PARTISANSHIP AND VOTING

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1. INTRODUCTION

American politics are largely partisan politics. The political parties provide focus and continuity to our politics. While candidates and issues come and go from the political arena, the parties are fixtures. They have been a durable and potent force because they have articulated and organized many of the enduring divisions in the public. Notwithstanding the widely noted and lamented decline of the parties, most Americans are to some extent still partisan and most partisans to some significant degree still think and act in partisan ways. Our aim in this chapter is to review the major developments in research concerning the parties' role in voting behavior.

The voting behavior literature involving political parties can be divided into three segments. The first segment addresses questions related to the conceptualization, meaning, and measurement of party identification. What does it mean to be partisan, and how can researchers best discover who is partisan and who is more partisan? The second portion of research addresses questions relating to the formation and change of party identification. How do people become partisan? What influences party identi-

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fications, and how great is that influence? This research treats party identification as a dependent variable. The final and perhaps the most important segment of research examines the effects of party identification on voter attitudes, beliefs, and behavior. To what extent does partisanship affect the thinking and vote choice of the electorate? This research places party identification in the position of an independent variable. The following sections of this chapter will review the developments in these three segments of research—Section 2 examining party identification; Section 3, its causes; and Section 4, its effects.

2. THE PARTY IDENTIFICATION VARIABLE

Although the importance of party had been recognized for some time by students of political behavior (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944; Berelson et al., 1954), partisanship was placed in center stage by *The American Voter* study. In that study, A. Campbell et al. (1960) added a significant degree of sophistication to both the conceptualization and measurement of partisanship. Partisanship was conceptualized as a psychological identification with a party. This party identification is an attachment to a party that helps the citizen locate him/herself and others on the political landscape. As thus conceived, partisans are partisan because they think they are partisan. They are not necessarily partisan because they vote like a partisan, or think like a partisan, or register as a partisan, or because someone else thinks they are a partisan. In a strict sense, they are not even partisan because they like one party more than another. Partisanship as party identification is entirely a matter of self-definition. To measure this self-definition, Campbell and his colleagues constructed three questions. The response to the first question indicated whether the respondent was a Democrat, a Republican, or an independent. If a Democrat or a Republican, the second question asked about the strength of that association. If an independent, the next question asked whether the respondent leaned toward or favored one party more than the other. From these responses, respondents were placed on a seven-point equally spaced scale ranging from strong Democrats at one end to strong Republicans at the other. After some 25 years of research and debate, this measurement of party identification and its underlying conceptualization stand clearly dominant in political behavior research.

2.1. The Behavioral Critics

Although dominant, *The American Voter* study's conceptualization and measurement of party identification have not been passively accepted or gone unchallenged. DeVries and Tarrance (1972) challenged the psychological basis of partisanship advocated in *The American Voter*. They argued in behalf of a behavioral basis of partisanship. People are partisan if they vote like partisans. People who regularly cast straight party ballots are more partisan than those who deviate from the party slate. DeVries and Tarrance argued that such a measure was both more accurate and reliable than the psychological measure. Despite this challenge, nearly all research has continued to use the psychological construct since it is more analytically distinct from the principal behavior it seeks to explain (i.e., the vote), relies no more on self-reporting than the behavioral measure, and is certainly the most widely collected and documented measure available.

A quite different though also behaviorally oriented approach to partisanship has been offered by Lodge and Tursky (1979, 1981). On the basis of psychophysical responses (e.g., line and number tasks), Lodge and Tursky (1979) produced a magnitude scale of partisanship. While this scale correlated quite highly with conventional party identification measure ($r = .91$), Lodge and Tursky determined that the conventional measure drew a distinction between leaning and weak identifiers where none apparently existed and artifically constrained the strength of identification among strong partisans.

2.2. The Multidimensional Critics

A number of other challenges to *The American Voter* conceptualization and measurement of party identification have appeared in recent years. All accept the psychological basis of partisanship but question the conventional approach. The most serious questions concern the unidimensional assumption of *The American Voter* concept. A number of studies have promoted the notion that the conventional measure of party identification in fact measures several dimensions. Speculation about the possible multidimensionality of party identification was aroused by several observations seemingly inconsistent with the unidimensional assumption. In particular, Petrocik's (1974) finding that party identification was intransitive with respect to several related variables created some suspicion about its multidimensional character. In Petrocik's analysis independents leaning toward one of the parties were more like strong partisans than like weak partisans with respect to political interest, concern about the election's outcome, and participation.

The intransitivities in the party identification index could indicate either a measurement problem or a conceptual problem. If a measurement problem, it could be resolved in a number of ways.[1] A new measure could be devised or the spacing of the existing categories could be changed. The distance between leaners and weak partisans could be narrowed, collapsed, or even reordered. However, the intransitivites could also be interpreted as a symptom of multidimensionality. This is the interpretation advocated by Valentine and Van Wingen (1980). Like Petrocik, they found evidence that party identification was intransitive with respect to some variables, nontransitive with respect to others, and transitive with respect to yet other variables such as straight-ticket voting. This pattern, according to Valentine and Van Wingen, suggests two dimensions in the party identification measure—a party direction dimension and a strength of partisanship dimension.

Aside from the intransitive relationships observed by Petrocik and by Valentine and Van Wingen, speculation about the possible multidimensionality of party identification was fueled by two other observations. The first involved the nature of change in party identifications between presidential elections. Katz (1979) found a significant amount of change in party identification between elections to be change from a strong identification with one party to a strong identification with the other party. This pattern of change suggested to Katz a two-dimensional model of partisanship. Like Valentine and Van Wingen, Katz argued that the data indicated a party direction dimension and an intensity dimension.

Further support for a two-dimensional scheme was provided by Shively's analysis (1980) and implied as well by Miller and Wattenberg's later analysis (1983). Shively's admittedly limited test of questions concerning evaluations of the two parties and the voters' perception of party influence on their voting also indicated the existence of both a party direction and an intensity/strength dimension. Although Miller and Wattenberg (1983) do not explicitly suggest a two-dimensional structure, their distinction between partisan independents and those with no partisan preference seems to conform with a two-dimensional structure. According to Miller and Wattenberg's analysis, there are substantial behavioral differences between those who claim to be independent and those who simply claim no preference or find parties irrelevant. Yet, the two groups are commonly lumped together. The independents are more interested and active in politics but neutral between the parties, whereas the no preference group, the group of "independents" that increased the most in last decade, are substantially less interested and active in politics.

Besides the intransitivities of party identification and the large changes observed by Katz, an examination of the Michigan Center for Political Studies (CPS) thermometer ratings of the parties raised questions about the unidimensional assumption. Weisberg (1980) found that nearly half the public rated both parties higher on the feeling thermometer scales than the independents did. If party identification were unidimensional, a voter favoring one party should prefer independence over the opposing party. The fact that this is not true for about half of the public raises doubts about the unidimensional assumption. Weisberg, like Valentine and Van Wingen and others, raises the possibility that party identification is two-dimensional but also raises the possibility of three dimensions—a Democratic dimension, a Republican dimension, and an independent dimension. This three-dimensional scheme is precisely what B.A. Campbell and England (1981) found in their factor analysis of five thermometer scale items. They asked two different samples to respond on thermometer scales on strong Democrats, strong Republicans, independents who leaned toward Republicans, and independents. The three distinct factors hypothesized by Weisberg emerged from both factor analyses. However, Weisberg's own analysis produced a different dimensional structure. A factor analysis of 13 different measures of partisanship yielded four different dimensions. The analysis produced a party direction dimension, a strength of partisanship dimension, a separate independence dimension, and a dimension Weisberg refers to as a proparty/antiparty dimension. When compared to the most prevalent two-dimensional scheme, the Weisberg dimensions appear to have the direction dimension in common with the other critics but find several variations on the strength/intensity dimension.

Although he found fewer dimensions than either B.A. Campbell and England (1981) or Weisberg (1980), Jacoby's (1982) findings are perhaps more complex. He examined partisan attitudes in a way that permitted individual differences rather than assuming a single universal dimensional structure, whether unidimensional or multidimensional. Preference orderings of the seven identification categories, from strong Democrat to strong Republican, were collected and examined. Jacoby's analysis of these orderings indicated that the traditional unidimensional format corresponded to the orderings of about 65 percent of the respondents and that a two-dimensional format, a direction and an independence dimension like that of Valentine and Van Wingen, fit the remaining 35 percent. These findings may be seen in at least two lights: on the one hand, they indicate that a one-dimensional treatment of party identification is satisfactory for most respondents; on the other hand, if Jacoby's respondents are roughly representative of the electorate, a two-dimensional approach is necessary to understand the partisanship of a sizable minority of the electorate.

2.3. Defending the Unidimensional Measure

McDonald and Howell (1982) have raised serious questions about the use of party thermometer scales in studies promoting multidimensionality. McDonald and Howell found that the party thermometer scales are substantially affected by the voter's current vote choice, whereas the traditional party identification measure, though definitely affected (Meier, 1975), by comparison is only slightly so affected. A further challenge to the use of raw thermometer scales is their susceptability to a positivity bias. It has been argued that the respondent's positivity bias, the inclination to respond positively to most objects, should be taken into account before any interpretation of the thermometer items. The failure to take this bias into account may explain the emergence of a second dimension in these analyses.

The final response in defense of the traditional party identification index is that the suggestion that party identification is two-dimensional says nothing new. It only renames a familiar phenomenon. Whereas the revisionists speak of two dimensions, the conventional treatment of party identification has for some time recognized two components. In *The American Voter* itself, the party identification scale was used to explain attitudes of voters and their vote choice while the intensity of party identification, the second component or dimension, was used to explain turnout. The intensity measure is simply a four-point scale created from the party identification measure folded at the midpoint. In precisely the same vein, Converse (1976) analyzes the different sources of change in what he explicitly refers to as the strength component and the direction component of party identification. If the recent work on party identification has made any contribution to the analysis of party identification, it cannot be simply the "discovery" of a direction component and an intensity/strength component.

Despite these rebuttals to the multidimensional revisionists, the debate over the conceptualization and measurement of party identification will continue. Yet, as suggested by the last rebuttal argument, there may be less to this debate than meets the eye. As Kessel (1980) and Fiorina (1981) suggest, the discipline ought to settle for the conceptualization of party identification as stipulated by *The American Voter*. It is well documented as a real and pervasive attitude (Bastedo and Lodge, 1980; Converse, 1970; Achen, 1975) that is relatively stable (Converse and Markus, 1979; Markus, 1982, p. 549), though some have suggested that its stability may have been exaggerated (Fiorina, 1981; Dobson and Meeter, 1974; Dreyer, 1973; Meier, 1975; Pierce and Rose, 1974).[2] Even those claiming multidimensionality in nearly all cases find a party direction dimension that corresponds closely to the traditional notion of party identification. If their direction dimension proves to be a significantly superior measurement (e.g., more accurate prediction, less influenced by short-term forces, more reliable) then it should take the place of the traditional index. Of course, complementary work on the existing index should also continue. In particular, given the widely commented upon similarity of weak partisans and independent leaners, it would appear that research should either indicate the benefits of collapsing these categories or provide stable estimates of the intervals between the categories. Lodge and Tursky (1979), Jacoby (1982), and Fiorina (1981) have reported the first steps in arriving at such interval estimates. Such work would seem to be the most productive line of inquiry, since it would not disturb the 30-year data collection investment in the traditional party identification measure.

As for the other commonly found dimension, the intensity dimension, this variable can be inserted wherever it explains or clarifies a relationship. Such an inclusion would do no violence to the party identification concept as originally conceived. The task of revisionists is to prove that their measurement, their second dimension, is a superior measurement of independence or strength of partisanship than the straightforward folded party identification scale.

3. PARTY IDENTIFICATION AS A DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Research on the causes of party identification has addressed four questions. First, why do people choose to identify with a party at all? Second, what factors cause them to identify with a particular party, that is, what is responsible for the direction of party choice? Third, what causes some individuals to have more intense feelings of party loyalty than others? Fourth, why has there been a decline in partisanship since the mid–1960s? Although derivative of the first three questions, this last question will be examined separately because of its intrinsic interest and its importance to the electoral system.

3.1. The Functions of Party Identification

It is evident that most people have in some form a party identification, even if it is neutral between the two major parties. It is less evident why they identify themselves in such a way. We know, of course, that the particular party they identify with and the strength of that identification are affected by socialization and personal experiences. However, the reasons why these social forces and experiences create, maintain, or change a party identification of any sort or strength are not entirely clear.

Katz (1960) speculated that attitudes and psychological attachments such as party identification are acquired because they are in some sense functional for the individual. Katz identified four possible functions an opinion might serve: a knowledge function, an instrumental function, an ego-defensive function, and a value-expressive function. Miller and Levitan (1976, p. 30) have identified three functions served by party identification: an informational function similar to the knowledge function, a normative function similar to the instrumental function, and a reference function in some ways similar to both Katz's ego-defensive and value-expressive functions. As Miller and Levitan put it, party identification is functional in these respects because it is helpful in answering the following questions: "What's going on here?" "What should I do?" And "Who am I?" Although this last function, the reference function, is the reason most naturally attributed to the formation of a party identification, research also suggests that party identifications may be formed because they serve the normative/instrumental function (B.A. Campbell, 1979) and the informational/knowledge function (Shively, 1979a; Pomper, 1975). However, while there is some evidence indicating that party identification may be adopted to serve all three of these functions, their relative importance to the adoption and preservation of a party identification for the typical voter is not known.

The functional basis of party identifications may be interesting in and of itself, but it is also interesting because of its potentially broad implications for both the causes and effects of partisanship. For instance, the increased educational level of the American electorate may undermine the informational/knowledge function of party identification. Delli Carpini (1983) suggests that this changes the nature of partisanship. More highly educated voters who take advantage of the widespread availability of political information and take an interest in politics increasingly rely less on party identification in making political decisions. On the other hand, those retaining party identifications may be increasingly doing so because of socialization factors rather than because of experience-related reasons. This line of inquiry suggests a fairly complex causal structure that knits together the causes of party identification, its functions, and its effects. The reasons why a person holds or needs a party identification should in some way affect both the type and strengths of party identification's causes and the type and strength of party identification's effects.

3.2. Causes of Party Identification's Direction

Two broad sets of factors have been suggested as explanations of both party identification's directional component and its intensity component. Fiorina (1981, pp. 65–83) explicitly recognized these two factors in his model of party choice. These two factors are political socialization and previous political experiences. Since it is generally accepted that socialization is the relatively stronger influence in early life and experiences have a greater influence in later life, the socialization vs. experience debate in many ways corresponds to the debate about the nature of the relationship between age and party identification (Converse, 1976). Generational effects are similar to the socialization explanation of party identification, and life-cycle and period effects are similar to the political experiences explanation of party identification.

Certainly in determining the direction of party identification, whether one is attached to the Democratic party of the Republic party however strongly, both socialization and experience have an impact. However, at least since *The American Voter* study of A. Campbell et al. (1960), the force of socialization has been accepted as the dominant influence over the direction of partisanship.

Political socialization research has found that most children have formed some partisan feelings by about the age of 10. Researchers examining the 1958–1962 period found that by the fifth grade most children were familiar with the parties and identified with one of them (Hess and Torney, 1967; Greenstein, 1965; Jennings and Niemi, 1968). This affective orientation toward one of the parties develops before children are likely to have the cognitive capacity to be aware of and evaluate issues. Party loyalty then colors the later acquisition of knowledge so that the individual selectively perceives and perhaps distorts political information in a way that reinforces early partisan biases (Converse, 1976). Partisanship thus conceived has two features: it is relatively impervious to change because, once acquired, only extraordinary political events have much effect on party identification; and it is a relatively non-goal-oriented attitude. In that it is more the cause than the result of policy preferences, however specifically or broadly defined (see Dennis and McCrone, 1970; Hennessey, 1972).

A number of single-equation and multiequation multivariate models of party identification have also confirmed the primary influence of parents in the formation and maintenance of their children's party identification. Knoke (1972), DeClercq et al. (1975), and Hartwig et al. (1980) have found the parent's party identification to be the strongest predictor of a voter's party identification. Even when it appeared to have weakened in the late 1960s (Hartwig et al., 1980), it was still a stronger influence on partisanship than the voter's own socioeconomic status. As Cassel (1982, p. 274) put it, "The one best answer to the question 'Who are the Republicans and who are the Democrats?' is that Republicans are the children of Republicans and Democrats are the children of Democrats."

The impact of parental socialization on party identification, while generally very strong, is not in all circumstances overwhelming (Flanigan and Zingale, 1983). Limitations and variations in its impact have been noted. Jennings and Niemi's panel study of high school students and their parents demonstrates that, though preadult socialization is critical, other factors can make a difference. A comparison of party preferences of the youth cohort in 1965 and again eight years later indicated that the partisanship of late adolescence carries over into adulthood. However, the stability of the parent cohort in this period was even greater, which suggests that party identification continues to develop in the early adult years. The imperfect stability of partisanship in the parent cohort also suggests that party identification is open to change throughout one's life. Consistent with these findings, Brown (1981) found that a change in partisan environment increases the likelihood of a change from one's childhood partisanship. Other research suggests that the impact of parental socialization is conditional as well as being less than complete in its influence. Cundy (1979a, 1979b) found evidence that the socialization effects are stronger when children particularly like their parents. Tedin (1979, 1980) found evidence that socialization is stronger when parents have stronger partisan preferences and when children accurately perceive those preferences.

Beyond parental socialization, three other forms of socialization have been identified as sources of party identification—peer group socialization, socialization to a spouse's party identification, and socioeconomic and group socialization. While each of these forms of socialization appearsto influence party identifications, their impact is modest in comparison to the impact of parental influence. Tedin (1980), Silbiger (1977), and B.A. Campbell (1980a), among others, have found that the peers of adolescents have some influence on party identification, though that influence appears small in relation to that of parents. Tedin (1980) attributes the limited impact of peer influence to the generally low salience of politics to adolescent peers. There is also some evidence that spouses have some influence over each other's party identification (Beck and Jennings, 1975). Niemi et al. (1977, p. 143) found some support for what they called "mutual socialization," and Weiner (1978) found evidence of "political resocialization."

The impact of groups on party identification is difficult to classify. Group influence would appear to be partly that of a socialization agent and partly that of an indicator of shared experience. Of the variety of demographic and social groups, socioeconomic class is generally regarded as having the greatest impact on party identification (Goldberg, 1969; Pomper, 1975 and Cassel, 1982), though its impact is still modest compared to parental socialization. Other groups such as religion, race, region, union membership and ethnicity have also been claimed as having an influence on party identification (Axelrod, 1972, 1976; Abramson et al., 1982; Fee, 1980; Cassel, 1982), though less of an impact than social class.

While group influence, an influence that is at least partly experiential in nature, has long been recognized, more obviously experiential factors have until recently been generally ignored as possible influences on party identification. The short-term forces that have been found to affect party identification are of two types—attitudes and behaviors. The impact of attitudes, usually attitudes about issues, has been detected by Fiorina (1981, pp. 98–102) and those examining nonrecursive vote choice models such as Page and Jones (1979) and Erikson (1982). Cassel (1980) finds policy attitudes to be helpful in predicting partisan preference, particularly attitudes about domestic welfare policy, but stops short of claiming a causal impact for these attitudes. Fiorina (1981), using lagged attitudes and examining change in partisanship rather than partisanship itself, finds some but not substantial support for direct attitudinal effects.[3]

There is stronger evidence that prior vote choices affect party identifications directly and that most of the impact of issues is indirect through their influence on the vote choice. The possibility of such an effect was noted in the *American Voter* study, though the extent of such an effect was not estimated. The extent of this impact has been estimated using panel data by Meier (1975), Markus and Converse (1979), Howell (1980, 1981) and Dobson and St. Angelo (1975). These studies revealed that voting consistent with party identification's direction reinforced party identification and that defection from a party preference increased the likelihood of a weakened or converted party identification. Howell (1980, 1981) found that prior voting behavior had a greater impact than issues and other short-term forces on subsequent partisanship, though a change of identifications by a significant portion of the electorate cannot be explained simply in terms of prior vote defections.

To summarize these findings, the direction of party identification is primarily caused by socialization in early life, principally socialization to parental partisanship; however, experiences as an adult also may have an impact. These results are in accord with the prevailing wisdom about the nature of the relationship between age and party identification. The direction component of partisanship is largely a function of the voter's generation rather than maturation through the life cycle (Converse, 1976). The finding that the direction of party identification is usually set fairly early in life and maintained through later life is also consistent with findings about the sources of realignment. Realignment research suggests that mobilization, the introduction into the active electorate of new voters who most often are also young voters, accounts for a larger share of partisan change than conversion (Andersen, 1979; J.E. Campbell, 1983). However, while mobilization findings fit nicely with the finding that the direction of party identification takes shape early in life, they depart from the notion that socialization dominates that direction under all circumstances. Socialization, if dominant, would tend to produce intergenerational partisan stability, whereas mobilization often yields substantial intergenerational partisan change. This discrepency can be explained in a straightforward manner. Under normal circumstances, the partisan environment surrounding a person early in life is dominated by parental preferences. Under abnormal circumstances, like those of a realignment period, the partisan environment surrounding youth may be dominated by events outside the family. In such circumstances, the direction of party identification apparently is still largely determined early in life, but with a much diluted impact of parental socialization.

3.3. Causes of Party Identification's Intensity

Much, if not most, of the research concerning the causes of party identification examines the directional component of partisanship and fails to examine its intensity component. While this is understandable in that most of the variance in the party identification measure should be associated with the directional component, some of the variance is undoubtedly associated with the intensity component. If the causes of variation on one component are different from those of the other, an analysis that fails to make the distinction may produce distorted, if not misleading, results. Fortunately, the distinction has been preserved in the generational/life-cycle form of the causes of party identification debate.

Although there has been substantial dissent (Glenn, 1972; Glenn and Hefner, 1972; Abramson, 1976), the most prevalent view is that the intensity of partisanship is more a function of maturation than one's generation (Converse, 1976). This suggests that it is experience rather than early socialization that accounts for partisan intensity. Experiences as seen through lenses tinted a partisan shade by socialization tend to be seen as further evidence of the correctness of the initial party preference. So, in normal circumstances, the accumulation of reinforcing information leads to the adoption of firmer partisan attachments. However, if a voter, despite his or her partisan bias, forms a negative impression of the party because of events, issues, or candidates, partisan attachments may well suffer. Converse's finding of life-cycle effects have received support from the research of both Shively (1979b) and Claggett (1981): Shively, after correcting for period effects, found that partisan strength rose slightly every year for each cohort; Claggett found that, when the questions of the acquisition and intensity of partisanship are clearly separated, there emerges clear evidence of life-cycle effects reinforcing and increasing the intensity of party identifications.

3.4. The Decline of Partisanship

In the period from 1952 to 1964 about 74 percent of the public identified, either strongly or weakly, with a political party. Beginning in 1964, this partisan segment of the public declined. Only 62 percent of the public identified with a party in the period from 1978 to 1980, a drop of approximately 12 percent. The most thorough study of this decline is that of Norpoth and Rusk (1982). Their analysis indicates that the partisan decline of this period is evident in all cohorts, indicating substantial period effects. However, Norpoth and Rusk (1982, p. 536) also found that:

> Younger voters were more inclined to abandon their partisan ties than were older voters, and the sharpest decline—using the partisanship of previous new voters as a benchmark—occurred among those voters who became eligible to vote in this period

of change. Indeed, this group, together with the group of voters who had entered the electorate in the 1950s and early 1960s, contributed nearly 75 percent of the decline in partisanship in the American electorate, whether through their increased size, lower partisan entry level, party desertion, or suppressed life-cycle gains.

The events and experiences of the 1960s and early 1970s apparently put a substantial dent in the socialization and initial partisan predispositions of many young voters but were not sufficiently strong to offset the great store of experiences binding older voters to their parties. Nevertheless, these ties of older voters may have been weakened though not broken by the period effects.

Two important questions about the decline of party identification remain unsettled: (1) What aspects of the political environment precipitated the decline? (2) What was the nature of voter response to this environment?

A number of changes in the political environment may have shaken party identifications. Certainly the issues of civil rights, the Vietnam War, and the Watergate imbroglio were sufficiently controversial to break a number of attachments, as were the very unpopular candidacies of Barry Goldwater in 1964 and George McGovern in 1972. Events that did not happen in this period may also be of importance. The Great Depression and New Deal that formed the party system were not within the memories of young voters and may have begun to fade in the memories of older voters. Finally, voters and campaigns may have changed. Party identification may be less necessary or useful to more educated voters with greater access to information and opinions.

Whatever combination of events and circumstances precipitated the decline, three explanations of voter reactions to this environment have been offered. The decline of party identification has been explained as (1) a loss of the functional basis of party by the indifference explanation, (2) a lack of partisan intensity by the alienation explanation, and (3) a lack of partisan direction by the confusion explanation.

Dennis (1976), Burnham (1970), and Nie et al. (1979) appear to advocate the alienation thesis. Dennis finds a trend of diminished public support for parties. Burnham argues that voters view the parties negatively because the parties have not taken clear stands on the issues which have become salient to the electorate. Disenchantment with the parties induces citizens to refrain from identifying with either of them. Nie et al. noted an overall decrease in the proportion of the electorate who had a positive evaluation of their own party while the proportion with negative evaluations of both parties rose.

Wattenberg (1981) argues on behalf of the indifference thesis. He finds an increase in neutral, rather than negative, evaluations of the parties. He interprets this as an indicator of indifference attributable to the increasing irrelevance of parties in the candidates' campaigns, though increased educational levels and the expansion of news media political coverage may also make parties less relevant to voters. Further support for this thesis is provided by Miller and Wattenberg (1983). They note that the increase in the ranks of independents has been in those claiming "no-preference" rather than self-proclaimed "independents."

Campbell (1979) offers support for the confusion thesis. Many voters according to this thesis have been receiving conflicting signals from the parties. For instance, a traditional Southern Democrat is asked to make sense out of a moderate Democratic party from the pre–civil rights era, a liberal national Democratic party during the civil rights turmoil of the 1960s, and a very conservative state Democratic party. This understandably may confuse the voter, who retreats to safety in the middle of the partisan spectrum.

4. PARTY IDENTIFICATION AS AN INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

Party identification is probably the most ubiquitous individual level independent variable in American politics research. A great deal of research has been done that focuses specifically on party identification as the independent variable of primary interest, but a great deal more research utilizes party identification tangentially—largely as a control variable. While the latter group of studies are clear testimony to the broad acceptance of party identification as a critical influence on political behavior, any compilation of these studies is beyond the scope of this essay. Our concern here is with the former group of studies, focusing specifically on the effects of party identification and even more specifically on those studies concerned with the relationship of party identification and voting behavior. We will look first at research on party identification and voter turnout (a logical precursor to vote choice). Presidential and subpresidential voting will then be considered separately.

4.1. Party Identification's Effect on Turnout

Whether one prefers the psychological model of the *American Voter* study or the rational choice approach, there is reason to suppose that strength of partisanship would be related to the probability of voting. From the psychological perspective, partisan loyalties may be thought to give rise to or sustain a high level of general interest and involvement in politics. From a rational choice perspective, strong partisans might be expected to be more inclined to vote for two reasions: (1) since they already possess a strong predisposition to vote a certain way, information costs should be much lower; and (2) the same predisposition toward one party should increase the net difference to the individual of one party winning vs. the other.

Most research in this area has borne out the expectation of a positive relationship between intensity of partisanship and turnout (A. Campbell et al., 1960; Verba and Nie, 1972, pp. 209–228), and much of the current concern has turned toward estimating how much of the recent decline in aggregate turnout can be explained by the declines in the ranks of partisans. The logic of this relationship is clear: if strong partisans turn out to vote at higher rates then independents, then the general movement into the independent category should result in a decrease in turnout. The fact that there has been a decline in ranks of partisans is quite clear; but if there has also been a weakening of the ability of partisanship to structure behavior (as most scholars of vote choice have argued), then this erosion should reduce the impact of the numerical decline of partisans. Most recent studies have found some link between declines in partisan numbers and lower turnout (e.g., see Miller, 1980; DeNardo, 1980; Hill and Luttbeg, 1980; Shaffer, 1981); however, others have found little or no effect (Cassel and Hill, 1981; Conway, 1981).

The most recent and comprehensive study of this question is that of Abramson and Aldrich (1982). They begin by examining the simple relationships between partisanship and voting for the presidential elections from 1952 to 1980. They find a clear positive relationship between strength of partisanship and likelihood of voting for each of the elections. Turning to the pattern across the elections, they find that the impact of partisanship on voting has actually *increased* over this period. In the early 1950s strong partisans turnout was about 10 percentage points above that for nonleaning independents. By 1980 this gap had grown to 30 percentage points. Throughout the period strong partisans maintained about an 85 percent turnout rate, whereas the rate for pure independents fell from about 75 to 55 percent. Abramson and Aldrich conclude, as does Shaffer (1981), that the decline in ranks of partisans has been an important contributor to the decline in turnout—accounting for about 25 percent of that decline (1982, p. 510).

4.2. Party Identification's Effect on Presidential Vote Choice

Any understanding of current research on party identification and voting must rest on an understanding of the basic model of voting behavior proposed some 25 years ago in *The American Voter* study. It established three things of particular importance: (1) an approach to understanding voting that was rooted in psychology, with attitudes as the precursors of the vote most worthy of scholarly attention; (2) a grouping of the most critical attitudes leading to the vote into the enduring categories of party identification, issues, and candidate images; and (3) an outline of the key relationships among these attitudes, as well as between these attitudes and the vote.

Briefly sketched, *The American Voter* model is as follows: Party identification is as an enduring, diffuse, psychological loyalty to a party. Issues come into play in the form of voter attitudes toward a variety of domestic and foreign issues, various societal groups in the political process, and the parties as managers of government. Candidate image involved voter attitudes centered on the actual candidates in a given election. Party identification was thought to raise "a perceptual screen through which the individual tends to see what is favorable to his partisan orientation" (A. Campbell et al., 1960, p. 133). These issue and image attitudes in turn largely governed vote choice. For most voters the effect of party identification on vote choices was indirect; however, for those voters with only faint perceptions of candidates and issues, party has a direct role in vote choice.

Two points about this model merit elaboration. First, the role of party identification in screening and biasing information should not be overstated; it tints ones view of the political reality but does not obscure it entirely. Second, while the relationship between party identification and more short-term attitudes is recognized to be nonrecursive, Campbell et al. felt that "in the period of our studies the influence of party identification on attitudes . . . has been far more important than the influence of these attitudes on party identification on itself" (1960, p. 135). With regard to various links in the model, the general conclusion is that most of the impact of party identification on the vote is indirect through issues and images and that images tend to be more important than issues.

A great deal of subsequent work confirmed the finding of party identification's impact on information about both domestic and foreign policy issues and perceptions of candidates. This literature is far too vast to be reviewed in any depth in this essay. However, a few recent examples deserving of some mention include the work of Wright and Niemi (1983), LeBlanc and Merrin (1978), Merrin and LeBlanc (1979), King (1977), Sniderman et al. (1982), Eismeier (1982), and Nie et al. (1976, pp. 194–209). While the effect of partisanship on issue and image opinions is frequently thought to be a result of a nonrational or irrational screening process such as selective exposure or perception, this interpretation has been challenged in the last few years (Helm, 1979; Patterson, 1980). An alternative interpretation is that a party's impact is the result of a rational inference or, in different terms, an instance of learning. Given previous findings of Bastedo and Lodge (1980), Trilling (1975), and others that parties are meaningful to voters, they ought to be fairly efficient devices for accumulating reliable impressions of both issues and candidates.

Since *The American Voter* study, research concerning the impact of party identification on the vote, rather than on issue and image perceptions, primarily has addressed two related questions: (1) How important is party identification to the vote choice relative to other variables? (2) Has the impact of party identification changed or declined in recent years? Both of these issues have been explored in a number of studies (Nie et al., 1979, pp. 50–59; Crotty and Jacobson, 1980, pp. 31–32; Pomper, 1975: pp. 35–38; Miller and Miller, 1975; Miller et al., 1976). They have also been addressed in a more sophisticated manner in research comparing recursive causal models of voting behavior across the presidential elections since 1956. Most notable in the development of this line of research are the early efforts of Goldberg (1966), the later refinement and updating of his work by DeClercq et al. (1975), Mackelprang et al. (1975), and Schulman and Pomper (1975), and the updating of Schulman and Pomper by Hartwig et al. (1980). Although this research has noted significant fluctuations in party identification's effects (Miller, 1978), several conclusions about the strength and trends in these effects have found a good deal of support. First, there is general agreement that the total effect, direct and indirect, of party identification on the vote choice has declined since the elections observed by *The American Voter* study in the 1950s. According to Hartwig et al. (1980), the decline began in the 1960s and leveled off during the elections in the 1970s. However, there remains a distinct possibility that the findings reveal a conditional aspect to party identification's influence rather than simply a downward trend in that influence. Second, in contrast to the view suggested by *The American Voter* study, party identification's greatest influence on the vote is a direct influence rather than an indirect one. It is a decline in this direct influence that accounts for most of the loss in party identification's total impact on the vote. Third, though the tendency is not as clear, the indirect effects that party identification exert through issue preferences appear a bit stronger than they were in the 1950s. Finally, though it is often overshadowed by the findings of partisan decline, despite that decline party identification remains the single most important influence on the vote in most presidential elections. The extent of the decline in partisan voting, though significant, has often been overstated. The correlations between party identification and the presidential vote, which in these recursive models is tantamount to the total effects of party identification on the vote, has only declined from an average of .67 for the 1952, 1956, and 1960 elections to an average of .62 for the elections from 1964 to 1980. Of course all of these findings rest on an assumption that party identification is an exogenous variable in the campaign setting. This is an assumption that has increasingly come under attack.

Developments in nonrecursive and lagged models of the vote choice have raised new questions about the impact of party identification. Rather than assuming that party identification directly or indirectly affects issue preferences, image evaluations, and the vote, these more sophisticated models permit two-way causation in which party identification can be *affected by* as well as *affect* issues, images, and the vote. The specification of a two-way causal flow has two implications. First, by admitting that party identification can be affected by the opinions and behaviors it also affects, the impact of party identification can be estimated more accurately. Rather than erroneously claiming that the causes of party identification are its effects, the nonrecursive or lagged models separate the two. Second, two-way causation models affect the longstanding debate over the relative influence of issues and party identification on the vote. It certainly makes the debate more complex and perhaps less important, since issues and party identification are more closely entwined and on more nearly equal footing, in causal priorities, than had previously been thought.

Fiorina (1981) has emphasized the importance of the two-way causal specification, particularly with respect to this relationship between party identification and issues. According to Fiorina (p. 97), party identification "is both cause and consequence of some kinds of political behavior." In his model, party identification is affected by what he terms both simple and mediated retrospective evaluations of the parties' and candidates' past performance on the issues. In turn, party identification is a cause of mediated retrospective evaluations and future expectations of policy performance. Although Fiorina did not explicitly estimate the relative strengths of paths to or from party identification, others have attempted to determine the extent to which party identification shapes other opinions and behaviors or is shaped by them.

One segment of two-way causation research finds party identification to be more of an effect of short-term political forces than a cause of them. Jackson's model (1975) of the 1964 election was the first attempt to estimate a nonrecursive vote choice model. Quite surprisingly, Jackson found the effects of evaluations of the party's issue positions on party identification to be stronger than the reciprocal effect of party identification on issue evaluations. Page and Jones (1979) greatly expanded the nonrecursive model and applied it to the 1972 and 1976 elections. Although no comparable models for the 1950s are presented, their findings for 1972 and 1976 indicated only a very modest impact for party identification on vote choice, directly or indirectly. In 1976 party identification "had much less direct influence on vote intention than either policy orientations or evaluations of personal qualities" (p. 1083). The only indirect effect possible under the set of initial assumptions made by Page and Jones is through policy orientations, and their estimations indicated no effect of party identification on policy orientations. An indirect effect of party identification through personal qualities of the candidates was not allowed. The 1972 findings were even more bleak for party identification. Neither indirect nor direct effects were detected: "in 1972—quite unlike 1976—party loyalties played no part in the formation either of voting decisions or perceptions of closeness to the candidates on policy matters" (p. 1086). In addition to finding that party identification has much less influence on short-term evaluations than previously thought, Page and Jones also find more of an impact of short-term evaluations of party identification than was noted in past research. Similar analyses by Erikson (1982) and Weatherford (1983) also indicate that party identifications are more an effect of issue attitudes than a cause of those attitudes.

Party identification appears stronger in the two-way causation model estimated by Markus and Converse (1979). Rather than constructing a nonrecursive model, they use lagged variables to distinguish between causal flows in a model that is in many respects similar to that suggested but never estimated by Goldberg (1966). Like Page and Jones (1979), Markus and Converse find a reciprocal relationship between party identification and short-term forces. Beyond this, there is little similarity in the findings. The Markus and Converse model allows party identification to have several types of influence. First, it directly affects perceptions of the candidates' personalities (an effect excluded by Page and Jones) and the general evaluations of the candidates. Second, though the model does not admit to direct effects in either direction between issues and party identification, issue stands and perceptions may be indirectly affected by party identification through general candidate evaluations (p. 1058). Finally, unlike the nonrecursive models, the Markus and Converse model specifies party identification as having a direct impact on the vote choice, an impact that varies according to the candidate evaluation differential, being greatest when the difference is smallest. This specification of a direct but conditional effect is similar to a sophisticated version of Kelly and Mirer's (1974) treatment of party identification as a tiebreaker. As well as permitting party identification to effect issues, images, and the vote, Markus and Converse recognize that party identifications are "not completely immune to electoral forces" (p. 1060). Although their model does not suggest, like the nonrecursive models, that party identification can be directly affected by issues or candidates, Markus and Converse find current party identifications to be a function of the prior vote choice as well as the prior party identification.

Markus and Converse's analysis of their model using CPS 1972–1976 panel data indicates the importance of party identification to the vote choice. Although the prior vote has some effect on partisanship, that effect is, in their words, "hardly dramatic." The total direct and indirect effects of party identification on the vote are greater than the total effects of either issues or candidate images, a finding entirely consistent with those of the recursive models. Markus and Converse (1979, p. 1069) note two reasons for importance of party identification to the vote choice:

> First, party identifications are much more stable in the intermediate term than other elements in the model. . . . The second reason shows up clearly in the structure of the model and hinges on the fact that the party component is unique in the way it intrudes at multiple points in the process. Partisan predispositions may be outweighed by other model terms of particular stages, as other research on a static base has shown, but these loyalties keep coming back as determinants while the vote decision process unrolls.

The contrast between the findings of Jackson (1975) and Page and Jones (1979), on the one hand, and Markus and Converse (1979), on the other, can be explained in several ways. First, the different conclusions about the effects and causes of party identification may simply be due to the exclusion and inclusion of different paths in their models. Second, the different conclusions may be the result of using weak and perhaps inappropriate instrumental variables to identify the nonrecursive models. Most of the instrumental variables in the Page and Jones model (1979) were only weakly related to the variable they were supposed to identify. Moreover, variables such as race and income were used as instrumental variables to identify the issues variables and were assumed, quite questionably, not to influence party identification. Finally, the different results may be due to what Heise (1970) terms a lack of constancy. Meier (1975) found that if the dynamics between party identification and the vote are examined across elections, as they are in Markus and Converse, party identification has a strong influence on the vote choice. However, if the relationship is examined within the confines of a campaign when most voters have a fairly good idea of their vote intention, the effects of the vote on party identification are greater than the effects of party identification on the vote, though both are small relative to the interelection effects.

4.3. Party Identification's Effect on Subpresidential Elections

While scholars of presidential elections have debated the decline of party vis-à-vis issues, scholars of congressional elections have recorded a similar decline in the influence of party, but here the rising influence has been incumbency. Traditionally congressional elections were viewed as being dominated by party identification because of the low visability of candidates and low levels of voter interest relative to those in presidential elections. Voters were thought to simply rely on the cue of partisanship, clearly indicated for congressional candidates on most ballots. Assessments of voters knowledge about the issue positions of congressional candidates reinforced this view (Stokes and Miller, 1966). The only other factor of any importance appeared to be presidential coattails in on-year elections (Press, 1958; A. Campbell, 1966). This portrait of congressional elections remained largely unchallenged in part because the SRC election studies produced a wealth of readily available data on presidential elections and thus most scholarly attention focused on those elections.

Interest in voting behavior in congressional elections revived in the 1970s with the publication of a variety of analyses challenging the traditional picture of a congressional electorate dominated by party loyalty. Unlike presidential voting research, these studies of congressional elections were almost exclusively at the aggregate level (for notable exceptions see Hinckley et al., 1974; Mann, 1978). While not surprising given the paucity of individual level data available prior to the 1978 Michigan Survey Research Center (SRC) study, this reliance on aggregate level data encouraged an approach very different from that of presidential voting studies. Rather than examining voter motivation, the studies of voting in congressional elections tended to focus on contextual variables. The data problem also was at least partly accounts for the focus on elections to the House of Representatives, where the greater number of contests per election (435 vs. 33) made aggregate analysis much easier. Incumbency, identified by Erikson (1971) as a factor of considerable influence, quickly became a growth industry as study after study confirmed its importance in House elections (e.g., see Alford and Hibbing, 1981). General economic conditions produced a similarly intense interest (e.g., see Kramer, 1971; Tufte, 1975). With a few exceptions (Baker and Walter, 1975; Conway and Wyckoff, 1980; Mann, 1978), party identification was largely ignored by those studying congressional elections because it simply was not very amenable to aggregate level analysis.

The availability of new individual level data in the 1978 SRC/CPS National Election Study was followed by several important analyses of individual voting behavior in congressional elections (Abramowitz, 1980; Ragsdale, 1980; Jacobson, 1981). The most comprehensive with regard to party identification and vote choice was that of Mann and Wolfinger (1980). In addition to analyzing the 1978 survey data, Mann and Wolfinger analyzed party defection extending back to the 1956 survey. Comparing the rate at which party identifiers defected from their party to vote for an opposing House candidate over this period, they found a clear pattern of increased defection, increasing steadily from about 10 percent in the 1950s to more than 20 percent by 1978. By comparison, defection in presidential elections stood at about 15 percent in the 1950s and tended to remain there, except for a rise into the mid–20 percent range in 1968 and 1972. At 15 percent defection, 1976 appeared to be a return to the old level (something which the 1980 elections bear out). Mann and Wolfinger note that the early pattern of relative defection rates confirms the traditional wisdom of party identification predominating in House races, since in the earlier studies defections in House races were about 5 percentage points lower than in presidential elections. However, the more recent pattern indicates a reversal of this pattern, with House defection rates about 5 percentage points above those for presidential elections. Mann and Wolfinger conclude, in line with scholars following Mayhew's (1974) lead, that the rise in incumbency as a voting cue in House elections is the major factor in the decline of partisan voting (for a similar conclusion, see Krehbiel and Wright, 1983; Kritzer and Eubank, 1979). A similar analysis by Jacobson (1983) includes Senate elections over the same period. The pattern of defection from party identification in Senate voting is somewhat more erratic but does indicate an increase over this period, though of a lesser magnitude than that for the House (p. 85). This fits with Kostroski's earlier finding (1973) that party identification had declined in importance in Senate elections and that by the 1960s incumbency was of roughly equal importance.

At the level of state and local elections, much less is known about the impact of party identification. Again, this reflects the scarcity of survey data. The research that has been done suggests that party identification is a key influence in voting for governor (Cowart, 1972, p. 843) and that this influence has been fairly stable from the mid–1960s to the mid–1970s (Jewell and Olson, 1982, p. 206). There is some evidence, however, that high-intensity campaigns can sway gubernatorial voters considerably (Tedin and Murray, 1981). A study of state legislative elections in California and Iowa concludes that partisanship is also the dominate influence at that level (Caldeira and Patterson, 1982).

The general view of subpresidential elections seems to be that the level of information about the candidates is the critical mediator of party's influence on the vote. This explanation was offered by Converse (1966) and later extended by Hinckley et al. (1974). The more recent research seems to bear them out. The source of voters' information may be incumbency (as discussed in Goldenberg and Traugott, 1980), media coverage (as discussed in Wattenberg, 1982), or intense campaigns (as discussed in Tedin and Murray, 1981; also Jacobson, 1981). When information levels are high, the impact of partisanship is depressed. When information levels are low, as they are for most voters in subpresidential races, party identification fills the void.

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NOTES

1. One might find some of the problems with the traditional index to be traced to the labeling of the midpoint as "independents." A more neutral term might prove less proble-

matic. Bastedo and Lodge (1980, p. 306) have also suggested that the "independent" label is ambiguously defined by voters and "may well undermine the validity and reliability of such scales."

2. Although the party identification index itself has been shown to be quite reliable, the party identification recall questions used to determine past partisanship have been shown to be unreliable (Niemi et al., 1980).

3. An issue may be considerably more likely to directly affect party identification if the issue is highly salient to the voter. McIver (1982) has noted that unemployed Republicans in 1974 were more likely to convert to the Democratic party by 1976.

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