication. These items were designed to measure the extent to which respondents sought out political news and stayed informed about politics. Four items were used: *In general how interested are you in politics, how important is it for you to keep up with political news, how often do you discuss politics outside of class* and *do you attempt to stay informed about political events.* Responses were made on a 7-point scale ranging from *not at all* to *very much*. The four items were averaged into a single index, Cronbach's alphas ranged from .86 to .88

Procedure

Participants were recruited and enrolled in this study via e-mail. Potential participants received a short description of the study, and were urged to participate even if they were not interested in politics. Once participants had enrolled in the study, they received an e-mail including a link to the website containing the survey, a unique ID number to access the survey, as well as instructions regarding how and when to access the survey. Participants were allowed two weeks to complete the first wave of the survey, and one week for subsequent waves. Reminders were sent to those participants who had not yet completed the survey three days prior to each deadline. All participants were

reassured of the anonymity of their responses, and were urged to answer as honestly and accurately as possible.

Data collection for the first wave began the week following the political conventions, which marked the beginning of the official campaign season. The Democratic Convention was held July 26-29, and the Republican Convention August 30 - September 2, therefore occurring the week before data collection began. The second wave of data collection began the week after the last political debate, and the final wave began the week following Election Day. After all data had been collected, participants received an e-mail thanking them for their participation, and were provided additional information about the study, as well as an opportunity to ask questions.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Data Analytic Strategy

A primary objective in the following analyses was to assess strength of identity and political alignment, regardless of the direction of preference towards either party. Likewise, it was important that all participants could be examined as an entire group, despite of their political orientation. To facilitate these analyses, individual items that were anchored on either end with a typically "Democratic" or "Republican" response were recoded as such that a value of zero indicated neutrality, a positive value indicated the expected response from the individual's self-identified party, and a negative value indicated a response in favor of the opposing party. For example, a value of 7 on a 7-point scale measuring ideology would indicate 'highly conservative' for a self-identified Republican and 'highly liberal' for a self-identified Democrat. Therefore, when these items were combined to form indices, a higher value indicated greater support for the individual's preferred party, while negative values indicated support for the opposing party. Respondents' self-identified party was determined by whether their scores on the partisan identity measure favored Democrats or Republicans.

Among participants with no political identification, all items were coded in a consistent direction, and the absolute value on each respective index was used to indicate a preference that may have existed for either party.

Recoding the variables in this manner allowed us to examine strength of identity independently of political preference; the two would have been confounded if the measures had been used in their original form. Greene (2004) used a similar strategy to deal with this issue, in which response scales flanked on either end with partisan-specific responses were folded in the middle so that higher values indicated greater agreement with the respondent's preferred party's ideology. However, for our purposes, this strategy would not have distinguished between responses in favor of or opposing a given party. Therefore, we opted to reverse code responses when applicable, rather than to use folded scales. In our study, measures that were recoded in this manner included: policy preference, discussion, perceived fit, party evaluation, and candidate preference.

Voting Behavior. In the present sample, 86.7% of respondents voted in the election. Among those who self-identified as Democrats (n=61), 83% Voted for Kerry, 2% voted for Bush, 2% voted for Nader, and 13% did not vote. 89% of self-identified Republicans (n=59) voted for Bush, 2% voted for Kerry, and 9% did not vote. Among those who reported no political identity (n=15), 26.7% voted for Kerry, 40% voted for Bush, and 33% did not vote. Because of the small number of participants who voted outside of party lines (n=3), there was insufficient variance to accurately examine how strength of identity may have influenced an individual's voting preference. Therefore, a dummy variable for each respondent's intention/decision (post-election) to vote or not was analyzed instead.

Preliminary Analysis

Descriptive statistics and correlations for the eleven variables measured in this study are presented in Table 2. At all three waves, partisan identity was significantly associated with policy preference, proportion of friends, political activity, perceived party fit, party evaluation, candidate preference, political sophistication, and ideology. Identity was related to discussion at waves 2 and 3 only. A marginally significant correlation was found between partisan identity and decision to vote at waves 2 and 3 only.

Policy preference was significantly related to discussion (waves 2 and 3 only), political activity, perceived party fit, political sophistication, party evaluation, and ideology. The correlations between policy preference and proportion of friends and voting behavior were marginally significant and at wave 3 only.

The two predictors in our model, policy preference and partisan identity, were correlated from .37 to .47. Clearly there is a substantial amount of overlap between these two variables, and a major goal of the subsequent analyses was to partial out the common and unique variance associated with each.

Table 2

Summary of Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Political Partisanship Variables.

		Wave	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Partisan Identity	1	2.73	.96	-	.37**	.12	.34**	.42**	.33**	.63**	.65**	.19*	.70**	.07
		2	2.66	.95	-	.44**	.22*	.40**	.54**	.33**	.61**	.62**	.20*	.62**	.15†
		3	2.78	.99	-	.47**	.24*	.37**	.41**	.41**	.74**	.61**	.25**	.75**	.15†
2	Policy Preference	1	1.00	.92		-	.02	.12	.27*	.34**	.58**	.33**	-.10	.47**	.05
		2	.95	.89		-	.17*	.05	.32**	.40**	.60**	.32**	-.07	.41**	.11
		3	1.02	.91		-	.17*	.20†	.29**	.43**	.68**	.28*	-.12	.45**	.15†
3	Discuss	1	.52	1.23			-	.26*	.15†	.01	.21*	.15†	.21*	.19*	.12
		2	.66	1.25			-	.35**	.18*	.12	.19*	.34**	.32**	.11	.01
		3	.56	1.21			-	.47**	.18*	.14	.15†	.20*	.09	.06	.02
4	% of Friends	1	3.35	.77				-	.10	.02	.27*	.30**	.24*	.34**	-.04
		2	3.36	.81				-	.19*	.04	.22*	.35**	.19*	.19*	.02
		3	3.35	.80				-	.15†	.17†	.29*	.29*	.23*	.19*	.04
5	Political Activity	1	.61	.61					-	.45**	.30**	.36**	.07	.32**	-.03
		2	.68	.63					-	.43**	.39**	.43**	.21*	.49**	.04
		3	.74	.63					-	.43**	.32**	.28**	.10	.40**	.13
6	Political Sophistic.	1	4.53	1.16						-	.42**	.21*	.05	.23**	.19*
		2	4.80	1.05						-	.39**	.57**	.19*	.46**	.20*
		3	4.82	1.01						-	.41**	.24*	.03	.43**	.17†
7	Perceived Fit	1	1.41	.80							-	.61**	.30**	.57**	.22*
		2	1.41	.82							-	.57**	.19*	.42**	.09
		3	1.40	.89							-	.54**	.20*	.63**	.23*
8	Party Evaluation	1	1.28	.98								-	.27*	.54**	.14†
		2	1.20	1.08								-	.44**	.37**	.03
		3	1.28	.99								-	.41**	.47**	.26*
9	Candidate Preference	1	1.38	1.63									-	.10	.01
		2	1.40	1.62									-	.14	.16†
		3	1.51	1.66									-	.11	.27*
10	Ideology	1	1.55	1.55										-	.15†
		2	1.48	1.48										-	.20*
		3	1.59	1.59										-	.25*
11	Voting Beahvior	1	.96	.20											-
		2	.92	.27											-
		3	.87	.34											-

†$p<.1$, *$p<.05$, **$p<.001$

Usefulness Analysis

Overview of Analysis. It was hypothesized that partisan identity would significantly predict the nine facets of political behavior that were measured in this study, beyond what could be explained by policy preference alone. To test this hypothesis, and to further distinguish between the usefulness of these two predictor variables, we conducted a usefulness analysis (Darlington, 1968). This analysis included two sets of regression equations in which each of the nine outcome variables were regressed onto policy preference and partisan identity. In the first model, policy preference was entered first and partisan identity second to test the prediction that identity would account for unique variance after controlling for policy preference. The beta-weights, R^2 and F-statistics are outlined in Table 3.

The second set of regressions replicated the above analyses after reversing the order of the two predictors; therefore assessing the proportion of variance associated with policy preference, after controlling for partisan identity. Statistics for these analyses are presented in Table 4. Consistent with Darlington's explanation, a comparison of the ΔR^2 associated with each predictor, after controlling for the other, provides an index of the usefulness of each. However, because the two predictors in our model are correlated, ΔR^2, reflects a segment of variance that is orthogonal to the other predictor, whereas common variance between the two is reflected in the R^2 associated with Stage 1.

Effects of Partisan Identity after Controlling for Policy Preference. Statistics from Table 3 suggest that policy preference accounted for a significant proportion of variance in seven of nine variables, although this effect was inconsistent across waves for discussion and proportion of friends. As expected, policy preference had a powerful

Table 3

Summary of Regression Analysis of Nine Political Variables Regressed Onto Partisan Identity After Controlling for Policy Preference

Outcome	Wave	Stage 1 Policy Preference			Stage 2[1] Partisan Identity		
		β	R^2	F	β	ΔR^2	ΔF
Discussion	1	.02	.00	.05	.12	.02	2.04
	2	.17	.03	4.09*	.17	.03	3.89†
	3	.17	.03	4.20*	.18	.03	4.66*
Proportion of friends	1	.12	.01	2.02	.31	.10	15.54**
	2	.05	.00	.32	.42	.17	28.16**
	3	.20	.04	5.49*	.31	.10	15.07**
Perceived Fit	1	.58	.34	72.31**	.44	.20	58.52**
	2	.60	.37	76.91**	.43	.15	40.81**
	3	.68	.46	114.91**	.48	.23	98.04**
Ideology	1	.47	.22	38.99**	.57	.32	96.83**
	2	.41	.17	26.97**	.49	.24	52.60**
	3	.45	.20	33.88**	.61	.38	118.86**
Party Evaluation	1	.33	.11	17.66**	.57	.32	78.81**
	2	.32	.10	14.73**	.54	.29	63.09**
	3	.28	.08	11.26*	.55	.30	63.55**
Candidate Preference	1	-.10	.01	1.55	.25	.06	9.50*
	2	-.07	.01	.71	.26	.07	9.47*
	3	-.12	.01	1.96	.34	.12	18.01**
Political Sophistication	1	.34	.12	18.98**	.22	.05	7.92*
	2	.40	.16	25.48**	.17	.03	4.91*
	3	.43	.18	29.27**	.24	.06	9.50*
Political Activity	1	.27	.07	10.65*	.35	.12	21.04**
	2	.32	.10	14.88**	.45	.20	38.34**
	3	.29	.08	12.04*	.31	.10	15.72**
Intention to Vote/Voted	1	.05	.00	.40	.05	.00	.34
	2	.11	.01	1.57	.08	.01	.82
	3	.15	.02	3.03†	.09	.01	1.15

[1] β in this stage represents the part correlation coefficient, for Identity after controlling for policy preference.

†$p<.1$, *$p<.05$, **$p<.001$

relationship with individuals' ideology and perception of fit with their party of choice, likewise it was related to more positive evaluations of one's preferred party. It is not surprising that similarity in political positions with either of the two parties would influence more positive evaluations of the members of that party. However, given this logic, it is surprising that this effect was not replicated among preferences for candidates.

Policy preference was also consistently associated with increased activity in the campaign, as well as to a greater willingness to seek out political news and information about current events. However, there was no effect of policy preference on the intention or decision to vote. A small effect was found for the relation between policy preference and affiliation with other party member in that individuals who were more aligned with their party reported discussing politics more exclusively with other party members as, well as having more friends of the same party. However, this effect was only significant with discussion at wave 2 and then with both discussion and proportion of friends at wave 3. It is possible that, as the election grew nearer, the role of an individual's political views became more prominent and therefore began to influence areas outside of the political sphere, however, this reasoning could not be directly tested with our data.

Overall, the first set of regressions suggested that policy preference indeed played an important role in political behavior. However, our primary interest in this project was not the role of policy preference per se, but rather the usefulness of partisan identity as a predictor after the effects of policy preference had been removed. An examination of the change in R^2 and F values within Table 3 supported this hypothesis for eight of nine variables. The strongest effects from this analysis were associated with

perceived fit, ideology, and party evaluation with ΔR^2s ranging from .15 to .38. However, partisan identity also significantly predicted discussion (wave 3 only), proportion of friends, candidate preference, political sophistication and political activity; decision/intention to vote was never significant.

Results from this analysis provided clear evidence that partisan identity did have an effect above and beyond the role of policy preference. Likewise, the effect was relatively strong in most cases with effect sizes rivaling, and at times surpassing, that of policy preference. This indicated a rather prominent role of partisan identity in these data. Likewise, the consistency of the effects across variables and waves suggested that identity influenced a broad spectrum of attitudes and behavior, perhaps even more broad than policy preference. Partisan identity was associated with a greater proportion of friends within the same party while policy preference had a minimal effect on this variable, and only at Wave 3. Likewise, partisan identity was related to a heightened preference for one's own party's candidate while policy preference was not.

Effects of Policy Preference After Controlling for Partisan Identity. The second set of regressions (Table 4) assessed the usefulness of policy preference, independent of partisan identity, in predicting the nine partisanship variables. In this case, the effects of policy preference on discussion, proportion of friends, party evaluation, and political activity that were significant in the first model dropped out, suggesting that these findings from the first set of regressions can be attributed entirely to shared variance between partisan identity and policy preference. The effects of policy preference on perceived fit, ideology, and political sophistication remained significant.

Table 4

Summary of Regression Analysis of Nine Political Variables Regressed onto Policy Preference After Controlling for Partisan Identity.

Outcome	Wave	Stage 1 Partisan Identity			Stage 2[1] Policy Preference		
		β	R^2	F	β	ΔR^2	ΔF
Discussion	1	.12	.02	2.02	-.03	.00	.08
	2	.23	.04	7.15*	.08	.01	.93
	3	.24	.06	8.30*	.07	.01	.69
Proportion of friends	1	.34	.11	17.89**	-.01	.00	.01
	2	.40	.16	24.95**	-.14	.02	3.19[†]
	3	.37	.14	21.13**	.03	.00	.14
Perceived Fit	1	.63	.39	90.47**	.38	.14	42.95**
	2	.61	.38	80.62**	.47	.14	37.81**
	3	.74	.55	161.65**	.38	.14	61.52**
Ideology	1	.70	.49	133.80**	.22	.05	15.12**
	2	.62	.38	82.36**	.15	.02	5.16*
	3	.75	.58	174.77**	.11	.01	3.93*
Party Evaluation	1	.65	.42	102.58**	.10	.01	2.52
	2	.62	.39	84.55**	.05	.00	.44
	3	.61	.38	80.64**	-.01	.00	.01
Candidate Preference	1	.19	.04	5.54*	-.19	.04	5.42*
	2	.19	.04	5.52*	-.18	.03	4.56*
	3	.25	.06	8.73*	-.27	.07	10.84*
Political Sophistication	1	.33	.11	17.13**	.24	.06	9.66*
	2	.33	.11	16.54**	.28	.08	13.10**
	3	.41	.24	26.15**	.27	.07	12.28*
Political Activity	1	.42	.18	30.51**	.12	.01	2.40
	2	.54	.29	55.79**	.09	.01	1.41
	3	.41	.18	26.97**	.11	.01	1.93
Intention to Vote/Voted	1	.07	.00	.60	.03	.00	.14
	2	.12	.01	1.86	.06	.00	.53
	3	.15	.02	3.08[†]	.09	.01	1.09

[1]β in this stage represents the part correlation coefficient, for Identity after controlling for policy preference.

[†]$p<.1$, *$p<.05$, **$p<.001$

Interestingly, the effects of policy preference on candidate preference, which were not significant in the earlier analysis, became significant in this model. Likewise, the effects of partisan identity on this variable were attenuated when identity was entered into the model first. This pattern, in addition to the fact that policy preference was negatively related to candidate preference, may be indicative of a partial suppressor effect. In other words, policy preference had a weak, negative relationship with candidate preference that only became apparent when the common variance of identity and policy preference was removed. However, the fact that this pattern was only found for candidate preference, and not for party evaluation or other related variables, may suggest that it is an artifact of the measure itself rather than a reliable result.

Overall, the pattern of results reported here shows that policy preference only accounted for a unique proportion of variance among participants' ideologies, perceived fit with a party, and political sophistication, while partisan identity had unique effects on all dependent variables except for intention/decision to vote. It seems that the unique effects of policy preference were restricted to variables related to interest in politics and political opinions, while the effects of identity were much broader, influencing the character evaluations of other party members and candidates, political activism, and affiliation with likeminded individuals.

Change Analysis

The next set of analyses examined the influence of partisan identity on changes in partisanship behavior over the course of the election. It was expected under SIT that partisan identity would lead to observable changes in attitudes, perceptions, and behavior. To assess this question, an analysis of change was conducted in which nine dependent variables were regressed onto policy preference and partisan identity measured in the previous wave. To set up this model, we first controlled for the previous level of the dependent variable so that any significant findings among our predictors could be associated with changes from the previous level to the current level of the dependent variable. Next, the two predictors were entered into the model with policy preference entered first and partisan identity second. Both predictors were measured one wave prior to the dependent variable. This model was used to separately predict dependent variables in waves 2 and 3, with controls and predictors measured in waves 1 and 2 respectively. The R^2 and F statistics are presented in Table 5.

Policy Preference accounted for significant changes in perceived fit and ideology at both waves, as well as political sophistication at wave 3. However, these were the only significant findings associated with this predictor. It seems that, again, the influence of policy preference was restricted to variables dealing with political attitudes and interest in politics. In other words, individuals who reported increases in political alignment with a party developed a more extreme ideological position over time, as well as a heightened perception that one's views are represented by the preferred party. If, indeed, an individual's position shifted toward the position of the party in such a way, it is not surprising that one's ideology and perceived fit with the party would likewise shift

Table 5

Change Analysis of Nine Dependent Variables Regressed onto Partisan Identity After Controlling for Policy Preference and the Previous Level of the Dependent Variable.

| | Model (Time 1) | | | |
| | Policy Preference | | Partisan Identity | |
Outcome (Time 2)	ΔR^2	ΔF	ΔR^2	ΔF
Discussion	.00	.20	.04	5.97*
Proportion of Friends	.01	1.34	.02	4.68*
Perceived Fit	.02	7.49*	.03	9.21*
Ideology	.03	6.81*	.01	1.48
Party Evaluation	.00	.05	.01	3.66†
Candidate Preference	(-) .01	2.31	.03	6.17*
Political Sophistication	.01	3.99*	.00	.68
Political Activity	.01	2.03	.02	8.49**
Voting Behavior	.00	.33	.00	.89

| | Model (Time 2) | | | |
| | Policy Preference | | Partisan Identity | |
Outcome (Time 3)	ΔR^2	ΔF	ΔR^2	ΔF
Discussion	.01	.97	.01	2.41
Proportion of Friends	.00	.44	.01	1.44
Perceived Fit	.02	7.22*	.06	24.79**
Ideology	.04	12.69*	.07	26.02**
Party Evaluation	.00	1.05	.04	10.41**
Candidate Preference	(-) .01	1.17	.02	4.62*
Political Sophistication	.00	1.77	.01	4.02*
Political Activity	.00	.02	.00	.25
Voting Behavior	.01	1.91	.01	1.35

†$p<.1$, *$p<.05$, **$p<.001$

towards the extremes of the scale. However, the fact that this variable did not influence changes in the affective evaluations or preferences for party members or candidates, nor affiliation with like-minded individuals, further suggests the issue-focused nature of this construct.

Partisan identity, on the other hand, appeared to have a much broader effect on the spectrum of political behavior. Increased identification with the group was associated with more favorable evaluations of party members (though only marginally significant at wave 2), greater preference for the party's candidate, and an increased perception of fit with the party. In addition, more exclusive discussion, proportion of friends, and increased political activity were found at wave 2 only, while increased political sophistication and ideology were significant at wave 3 only.

In sum, identification with a party seemed to exert a similar influence among political attitudes as did policy preference (though not as consistently), however, this influence extended to affective evaluations about the party while policy preference was limited to interest in politics and ideological and issue-oriented attitudes. Identity also went beyond policy preference to influence involvement with other party members as well as political activism and the effort to stay informed about politics.

While the diverse effects of identity are informative, it is important to note that most of these effects were not consistent across waves. In fact, the only cases in which the effects of identity remained consistent included perceived fit, candidate preference, and party preference (though, only marginally). Given the lack of a consistent pattern, it is unclear whether the role of identity may operate in different ways according to the electoral climate, the extent to which identity is salient, or whether the outcome of the

election is already known as it was in wave 3. With the case of political activity, it is expected that levels would decrease after the election due to the fact that political campaigning had ceased. Therefore, its non-significance here is not surprising. However, we would expect the effects of the other variables to remain somewhat consistent, and the lack of consistently found here warrants further research. It is possible that the role of both policy preference and identity shifted post-election, and it is also likely that the status of one's party after the election influenced this shift, more data would need to be collected over a longer course of time to be able to properly assess these questions.

It is also important to note that the effect sizes in this analysis are relatively small, with ΔR^2 for all variables at .07 or below. However, an examination of the reliability of our measures across waves suggests that many of these variables are highly stable (Table 6), therefore limiting our ability to fully assess changes that may or may not have been related to the predictors in our model. This, once again, reinforces the need to collect data over a longer span of time, which may allow for a better assessment of the development of our constructs of interest.

Table 6

Summary of the Stability of Constructs Across 3 Waves of Data Collection

Variable	Bivariate Correlations	
	$r_{(T1, T2)}$	$r_{(T2, T3)}$
Partisan Identity	.75	.84
Policy Preference	.79	.84
Discussion	.42	.50
Proportion of friends	.58	.72
Perceived Fit	.75	.78
Ideology	.70	.75
Party Evaluation	.69	.72
Candidate Evaluation	.57	.66
Political Sophistication	.79	.83
Political Activity	.79	.91
Voting Behavior	.59	.68

Note: All *r*-values are significant at the $p<.001$ level

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Based on the analyses presented here, it is clear that holding a set of political opinions that are consistent with either of the two political parties does influence how individuals approach the political process. In particular, it seems to be primarily related to the development of an individual's ideology, as well as the perception of the extent to which one's views are represented by either of the two parties. Likewise, individuals who are politically aligned tend to be more politically sophisticated. However, policy preference did not have an influence on social interactions with individuals who share the same views, evaluations of the party, and political activism that could not also be explained by an individual's identification with that party. These findings speak to the influence that an affective attachment to a group can have, and in the present case, it seems this attachment accounts for more exclusive involvement with the group, more favorable attitudes of the group, a sense of similarity with the group, and increased participation in the group's cause.

Two major findings emerged from this analysis that were consistent with our predictions. First, partisan identity accounted for a significant proportion of variance beyond what could be explained by policy preference in eight of nine outcome variables. While identity had only weak to moderate relationships with amount of discussion with other party members, candidate preference, and political sophistication; strong relationships were found for proportion of friends in the same party, perceived fit with one's party, ideology, party evaluation, and political sophistication at all waves of data

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collection. Neither identity nor policy preference significantly predicted voting behavior; however, the restricted variance associated with this variable limited our ability to accurately assess its relation with either predictor in our model. A sample that more accurately represents the spectrum of political involvement in this country may help to solve this problem in future studies.

The second major set of findings concerned the influence of partisan identity over time. Identity was, at times, associated with more exclusive interactions with other party members, greater perceived fit with the party, a more extreme ideological position, more favorable evaluations of the party and candidate, and increased political sophistication and activism. These findings emerged even after controlling for the influence of policy preference, and despite the fact that many of these variables were highly stable across waves. The fact that many of these results were inconsistent across waves suggests that identity may have been operating differently at different stages of the election campaign; however, the present design had limited ability to tease apart these differences. It is likely that replicating this analysis across a longer time span, with more points of data collection, would produce a clearer picture. However, the point of this analysis was primarily to assess whether identity could explain changes in the dependent variable beyond what could be explained by policy preference. The findings here provided evidence for this hypothesis.

It is clear that an individual's political orientation is not simply restricted to a set of political opinions, but also encompasses whom we choose to associate with, the extent to which we trust and respect the government and our political officials, as well as our willingness to participate in the political system at large. Our results suggest that partisan

identity has a rather broad influence on this political spectrum, and by choosing to conceive of politics as merely a collection of attitudes leaning to the right or left ignores a very important element involved in political cognition and behavior. Our political realities are embedded in groups, and the extent to which we are attracted to and associate with these groups will in turn color the ways that we receive and respond to politics. This is not to say that a simple preference for a set of political policies does not also drive this process, however, such preferences seem to act in conjunction with group identity.

In many ways, the implications of these findings are not encouraging. It is likely that identification with a political party can distract citizens from a critical, and often more realistic, analysis of parties, candidates and their policies. The fact that partisan identity independently led to more favorable perceptions of party members and candidates, as well as the increased perception that the party represents one's views, suggests that these beliefs are, in part, due to an affective attachment to the group rather than a rational analysis of the political scene. This, in turn, has the potential to lead individuals to accept policies that they may not rationally or objectively agree with, as has already been demonstrated by Cohen (2003). Possibly our most important finding in light of this point was the relation between identity and perceived fit. Identity was strongly related to the belief that a preferred party represents one's views and, likewise, identity led to an increase in this perception over time. Regardless of whether one's political beliefs actually do match well with those of the party, the perception of similarity is ultimately the more important factor in determining an individual's political decisions and, as Robinson and colleagues (1995) have shown in a different context, has the ability to intensify conflict between parties.

While our results suggest that party identity can subject an individual to a number of biases, there may also be a positive side to this analysis. Consistent with earlier research on social and political activism, our findings also suggest that a psychological connection with a group is related to an increased willingness to make sacrifices for the values that an individual shares with that group (Kelly & Kelly, 1993; Simon et al., 1998). In the present case, the sacrifice involved political activism. This type of behavior is generally viewed as illogical from a rational-actor perspective, however, from a social-identity perspective it is more easily understood why individuals would be willing to make such sacrifices. At the individual level, the chances of one's activism making a difference are quite slim. However, when an individual feels connected with a larger social group that person may receive validation for holding a given belief, as well as a sense of efficacy that the group as a whole can bring about change. In addition, it can be argued that social identification with a group leads an individual to consider the entire group's welfare when making a decision, rather than simply one's own welfare (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995). According to this rationale, it is not surprising that policy preference had no unique effect on political activity, but instead identification with the party was the primary variable involved.

The bulk of this discussion has focused on the unique effects of partisan identity; however, it is more likely that the combined effects of identity and policy preference exert the greatest influence on behavior. A moderate correlation was found between the two predictors and therefore they cannot be viewed as mutually exclusive constructs. This study was concerned with the simultaneous operation of these two variables, however, it is likely that a reciprocal relationship exists as well. For example, one's

political views can serve as a catalyst for developing an identity with a party that shares one's beliefs. Likewise, identifying with a political group may drive one's political views. In the present research we focused on the role of these two variables regardless of the circumstances that fostered them, and results suggested that both are uniquely important. However, the processes by which individuals develop their political views and identities is an important question, and should be investigated in future research.

While the findings discussed above provide insight into the nature of political partisanship, these conclusions should be taken with caution. The purpose of this research was not to generalize findings to the population at large, but rather to demonstrate the influence of partisan identity in a population of convenience. However, it is still likely that these conclusions are limited due to sampling bias. Given the age, educational status, income, and ethnicity of this population it is obvious that this sample is in no way representative of the population at large. Likewise, past research has demonstrated that some of these demographic characteristics are related to both political identity and political behavior (Cole & Stewart, 1996). It is possible that partisan identity may have a differential impact as a function of more salient identities such as race or social status. It is equally as possible that the role of policy preference is also affected by such variables. Future research, using a more representative sample, will be needed before these findings can be generalized beyond the present sample.

As with any correlational research, the present study is also limited in its ability to infer causality. While some of the analyses presented here give insight into the causal nature of identity, the majority of these findings represent concurrent relations between variables. In order to capture more accurately a cause and effect relationship between

social identity and its consequences, it is necessary to conduct experimental work, or examine these constructs in a more controlled environment. The timing of our measurement may have also inhibited this possibility. Even in the first wave of data collection the vast majority of participants were clearly identified with a party, and many of our constructs of interest remained relatively stable. Future research should consider beginning data collection months prior to the political conventions in order to truly examine how identity develops over time.

Finally, It was assumed that social identity processes would operate almost identically for both Democrats and Republicans, however there are a number of potential reasons why differences might be observed between the two parties. The Republican nominee, George Bush, was the incumbent president at the time of the election, and was coming to the end of a highly controversial first term. At the start of the 2004 campaign season, Bush had the advantage of an already established base that supported his positions and were familiar with his personality. Incumbents have increasingly held an advantage in both state and federal elections in American politics (Ansolabehere & Snyder, 2001), and therefore it is possible the effects of an incumbent might be observed in this analysis. Likewise, the outcomes of the election put the Republican Party in control of both the White House and Congress giving them more power and status than the Democrats. The role of group status was not examined in this study; however, it is an important question that should be examined in the context of politics with future research.

It is also possible that the role of religious identity might facilitate a Republican identity more so than a Democratic identity. Layman and Carmines (1997) have demonstrated that religious traditionalism has a powerful influence on political

preferences and behavior. In recent years the Republican Party has become increasingly more attractive to religious traditionalists (Layman & Carmines, 1997; Campbell, 2002). While secularism may also play a role in shaping a Democratic identity, this identity lacks the organization and cohesion of the religious conservatives, and John Kerry's religious orientation was far less prominent than that of George Bush. The present research had limited power to examine Democrats and Republicans separately. Likewise, it would be difficult to infer the source of such differences without a properly focused design. However, the possibility of such differences between parties should be considered, and we recommend that future research efforts pursue these questions.

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