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Author(s): Larry M. Bartels
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Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952–1996

Larry M. Bartels   Princeton University

I assess the extent of "partisan voting" in American national elections since 1952 using a series of simple probit analyses. My measure of partisan voting is sensitive both to changes in the *distribution* of partisanship and to changes in the *electoral relevance* of partisanship. I find that the impact of partisan loyalties on voting behavior has increased in each of the last six presidential elections, reaching a level in 1996 almost 80 percent higher than in 1972—and significantly higher than in any presidential election in at least 50 years. The impact of partisanship on voting behavior in congressional elections has also increased markedly, albeit more recently and to a level still well below that of the 1950s. I conclude that the conventional wisdom among scholars and commentators regarding the "decline of parties" in American politics is badly outdated.

The "decline of parties" is one of the most familiar themes in popular and scholarly discourse about contemporary American politics. One influential journalist has asserted that "The most important phenomenon of American politics in the past quarter century has been the rise of independent voters" (Smith 1988, 671). Textbook writers tell their students that "Voters no longer strongly identify with one of the major parties as they once did" (Wilson and DiIulio 1995, 180) and that "the two major parties are no longer as central as they once were in tying people's everyday concerns to their choices in the political system" (Greenberg and Page 1997, 269). The most persistent academic analyst of partisan decline has argued that "For over four decades the American public has been drifting away from the two major political parties" (Wattenberg 1996, ix), while another prominent scholar has referred to a "massive decay of partisan electoral linkages" and to "the ruins of the traditional partisan regime" (Burnham 1989, 24).

I shall argue here that this conventional wisdom regarding the "decline of parties" is both exaggerated and outdated. Partisan loyalties in the American public have rebounded significantly since the mid-1970s, especially among those who actually turn out to vote. Meanwhile, the impact of partisanship on voting behavior has increased markedly in recent years, both at the presidential level (where the overall impact of partisanship in 1996 was almost 80 percent greater than in 1972) and at the congressional level (where the overall impact of partisanship in 1996 was almost 60 percent greater than in 1978). Far from "partisans using their identifications less and less as a cue in voting behavior" (Wattenberg 1996, 27), my analysis suggests that "partisan loyalties had at least as much impact on voting behavior at the presidential level in the 1980s as in the 1950s" (Bartels 1992, 249)—and even more in the 1990s than in the 1980s.

The Thesis of Partisan Decline

Almost forty years ago, the authors of *The American Voter* (Campbell et al. 1960, 121) asserted that

Few factors are of greater importance for our national elections than the lasting attachment of tens of millions of Americans to one of the parties. These loyalties establish a basic division of electoral strength within which the competition of particular campaigns takes place. . . . Most Americans have this sense of attachment with one party or the other. And for the individual who does, the strength and direction of party identification are facts of central importance in accounting for attitude and behavior.

The so-called "Michigan model," with its emphasis on the fundamental importance of long-standing partisan loyalties, dominated the subsequent decade of academic research on voting behavior. However, over the same decade, changes in the political environment seemed to be rendering the "Michigan model" increasingly obsolete. By the early 1970s, political observers were pointing to the increasing proportion of "independents" in opinion surveys and the increasing prevalence of split-ticket voting as indications of significant partisan decline (Broder 1971; DeVries and Tarrance 1972). By the mid-1970s, some political scientists were extrapolating from a decade-long trend to project a permanent demise of partisan politics. For example, Niemi and Weisberg (1976, 414) wrote that

Of all the developments in contemporary electoral politics, the most remarkable is the increase in the number of independents after the mid-60's. . . . Significantly, the increase was greatest among the young, suggesting that the electorate may become still more independent as older voters who are more partisan die off. . . . That these developments signify the end of parties appears even more reasonable when one realizes the large number of changes in American society that have affected the party system. . . . In today's circumstances, organized political parties may be an anachronism.

The "increase in the number of independents" in the 1960s and early '70s noted by Niemi and Weisberg and other observers—and the corresponding decrease in the proportion of the public who identified themselves as Democrats or Republicans—constitute the single most important piece of evidence in support of the thesis of partisan decline. These and subsequent trends are displayed in the two panels of Figure 1, which show the proportions of party identifiers (including "strong" and "weak" identifiers) and independents (including "pure" independents and "leaners"), respectively, in each of the

FIGURE 1   The Distribution of Party Identification, 1952–1996

Proportions of National Election Study Sample
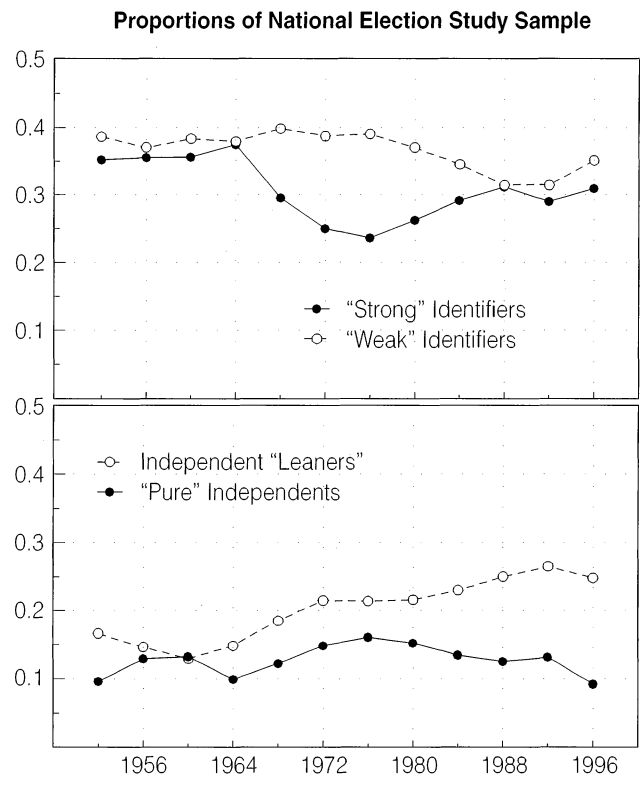
biennial American National Election Studies from 1952 through 1996.[1]

With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear from Figure 1 that Niemi and Weisberg were writing precisely at the nadir of party identification in the American public. The proportion of "strong" identifiers in the population increased from 24 percent in 1976 to 31 percent in 1996, while the proportion of "pure" independents—those who neither identified themselves as Democrats or Republicans nor "leaned" to either party in response to the

[1] All of the data analyzed in this report were collected by the American National Election Studies (NES) project, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, and are publicly available through the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research. My analysis is based on data from the Cumulative Data File issued on the American National Election Studies 1948–1994 CD-ROM (May 1995), supplemented with data from the 1956–58–60, 1972–74–76, and 1990–91–92 panel data files (on the same CD-ROM) and from the 1996 American National Election Study (available electronically from the NES website, http://www.umich.edu/~nes/).

traditional Michigan follow-up question[2]—declined from 16 percent in 1976 to only 9 percent in 1996.[3]

## A Summary Measure of Partisan Voting

What significance should we attach to the shifts in the distribution of party identification documented in Figure 1? It may be well to begin by recalling the first sentence of Campbell et al.'s (1960, 64) chapter on "Partisan Choice": "The cluster of precepts and feelings that make . up the popular image of the parties and candidates are ultimately of interest for their effect on what the electorate does." To the extent that our interest in partisan loyalties is motivated by an interest in voting behavior, we would seem to need (at least) two kinds of additional information to interpret the electoral implications of changing levels of partisanship. First, are the shifts documented in Figure 1 concentrated among voters or among nonvoters? Declining partisanship among nonvoters may leave the distribution of party identification in the voting booth unchanged. And second, has the electoral *impact* of a given level of partisanship declined or increased over time? Declining *levels* of partisanship might be either reinforced or counteracted by changes in the *impact* of partisanship on electoral choices.

The first of these two questions is addressed by Figure 2, which shows separate trend lines for the proportion of ("strong" or "weak") party identifiers among voters and nonvoters in presidential elections since 1952. Not surprisingly, nonvoters are less partisan than voters in every year. But what is more important to note here is that the gap in partisanship between voters and nonvoters has widened noticeably over time, from about ten percentage points in the 1950s to about twenty percentage points by the 1990s. Indeed, it appears from these re-

[2] NES respondents who classified themselves as independents were asked, "Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party?" Those who classified themselves as Republicans or Democrats were asked, "Would you call yourself a strong (Republican, Democrat) or a not very strong (Republican, Democrat)?" Responses to these follow-up questions are used to distinguish independent "leaners" from "pure" independents and "strong" identifiers from "weak" identifiers, respectively.

[3] The significance of the distinction between independent "leaners" and "pure" independents was emphasized by Keith et al., who pointed out that people "who leaned toward the Democratic party were very similar to outright Democrats in their voting habits, opinions on the issues, and views of the Democratic party" (1992, 198–199), while Republican leaners were similar in all these respects to Republican identifiers.

FIGURE 2 Party Identification Among Presidential Voters and Nonvoters
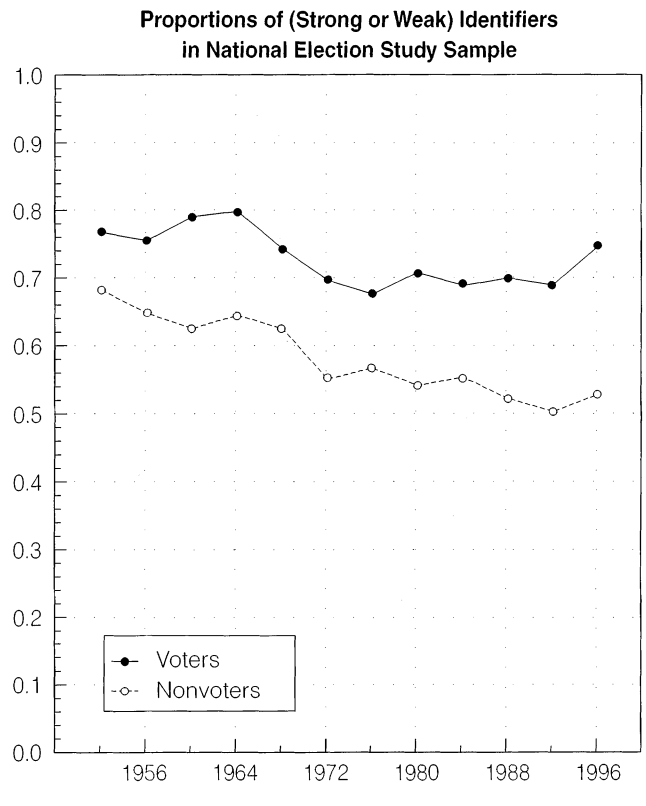
sults that the decline in partisanship evident in Figure 1 has been almost entirely reversed among voters: the proportion of party identifiers in the presidential electorate was 77 percent in 1952, 76 percent in 1956, and 75 percent in 1996, while the proportion among nonvoters was almost fifteen points lower in 1996 than in the 1950s. Thus, while the trend lines shown in Figure 1 suggest that the erosion of party loyalties underlying the "partisan decline" thesis has ended and probably even reversed in the last two decades, the results presented in Figure 2 suggest that these developments have been especially pronounced among actual voters.

The erosion of party loyalties among nonvoters evident in Figure 2 is of importance for any general account of the role of partisanship in contemporary American politics. It is especially important in view of evidence suggesting that declining partisanship is, at least in modest part, *responsible* for the substantial decline in turnout over the period covered by Figure 2 (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), and that individual turnout decisions are increasingly sensitive to the strength of prospective voters' preferences for one candidate or the other, which

derive in significant part from long-term partisan attach-ments (Bartels 1998b). However, given my narrower aim here of documenting changes in the impact of partisan-ship *on voting behavior,* the most important implication of Figure 2 is that the distribution of partisan attach-ments *among those citizens who actually got to the polls* was not much different in the 1990s from what it had been in the 1950s.

Of course, the significance of partisanship in the electoral process depends not only upon the level of par-tisanship in the electorate, but also upon the extent to which partisanship influences voting behavior. How, if at all, has that influence changed over the four and a half decades covered by the NES data? One answer to that question is provided by Miller's (1991; Miller and Shanks 1996, 146–149) analysis of party voting, based upon bi-variate correlations between party identification and vot-ing behavior in each presidential election from 1952 through 1988, as well as partial correlations controlling for a variety of demographic characteristics. In contrast to Keith et al.'s emphasis on the "covert partisanship" of independent "leaners," Miller (1991) classified voters purely on the basis of their responses to the "root" party identification question: "Generally speaking, do you usu-ally think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an in-dependent, or what?" Despite this important operational distinction, Miller's (1991, 565) results were similarly out of keeping with the thesis of partisan decline. "After hav-ing risen steadily from the 1972 low," he concluded, "the party identification/vote choice correlation was up to postwar highs by 1984 and 1988. There is no indication from any recent election that party identification is less relevant to the vote decision in the 1980s than it was three decades earlier" (1991, 565).

One limitation of Miller's calculations is that they demonstrate the continuing electoral relevance of party identification among those who are identifiers, but do not reflect the changes in the distribution of partisanship documented in Figures 1 and 2.[4] Another is that Miller's three-fold classification of partisans using the "root" party identification question is, as he himself put it, "more firmly grounded in theory than in data" (1991, 558). To the extent that the data reveal significant varia-tions in loyalty rates between "strong" and "weak" identi-fiers, or between "pure" and "leaning" independents,

these variations should presumably be factored into any assessment of the overall extent of partisan voting.

Here, I employ a measure of partisan voting that in-corporates both changes in the distribution of partisan-ship over time and evidence regarding the electoral rel-evance of each of the levels of partisanship defined by the NES seven-point party identification scale.[5] I estimate the influence of partisanship on voting behavior in any given election using a very simple probit model of vote choice in which the explanatory variables are the three levels of partisan attachment defined by both parts of the two-part NES party identification question. "Strong" party attachment is coded +1 for "strong" Republicans, −1 for "strong" Democrats, and 0 for all other voters; "weak" party attachment is coded +1 for "weak" Repub-licans, −1 for "weak" Democrats, and 0 for all others; and "leaning" is coded +1 for Republican "leaners," −1 for Democratic "leaners," and 0 for all others. Voting behav-ior is coded +1 for Republican voters and 0 for Demo-cratic voters, with minor party voters and nonvoters omitted from the analysis.[6]

The intercept in this probit model in each election year reflects the pro-Republican (or, for negative values, anti-Republican) bias in the voting behavior of "pure" independents in that election. The coefficients for "strong," "weak," and "leaning" attachment reflect the ex-tent to which the choices of voters with these various lev-els of partisan attachment departed from the choices of

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[4] In an endnote, Miller noted that "If one focuses on 'strength of partisanship' and takes variations in the proportions of 'strong' identifiers *and* the proportions with no partisan preference into account, one sees the aggregate evidence that prompted discus-sions of dealignment. These variations are *not* reflected in root self-identification for nonblack voters outside the South" (1991, 567).

[5] This measure is identical to the one employed by Bartels (1992, 249–250), and the analysis presented here is an updated and much-expanded version of the analysis originally presented there.

[6] Some analysts have routinely counted minor party voters as par-tisan "defectors." However, since no minor party candidate has been a credible contender at the presidential level in the period covered by my analysis—and only a handful have been credible contenders in congressional races—it seems simpler and more re-alistic to group minor party voters with outright abstainers in as-sessing the impact of party identification on election outcomes. Obviously, this coding convention is especially consequential for the 1992 presidential election. In Wattenberg's view, "More than any other election in recent memory, the 1992 presidential cam-paign demonstrated the weak hold of the two major political par-ties on the American public" (1996, 168). However, it is worth not-ing that Perot's spring candidacy lasted precisely until the week of the first major party convention, and that his failure to regain most of the ground he'd lost by the time he reentered the race in the fall was largely attributable to the strength of pre-existing partisan loy-alties in the electorate (Zaller and Hunt 1995). In any case, despite the fact that Perot amassed 19 percent of the popular vote, he did not come close to winning any electoral votes, had no significant impact on the outcome of the election, and lost most of his popu-lar support by the time he ran again in 1996. As will be evident be-low, simply treating Perot (and Anderson and Wallace) voters as abstainers from major-party electoral competition produces an unbroken trend in levels of partisan voting from 1972 through 1996.
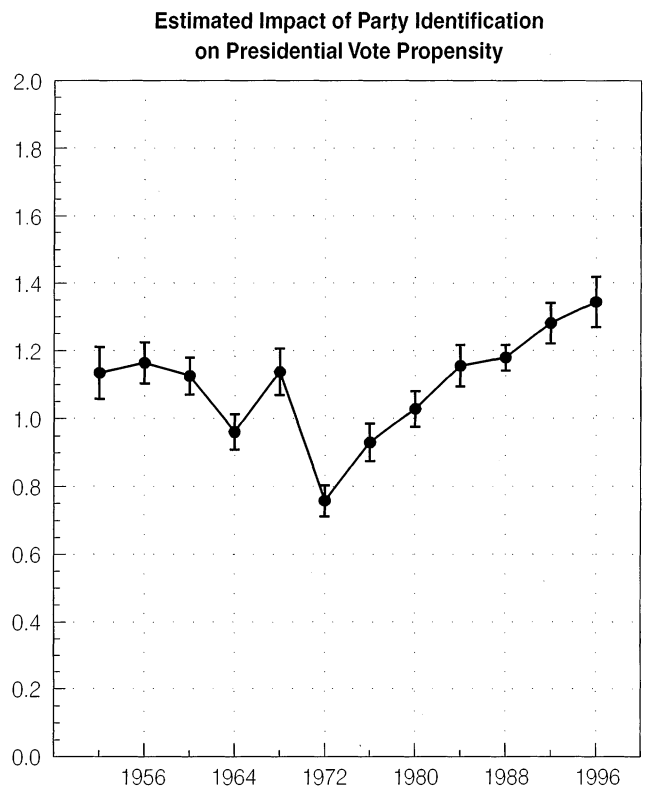
"pure" independents. Since each level of partisan attachment is assigned its own coefficient, the relative significance of "strong," "weak," and "leaning" attachments is left to be settled empirically rather than being stipulated *a priori.*[7] By the same token, since the model is estimated separately for each election year (and separately for presidential and congressional votes), the model is intentionally agnostic regarding the consistency or variability of partisan effects over time (and across electoral levels).

Given a set of estimated partisan effects for each election, a natural way to summarize the electoral significance of those effects is to compute the average of the probit estimates, each weighted by the proportion of the electorate in the corresponding partisan category. This summary measure would produce a value of zero—indicating no partisan voting—under either of two conditions: if all voters were "pure" independents (since in that case the proportions of the electorate in each of the other partisan categories would be zero) or if the voting behavior of party identifiers was identical to that of "pure" independents (since in that case the probit coefficients for "strong," "weak," and "leaning" identifiers would all be zero). More generally, the summary measure is appropriately sensitive both to the *proportion* of party identifiers of various types in the electorate and to the *impact* of their partisan attachments in the voting booth.

This logic may be illustrated by considering the set of probit parameter estimates for voting in the 1952 presidential election, which are reported in the first row of Table 1. The estimated effects are 1.600 for "strong" identifiers, .928 for "weak" identifiers, and .902 for independent "leaners." Multiplying these estimated effects by the corresponding proportions of the electorate in each of the three partisan categories (.391 for "strong" identifiers, .376 for "weak" identifiers, and .176 for "leaners") produces an average probit coefficient of (1.600 × .391 + .928 × .376 + .902 × .176 =) 1.133. This is the summary measure of "partisan voting" in the 1952 presidential election presented graphically in Figure 3. The subse-

quent rows of Table 1 report the results of probit analyses paralleling the 1952 analysis for each of the eleven subsequent presidential elections.

The Revival of Partisan Voting in Presidential Elections

The probit results presented in Table 1 are summarized graphically in Figure 3, which presents the average probit coefficient for the effect of partisanship on presidential voting behavior in each presidential election year from 1952 through 1996. The average coefficient for each year is simply the sum of the three separate coefficients for "strong" identifiers, "weak" identifiers, and independent "leaners" reported in Table 1, each weighted by the proportion of the electorate in that partisan category. These average coefficients reflect both the changing distribution of partisanship documented in Figure 1 and the changing effects of partisanship on presidential voting

FIGURE 3   Partisan Voting in Presidential Elections

Estimated Impact of Party Identification on Presidential Vote Propensity

Note: Average probit coefficients, major-party voters only, with jackknife standard error bars.

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[7] On the other hand, the impact of each level of partisan attachment is assumed here to be identical for Democrats and Republicans. This constraint seems to me to be desirable on theoretical grounds, since there is no *a priori* reason to expect the same expressed level of attachment to have different electoral consequences for one or the other party's partisans. In any case, estimating distinct coefficients for Democrats and Republicans has no significant impact on the results presented here. The average level of partisan voting remains unchanged in both presidential and congressional elections, while the temporal pattern of partisan voting is also very similar: the correlation across election years between the constrained and unconstrained results is .977 for presidential voting and .984 for congressional voting.

TABLE 1   Party Identification and Presidential Votes, 1952–1996

Election Year	"Strong" Identifiers	"Weak" Identifiers	Independent "Leaners"	Republican Bias	Goodness of Fit Statistics
1952 (N = 1181)	1.600 (.096)	.928 (.077)	.902 (.106)	.633 (.057)	log likelihood = −490.1 pseudo-R^2 = .39
1956 (N = 1266)	1.713 (.097)	.941 (.075)	1.017 (.118)	.644 (.055)	log likelihood = −489.8 pseudo-R^2 = .43
1960 (N = 885)	1.650 (.114)	.822 (.079)	1.189 (.153)	.208 (.057)	log likelihood = −345.9 pseudo-R^2 = .44
1964 (N = 1111)	1.470 (.094)	.548 (.067)	.981 (.122)	−.339 (.048)	log likelihood = −448.9 pseudo-R^2 = .36
1968 (N = 911)	1.770 (.121)	.881 (.080)	.935 (.120)	.442 (.059)	log likelihood = −363.9 pseudo-R^2 = .42
1972 (N = 1587)	1.221 (.079)	.603 (.058)	.727 (.078)	.589 (.040)	log likelihood = −789.0 pseudo-R^2 = .24
1976 (N = 1322)	1.565 (.102)	.745 (.062)	.877 (.088)	.122 (.042)	log likelihood = −604.3 pseudo-R^2 = .34
1980 (N = 877)	1.602 (.113)	.929 (.086)	.699 (.107)	.487 (.058)	log likelihood = −376.3 pseudo-R^2 = .37
1984 (N = 1376)	1.596 (.092)	.975 (.072)	1.174 (.096)	.451 (.048)	log likelihood = −514.1 pseudo-R^2 = .45
1988 (N = 1195)	1.770 (.107)	.771 (.073)	1.095 (.094)	.162 (.048)	log likelihood = −440.3 pseudo-R^2 = .47
1992 (N = 1357)	1.851 (.109)	.912 (.072)	1.215 (.092)	−.113 (.047)	log likelihood = −443.4 pseudo-R^2 = .52
1996 (N = 1034)	1.946 (.129)	1.022 (.083)	.942 (.101)	−.233 (.056)	log likelihood = −327.3 pseudo-R^2 = .54

Note: Probit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; major-party voters only.

behavior documented in Table 1; the standard error bar associated with each year's average coefficient reflects statistical uncertainty arising from both these sources.[8]

Figure 3 shows noticeable declines in the level of partisan voting in the presidential elections of 1964 and, especially, 1972. These declines primarily reflect the fact that Republican identifiers in 1964 and Democratic identifiers in 1972 abandoned their parties' unpopular presi-

dential candidates by the millions, depressing the estimated effects of partisan loyalties on the presidential vote in those years. However, an even more striking pattern in Figure 3 is the monotonic increase in partisan voting in every presidential election since 1972. By 1996, this trend had produced a level of partisan voting 77 percent higher than in 1972—an average increase of 10 percent in each election, compounded over six election cycles—and 15 to 20 percent higher than in the supposed glory days of the 1950s that spawned *The American Voter*.[9]

These results replicate and extend the analyses of Miller (1991) and Bartels (1992) documenting the re-

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[8] The standard error bars shown in Figure 3 are based on jackknife calculations in which the entire analysis—including estimation of probit coefficients analogous to those presented in Table 1 and multiplication by the corresponding fractions of the sample in each partisan category in each year—was conducted separately for each of ten random subsamples of the entire data set, and the observed variation in the resulting "pseudo-values" was used to calculate the standard error of the overall estimate of partisan voting in each election year. Miller (1974) provided a standard survey of jackknife estimators, while Efron and Gong (1983) and Mooney and Duval (1993, 22–27) compared jackknife estimators with bootstrap and other related resampling estimators.

[9] The magnitudes of the jackknife standard errors represented in Figure 3 make it highly unlikely that these changes are simply due to sampling variability in the estimates of partisan voting levels—even if we ignore general trends by comparing single pairs of elections. For example, the estimated increase in partisan voting from 1952 to 1996 is .210 with a standard error of .107 ($t = 2.0$), while the estimated increase from 1972 to 1996 is .586 with a standard error of .088 ($t = 6.7$).

vival of partisan voting in presidential elections in the 1980s. They also provide some individual-level support for Bartels's (1998a) aggregate-level analysis of presidential voting patterns over a much longer time span, which suggested that "the unusual political turmoil of the 1960s and '70s has given way to a period of partisan stability and predictability unmatched since the end of the 19th century" (Bartels 1998a, 323).

One possible explanation for the revival of partisan voting evident in Figure 3 is the sorting out of partisan attachments of southerners following the civil rights upheavals of the early and middle 1960s (Sundquist 1983, chapter 16; Black and Black 1987; Carmines and Stimson 1989). As national party elites took increasingly distinct stands on racial issues, black voters moved overwhelmingly into the Democratic column, while white southerners defected to conservative Republican presidential candidates. What is important here is that many of these conservative white southerners only gradually shed their traditional Democratic identifications—and Democratic voting behavior at the subpresidential level—through the 1980s and '90s. Thus, it may be tempting to interpret the revival of partisan voting at the presidential level largely as a reflection of the gradual reequilibration of presidential votes and more general partisan attachments among white southerners in the wake of a regional partisan realignment.

As it happens, however, the steady and substantial increases in partisan voting over the past quarter-century evident in Figure 3 are by no means confined to the South. This fact is evident from Figure 4, which displays separate patterns of partisan voting for white southerners and white nonsoutherners. The trend lines are somewhat more ragged for these subgroups than for the electorate as a whole, especially in the South (where the year-by-year estimates are based on an average of fewer than 300 southern white voters in each election); nevertheless, the general pattern in Figure 3 is replicated almost identically in both subgroups in Figure 4. The absolute level of partisan voting in the 1964 and 1972 elections is only slightly lower among southern whites than among nonsouthern whites, and the substantial increase in partisan voting since 1972 appears clearly (indeed, nearly monotonically) in both subgroups.

It should be evident from Figure 4 that the revival of partisan voting in presidential elections documented in Figure 3 is a national rather than a regional phenomenon. Indeed, additional analysis along these lines suggests that the same pattern is evident in a wide variety of subgroups of the electorate, including voters under 40 and those over 50 years of age, those with college educations and those without high school diplomas, and so

FIGURE 4 **Partisan Voting in Presidential Elections, White Southerners and White Non-Southerners**

Estimated Impact of Party Identification on Presidential Vote Propensity
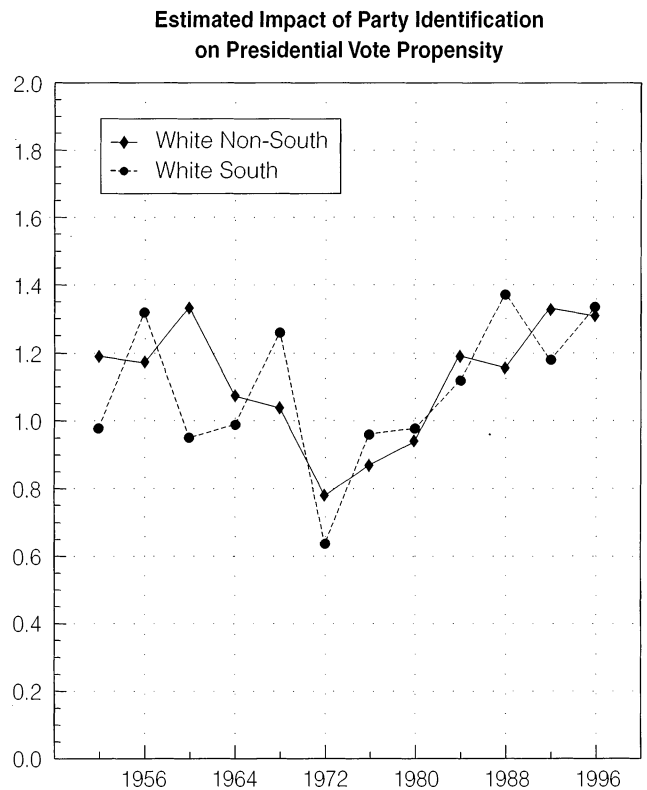
Note: Average probit coefficients, major-party voters only.

on.[10] Thus, any convincing explanation of this partisan revival will presumably have to be based upon broad changes in the national political environment, rather than upon narrower demographic or generational developments.

Partisan Voting in Congressional Elections

My analysis so far has focused solely on the impact of partisan loyalties on voting behavior in presidential elections. However, there are a variety of reasons to suppose

[10] The level of partisan voting increased in each of the last six presidential elections among voters over the age of 50 and in five of six among voters under the age of 40, with the total increase amounting to 84 percent (from .758 in 1972 to 1.398 in 1996) in the older subgroup and 72 percent (from .814 in 1972 to 1.399 in 1996) in the younger subgroup. The corresponding increases were 37 percent (from .923 in 1972 to 1.262 in 1996) among voters with some college and 107 percent (from .603 in 1972 to 1.251 in 1996) among those without high school diplomas. Details of these and other subgroup analyses are available from the author.

that the trends evident in presidential voting might not appear at other electoral levels. For one thing, I have already argued that the significant dips in partisanship at the presidential level evident in Figure 3 are attributable primarily to the parties' specific presidential candidates in 1964 and 1972. If that is so, there is little reason to expect those dips—or the subsequent rebounds—in levels of partisan voting to appear at other electoral levels.

In any case, analysts of congressional voting behavior since the 1970s have been more impressed by the advantages of incumbency than by any strong connections between presidential and congressional votes—except insofar as voters may go out of their way to split their tickets in order to produce divided government (Erikson 1971; Born 1979; Ferejohn and Calvert 1984; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987; Alesina and Rosenthal 1995; Cox and Katz 1996; Jacobson 1997). Thus, it would not be surprising to find a longer, more substantial decline in the level of partisan voting in congressional elections than in the analysis of presidential voting summarized in Figure 3.

In order to gauge the impact of partisanship on congressional voting, Table 2 provides year-by-year regression results paralleling those presented in Table 1 for presidential voting. As in Table 1, each analysis includes variables for "strong" identifiers, "weak" identifiers, and "leaners" as well as an intercept capturing the pro-Republican or (more frequently) pro-Democratic bias of "pure" independents in each congressional election since 1952. The levels of partisan voting in congressional elections implied by these regression results are graphed in Figure 5, which also shows the corresponding levels of partisan voting in presidential elections (from Figure 3) for purposes of comparison.

Figure 5 clearly shows a substantial decline in partisan voting in congressional elections from the early 1960s through the late 1970s. Indeed, the level of partisan voting declined in seven of the eight congressional elections between 1964 and 1978; by 1978, the average impact of partisanship on congressional voting was only a bit more than half what it had been before 1964. Although the overall impact of partisanship at the presidential and congressional levels was generally similar for much of this period, the declines at the congressional level were less episodic and longer lasting than those at the presidential level.

What is more surprising is that the revival of partisanship evident in presidential voting patterns since 1972 is also evident in congressional voting patterns since 1978. While the trend is later and less regular at the congressional level than at the presidential level, the absolute increases in partisan voting since 1980 have been of quite similar magnitude in presidential and congressional elec-

FIGURE 5   Partisan Voting in Presidential and Congressional Elections

Estimated Impact of Party Identification on Presidential and Congressional Vote Propensities
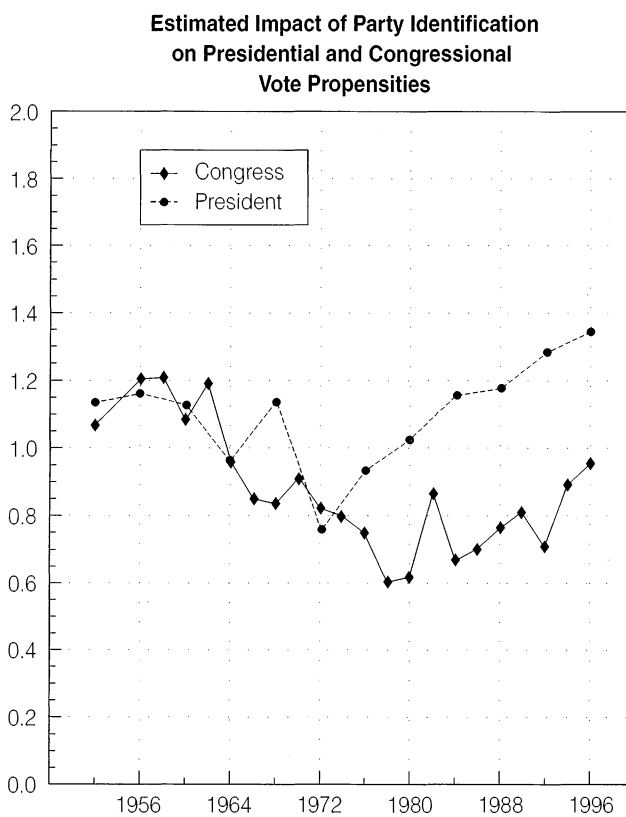
Note: Average probit coefficients, major-party voters only.

tions. While partisan voting remains noticeably less powerful in recent congressional elections than it was before 1964—or than it has been in recent presidential elections—the impact of partisanship on congressional votes in 1996 was almost 60 percent greater than in 1978.

An interesting feature of the resurgence of partisan voting in congressional elections documented in Figure 5 is that it appears to be concentrated disproportionately among younger and better-educated voters. For example, voters under the age of 40 were noticeably less partisan in their voting behavior than those over the age of 50 in almost every election from 1952 through 1984, but virtually indistinguishable from the older voters in the late 1980s and 1990s. Similarly, levels of partisan voting were distinctly lower among voters with some college education than among those without high school diplomas before 1982, but not thereafter. These patterns suggest that the resurgence of partisan voting reflects some positive reaction by younger and better-educated voters to the political developments of the past two decades, rather than simply a "wearing off" of the political stimuli of the 1960s and 1970s.

TABLE 2   **Party Identification and Congressional Votes, 1952–1996**

Election Year	"Strong" Identifiers	"Weak" Identifiers	Independent "Leaners"	Republican Bias	Goodness of Fit Statistics
1952 (N = 975)	1.495 (.098)	1.011 (.081)	.619 (.102)	.258 (.053)	log likelihood = –402.8 pseudo-R^2 = .40
1956 (N = 1157)	1.621 (.096)	1.148 (.079)	.959 (.115)	.069 (.050)	log likelihood = –406.0 pseudo-R^2 = .49
1958 (N = 817)	1.654 (.111)	.991 (.087)	.653 (.145)	–.122 (.059)	log likelihood = –282.4 pseudo-R^2 = .48
1960 (N = 759)	1.426 (.107)	1.059 (.092)	.857 (.144)	–.065 (.058)	log likelihood = –295.4 pseudo-R^2 = .43
1962 (N = 698)	1.695 (.129)	.999 (.092)	.646 (.147)	–.080 (.063)	log likelihood = –249.8 pseudo-R^2 = .47
1964 (N = 957)	1.423 (.096)	.680 (.073)	.689 (.118)	–.230 (.050)	log likelihood = –402.4 pseudo-R^2 = .35
1966 (N = 677)	1.294 (.112)	.840 (.086)	.362 (.130)	–.066 (.057)	log likelihood = –319.7 pseudo-R^2 = .31
1968 (N = 871)	1.293 (.099)	.705 (.075)	.604 (.104)	.131 (.050)	log likelihood = –431.2 pseudo-R^2 = .28
1970 (N = 683)	1.384 (.116)	.830 (.087)	.553 (.126)	.048 (.058)	log likelihood = –315.3 pseudo-R^2 = .33
1972 (N = 1337)	1.225 (.084)	.772 (.061)	.716 (.082)	–.124 (.040)	log likelihood = –652.0 pseudo-R^2 = .29
1974 (N = 798)	1.148 (.099)	.693 (.082)	.704 (.107)	–.222 (.052)	log likelihood = –385.9 pseudo-R^2 = .27
1976 (N = 1079)	1.150 (.088)	.677 (.068)	.616 (.090)	–.120 (.043)	log likelihood = –553.4 pseudo-R^2 = .25
1978 (N = 1009)	.974 (.086)	.641 (.072)	.312 (.083)	–.123 (.043)	log likelihood = –562.8 pseudo-R^2 = .18
1980 (N = 859)	.924 (.088)	.561 (.076)	.495 (.094)	–.037 (.047)	log likelihood = –486.9 pseudo-R^2 = .18
1982 (N = 712)	1.265 (.104)	.726 (.085)	.636 (.122)	–.008 (.056)	log likelihood = –339.7 pseudo-R^2 = .30
1984 (N = 1185)	1.119 (.078)	.462 (.067)	.496 (.080)	–.128 (.041)	log likelihood = –642.7 pseudo-R^2 = .21
1986 (N = 981)	1.111 (.085)	.521 (.072)	.490 (.090)	–.196 (.045)	log likelihood = –512.4 pseudo-R^2 = .22
1988 (N = 1054)	.979 (.075)	.714 (.077)	.717 (.089)	–.272 (.044)	log likelihood = –534.1 pseudo-R^2 = .25
1990 (N = 801)	1.179 (.094)	.567 (.084)	.673 (.107)	–.286 (.052)	log likelihood = –378.6 pseudo-R^2 = .28
1992 (N = 1370)	1.043 (.072)	.650 (.065)	.547 (.071)	–.211 (.038)	log likelihood = –716.4 pseudo-R^2 = .23
1994 (N = 942)	1.353 (.091)	.702 (.082)	.561 (.090)	.088 (.048)	log likelihood = –440.4 pseudo-R^2 = .32
1996 (N = 1031)	1.427 (.092)	.749 (.075)	.664 (.091)	.210 (.048)	log likelihood = –464.2 pseudo-R^2 = .35

Note: Probit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; major-party voters only.

Discussion

If the analysis presented here is correct, the American political system has slipped with remarkably little fanfare into an era of increasingly vibrant partisanship in the electorate, especially at the presidential level but also at the congressional level. How might we account for this apparent revival of partisan voting?

One plausible hypothesis is that increasing partisanship in the electorate represents a response at the mass level to increasing partisanship at the elite level. "If parties in government are weakened," Wattenberg argued, "the public will naturally have less of a stimulus to think of themselves politically in partisan terms"(1996, 4). But then the converse may also be true: in an era in which parties in government seem increasingly consequential, the public may increasingly come to develop and apply partisan predispositions of exactly the sort described by the authors of *The American Voter*.

Why might parties in government seem more relevant in the late 1990s than they had a quarter-century earlier? The ascensions of two highly partisan political leaders—Ronald Reagan in 1981 and Newt Gingrich in 1995—may provide part of the explanation. So too may the increasing prominence of the Religious Right in Republican party nominating politics over this period. At a more structural level, the realignment of partisan loyalties in the South in the wake of the civil rights movement of the 1960s may be important, despite the evidence presented in Figure 4 suggesting that the revival of partisan voting has been a national rather than a regional phenomenon.

Regional realignment in the South and the influence of ideological extremists in both parties' nominating politics have combined to produce a marked polarization of the national parties at the elite level. By a variety of measures—including "party unity" scores and Poole and Rosenthal's (1997) NOMINATE scores—votes on the floor of Congress have become increasingly partisan since the 1970s. As Poole and Rosenthal put it, "The collapse of the old southern Democratic party has produced, for the first time in nearly 60 years, two sharply distinct political parties" (1997, 232). These changes in the composition of the parties' congressional delegations have been "reinforced by the operation of those reform provisions that were intended to enhance collective control" by party leaders in Congress, including a strengthened Democratic caucus and whip system (Rohde 1991, 167). The new Republican congressional majority in 1995 produced further procedural reforms "delegating more power to party leaders than any House majority since the revolt against Joe Cannon in 1910" (Jacobson 1996, 223).

We know less than we should about the nature and extent of mass-level reactions to these elite-level developments. However, the plausibility of a causal link between recent increases in partisanship at the elite and mass levels is reinforced by the fact that the decline in partisan voting in the electorate in the 1960s and 1970s was itself preceded by a noticeable decline in party voting in Congress from the 1950s through the early 1970s.[11] Moreover, some more direct evidence suggests that citizens have taken note of the increasing strength of partisan cues from Washington. For example, the proportion of NES survey respondents perceiving "important differences" between the Democratic and Republican parties increased noticeably in 1980 and again in 1984 (Wattenberg 1996, 145) and reached a new all-time high (for the period since 1952) in 1996.

Even more intriguingly, Coleman (1996) has documented a systematic temporal relationship between the strength of partisanship in government and the strength of partisanship in the electorate. Analyzing data from 1952 through 1990, Coleman (1996, 17) found a strong positive correlation across election years (.60) between the strength of partisanship in NES surveys and the proportion of House budget votes with opposing party majorities—and an even stronger correlation (.66) between mass partisanship and opposing party majorities on budget authorization votes. While the detailed processes underlying this aggregate relationship are by no means clear, the strength of the correlation at least suggests that students of party politics would do well to examine more closely the interrelationship of mass-level and elite-level trends.

In the meantime, a significant revision of the conventional wisdom of political scientists, journalists, and other observers regarding "partisan decline" in the American electorate seems to be long overdue. References to "the weak hold of the two major political parties" (Wattenberg 1996, 168) and the "massive decay of partisan electoral linkages" (Burnham 1989, 24) would have been mere exaggerations in the 1970s; in the 1990s they are outright anachronisms. In the current political environment, as much or more than at any other time in the past half-century, "the strength and direction of party identification are facts of central importance" (Campbell et al. 1960, 121) in accounting for the voting behavior of the American electorate.

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[11] I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this fact.

Appendix
Partisanship and Incumbency in Congressional Elections

The decline in partisan voting in congressional elections throughout the 1960s and '70s evident in Figure 5 parallels a significant increase in the electoral advantage of incumbents over the same period (Erikson 1971; Mayhew 1974; Cox and Katz 1996). Indeed, some analysts have posited a direct relationship between these two trends. For example, Mayhew (1974, 313) suggested that congressional voters increasingly "dissatisfied with party cues" in the 1960s may have turned to incumbency as an alternative voting cue. On the other hand, increasingly elaborate and energetic constituency-service operations may have enticed voters to support incumbent members of Congress regardless of party, making the decline of partisan voting in congressional elections a consequence rather than a cause of the growing incumbency advantage (Fiorina 1989).

Given the apparent temporal coincidence—and possible causal relationship—between changes in the strength of party and incumbency as factors in congressional voting, it seems prudent to elaborate the simple model of partisan voting underlying the regression results presented in Table 2 to allow for the potentially confounding effect of incumbency in congressional elections. Thus, Table 3 presents the results of regression analyses paralleling those in Table 2, but with incumbency included as an additional explanatory variable. (In keeping with the coding of the other variables in the analysis, incumbency is coded +1 for congressional

TABLE 3   Party Identification, Incumbency, and Congressional Votes, 1970–1996

Election Year	"Strong" Identifiers	"Weak" Identifiers	Independent "Leaners"	Incumbency Bias	Republican Bias	Goodness of Fit Statistics
1970 (N = 683)	1.517 (.133)	.892 (.095)	.623 (.136)	.615 (.069)	.132 (.064)	log likelihood = –270.2 pseudo-R^2 = .43
1974 (N = 798)	1.138 (.102)	.721 (.086)	.722 (.111)	.474 (.062)	–.168 (.054)	log likelihood = –355.2 pseudo-R^2 = .33
1976 (N = 1079)	1.195 (.095)	.744 (.073)	.676 (.095)	.602 (.053)	.022 (.048)	log likelihood = –482.0 pseudo-R^2 = .35
1978 (N = 1009)	1.135 (.105)	.719 (.087)	.499 (.101)	1.004 (.060)	.009 (.052)	log likelihood = –386.7 pseudo-R^2 = .44
1980 (N = 859)	.959 (.098)	.586 (.085)	.496 (.103)	.727 (.056)	.136 (.054)	log likelihood = –392.9 pseudo-R^2 = .34
1982 (N = 712)	1.435 (.125)	.786 (.097)	.606 (.135)	.792 (.071)	.011 (.063)	log likelihood = –265.7 pseudo-R^2 = .45
1984 (N = 1185)	1.177 (.090)	.481 (.073)	.585 (.088)	.822 (.055)	.190 (.051)	log likelihood = –512.3 pseudo-R^2 = .37
1986 (N = 981)	1.158 (.103)	.490 (.084)	.536 (.106)	.920 (.058)	–.126 (.053)	log likelihood = –363.9 pseudo-R^2 = .45
1988 (N = 1054)	1.124 (.101)	.681 (.095)	.964 (.115)	1.088 (.066)	–.038 (.057)	log likelihood = –342.4 pseudo-R^2 = .52
1990 (N = 801)	1.122 (.113)	.540 (.099)	.718 (.126)	.964 (.070)	–.059 (.064)	log likelihood = –264.6 pseudo-R^2 = .49
1992 (N = 1370)	1.017 (.076)	.622 (.069)	.499 (.075)	.579 (.048)	–.056 (.042)	log likelihood = –638.6 pseudo-R^2 = .31
1994 (N = 942)	1.471 (.103)	.706 (.090)	.566 (.100)	.721 (.063)	.231 (.055)	log likelihood = –364.2 pseudo-R^2 = .44
1996 (N = 1031)	1.503 (.109)	.865 (.086)	.874 (.102)	.742 (.060)	.142 (.054)	log likelihood = –373.4 pseudo-R^2 = .48

Note: Probit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; major-party voters only.

voters with Republican incumbents seeking reelection, –1 for voters with Democratic incumbents seeking reelection, and 0 for voters in districts with open seats.) Since incumbency only appears in the NES Cumulative Data File for congressional elections after 1970 (and not in 1972), Table 3 includes only thirteen of the twenty-two elections included in Table 2.

The effect of including incumbency as an additional explanatory variable is summarized graphically in Figure 6, which compares estimated levels of partisan voting from the analyses in Table 2 (without incumbency) and Table 3 (with incumbency) for the period where the two analyses overlap. It seems clear from this comparison that the inclusion of incumbency as an additional explanatory variable has very little effect on the estimated level of partisan voting.[12] (If anything, the estimates in Table 3 derived from the model including incumbency as an explanatory variable—represented by the solid line in Figure 6—suggest slightly higher levels of partisan voting than are implied by the estimates in Table 2 from the model without incumbency.) Since the period covered by this comparison includes half of the decline in partisan voting of the 1960s and '70s and all of the subsequent rebound, there is no reason to believe that either of these developments is a mere artifact of changes in the value of incumbency.

Endogenous Partisanship as a Complicating Factor

Before accepting the evidence presented here of a significant increase in the electoral impact of partisanship in recent years, we should consider one potentially important objection to the statistical analyses presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3. By measuring partisan attachment in the heat of a political campaign (in presidential years) or just after the campaign has ended (in midterm congressional years), the National

[12] One possible concern about the analysis reported in Table 3 is that vote misreports may inflate the apparent advantage of incumbency in the NES surveys, especially for congressional elections (Eubank and Gow 1983; Wright 1993). While there is no particular reason to believe that this sort of misreport would bias the estimated impact of partisanship, it seems prudent to make some allowance for that possibility. Wright (1993, 307–309) showed that the magnitude of the over-reporting problem in congressional races tends to increase with the passage of time between the election and the post-election interview. Thus, I have replicated the analysis reported in Table 3 including an interaction between incumbency and the date of the respondent's post-election interview as an additional control variable. Adding this variable to the analysis decreases the apparent effect of incumbency by about 12 percent, on average, but has no effect on the calculations of partisan voting summarized in Figure 6: the average impact of partisanship remains unchanged, and the correlation across elections between the two sets of partisan voting figures is .999.

FIGURE 6 Partisan Voting in Congressional Elections, Controlling for Incumbency

Estimated Impact of Party Identification on Congressional Vote Propensity
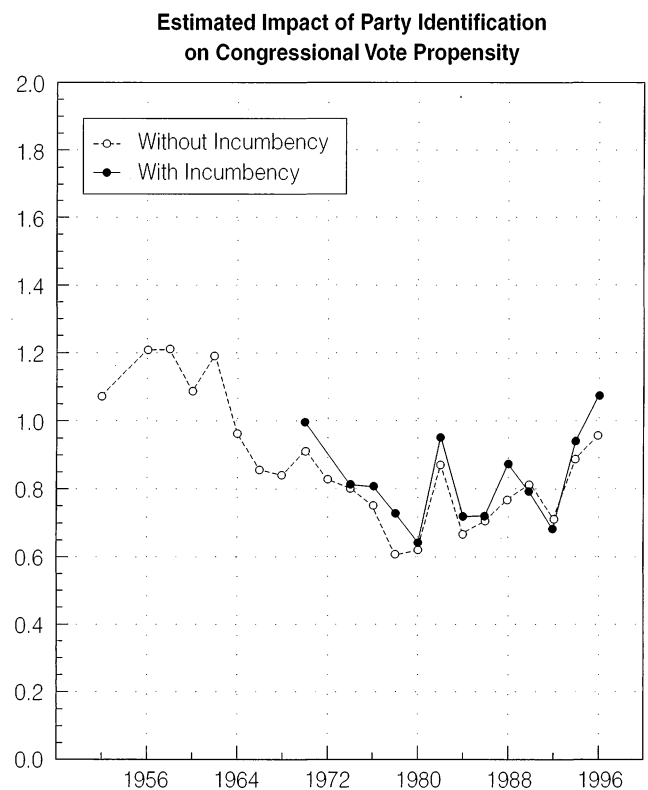
Note: Average probit coefficients, major-party voters only.

Election Studies may exaggerate the strength of the relationship between partisanship and voting behavior. While the traditional Michigan party identification questions are clearly intended to tap long-term partisan affiliations rather than short-term vote intentions,[13] voters who support a party's candidate or candidates may claim a more general identification with that party, without having anything like the psychological attachment posited by the authors of *The American Voter*. Indeed, if "partisanship has now become so weak that people are shifting it with their presidential vote" (Wattenberg 1996, 166), the strength of the relationship between party identification and voting behavior may appropriately count *for*, rather than against, the thesis of partisan decline.

[13] Recall that the Michigan party identification question asks, "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself . . . ." The most popular alternative form of the party identification question, which has been used consistently by Gallup, asks, "In politics, as of today, do you consider yourself . . . ." Not surprisingly, the Michigan measure, which distances "usual" partisanship from day-to-day political considerations, is less volatile than the Gallup measure (Abramson and Ostrom 1991). Presumably it is also less sensitive—though by no means completely insensitive—to coloration by current vote intentions.

TABLE 4   Current versus Lagged Party Identification and Presidential Votes

Election Year	"Strong" Identifiers	"Weak" Identifiers	Independent "Leaners"	Republican Bias	Goodness of Fit Statistics
1960 (N = 1057)	1.634 (.103)	.866 (.073)	1.147 (.141)	.289 (.054)	log likelihood = –418.0 pseudo-R^2 = .43
(lagged party ID)	1.250 (.082)	.804 (.070)	.546 (.119)	.251 (.048)	log likelihood = –506.4 pseudo-R^2 = .31
(IV estimates)	1.578 (.155)	.669 (.200)	1.185 (.601)	.227 (.052)	log likelihood = –506.4 pseudo-R^2 = .31
1976 (N = 799)	1.450 (.117)	.684 (.080)	.781 (.109)	.103 (.053)	log likelihood = –376.8 pseudo-R^2 = .32
(lagged party ID)	1.224 (.107)	.707 (.081)	.545 (.104)	.141 (.051)	log likelihood = –418.4 pseudo-R^2 = .24
(IV estimates)	1.577 (.188)	.491 (.243)	.848 (.413)	.103 (.052)	log likelihood = –418.4 pseudo-R^2 = .24
1992 (N = 729)	1.853 (.146)	.948 (.099)	1.117 (.122)	–.073 (.065)	log likelihood = –236.9 pseudo-R^2 = .52
(lagged party ID)	1.311 (.109)	.761 (.088)	.530 (.105)	–.072 (.057)	log likelihood = –343.1 pseudo-R^2 = .30
(IV estimates)	1.622 (.176)	.745 (.284)	1.092 (.499)	–.045 (.059)	log likelihood = –343.1 pseudo-R^2 = .30

Note: Probit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; major-party voters only.

Fortunately, the availability of panel data at various points in the NES time series makes it possible to evaluate this alternative interpretation of the evidence. It is especially convenient, for this purpose, that the three presidential election years in which substantial numbers of NES respondents had already been interviewed two years earlier—1960, 1976, and 1992—span most of the total time period covered by my analysis.[14]

If expressions of party loyalty in the heat of a presidential campaign are significantly contaminated by short-term candidate evaluations or vote intentions, we should observe much weaker relationships between partisanship and voting behavior when partisanship is measured well before the campaign has even begun. Thus, a quite simple way to assess the endogeneity of measured party loyalties is to estimate the effects of lagged partisanship on voting behavior using the same model employed in Tables 1 and 2 and to compare the estimated effects of lagged partisanship and current partisanship.[15] Comparisons of precisely this sort are presented

in Table 4 for presidential voting behavior and in Table 5 for congressional voting behavior. The first row in each panel of the tables reports estimated effects of current partisanship on voting behavior in each election year.[16] The second row in each panel reports estimated effects of partisanship as measured two years earlier.

These comparisons suggest that the relationship between partisanship and presidential voting behavior is exaggerated when partisanship is measured contemporaneously. Averaging across the three election years, the estimated effects of lagged partisanship are 23 percent smaller for "strong" identifiers, 8 percent smaller for "weak" identifiers, and 45 percent smaller for "leaners." The corresponding lagged effects on congressional voting behavior are also generally smaller than the contemporaneous effects, but the differences are much smaller in magnitude—1 percent for "strong" identifiers, 12 percent for "weak" identifiers, and 15 percent for "leaners." These differences seem well accounted for by the hypothesis that expressions of partisanship are contaminated by short-term reactions to the presidential

[14] NES gathered comparable panel data in 1996, but the 1992–94–96 panel data file has not yet been released as of this writing.

[15] Miller and Shanks (1996, 356–360) reported a similar comparison of the effects of current and lagged party identification on presidential vote choice using data from the 1990–92 NES panel survey.

[16] To make the comparison of current and lagged effects as straightforward as possible, these estimates are based on data from panel respondents only. Thus, they differ slightly from the corresponding estimates for 1960, 1976, and 1992 presented in Tables 1 and 2, which were based on data from both panel and fresh cross-section respondents in each election year.

TABLE 5   Current versus Lagged Party Identification and Congressional Votes

Election Year	"Strong" Identifiers	"Weak" Identifiers	Independent "Leaners"	Republican Bias	Goodness of Fit Statistics
1960 (N = 911)	1.358 (.094)	1.028 (.083)	.855 (.131)	.035 (.053)	log likelihood = −372.7 pseudo-R^2 = .41
(lagged party ID)	1.363 (.092)	.842 (.078)	.564 (.125)	.068 (.051)	log likelihood = −403.9 pseudo-R^2 = .36
(IV estimates)	1.715 (.173)	.728 (.239)	1.081 (.696)	.032 (.057)	log likelihood = −403.9 pseudo-R^2 = .36
1976 (N = 682)	1.087 (.105)	.624 (.086)	.622 (.110)	−.123 (.054)	log likelihood = −358.2 pseudo-R^2 = .24
(lagged party ID)	.966 (.104)	.738 (.089)	.486 (.109)	−.063 (.053)	log likelihood = −371.3 pseudo-R^2 = .21
(IV estimates)	1.123 (.178)	.745 (.251)	.725 (.438)	−.102 (.055)	log likelihood = −371.3 pseudo-R^2 = .21
1992 (N = 760)	.975 (.094)	.627 (.084)	.472 (.098)	−.211 (.051)	log likelihood = −408.2 pseudo-R^2 = .20
(lagged party ID)	1.061 (.100)	.404 (.077)	.519 (.101)	−.168 (.051)	log likelihood = −416.2 pseudo-R^2 = .19
(IV estimates)	1.516 (.180)	−.225 (.268)	1.824 (.513)	−.125 (.053)	log likelihood = −416.2 pseudo-R^2 = .19

Note: Probit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; major-party voters only.

candidates (hence, the larger differences for presidential voting than for congressional voting), and that second-order distinctions (between "strong" and "weak" identifiers and between "leaners" and other independents) are more susceptible to such contamination than first-order identifications (hence, the larger differences for "leaners" than for identifiers, and for "strong" than "weak" identifiers).

One implication of these findings is that previous work in this area—and especially Keith et al.'s (1992) work on voting loyalty among partisan "leaners"—may overstate the strength of the relationship between long-term partisan attachments and presidential voting behavior. However, for the purpose of the historical analysis presented here, what is most important is not the *magnitude* of the differences between estimated effects of current and lagged partisanship, but the extent to which those differences *change* over time. For the apparent rebound in the electoral significance of partisanship reported above to be artifactual, it must be the case that expressed partisan attachments are significantly *more* endogenous in recent years than they had been previously.

In this respect, the results presented in Tables 4 and 5 should be reassuring, since they provide no evidence that the apparent rebound in the electoral significance of partisanship is an artifact of increasing susceptibility to short-term considerations. Averaging the differences between cur-

rent and lagged effects in each election year (weighted by the proportion of respondents in each of the three partisan categories) shows some variation but no trend: substituting lagged values of partisanship for current values reduces the apparent level of partisan voting in presidential elections by 21 percent in 1960, 16 percent in 1976, and 33 percent in 1992, while the apparent level of partisan voting in congressional elections is reduced by 8 percent in 1960, 8 percent in 1976, and 6 percent in 1992.

One problem with simply substituting lagged for current partisanship in analyses of partisan voting is that doing so makes no allowance for changes in partisanship over a two-year period attributable to factors other than the short-term political influences of the presidential election year. Thus, while the estimates of partisan voting based on contemporaneous partisanship in the first row of each panel of Table 4 may overstate the electoral impact of long-term partisan attachments, the estimates based on lagged partisanship in the second row of each panel may understate that impact. An attractive alternative approach is to "purge" current partisanship of short-term influences by using lagged partisanship as an instrumental variable. In effect, this approach allows for systematic changes in partisanship over time while still discounting the apparent impact of purely short-term changes unrelated to a voter's previous partisan history.

Using an instrumental variable has another important advantage—it corrects for biases in estimated levels of partisan voting due to random measurement error in current partisanship. While partisanship is measured a good deal more reliably than most other political attitudes, even the 10 or 15 percent of observed variation that appears to be attributable to random measurement error may produce a noticeable bias in the estimated effect of partisanship on voting behavior (Green and Palmquist 1990).

Instrumental variables (IV) estimates of the impact of partisanship on presidential voting behavior in 1960, 1976, and 1992 are presented in the third row of each panel of Table 4, and the corresponding estimates for congressional voting behavior are presented in the third row of each panel of Table 5. By comparison with the original results presented in the first row of each panel, the instrumental variables results imply slightly lower levels of partisan voting in presidential elections (by 8 percent in 1960, 2 percent in 1976, and 12 percent in 1992) and somewhat higher levels of partisan voting in congressional elections (by 9 percent in 1960, 5 percent in 1976, and 27 percent in 1992). These results suggest, quite sensibly, that for presidential voting the upward bias due to short-term influences exceeds the downward bias due to measurement error, whereas for congressional voting the bias due to short-term influences is smaller than the bias due to measurement error.

None of these discrepancies is large enough to require any significant revision of the argument I have presented here. In particular, since there is no discernable trend in the magnitude of these biases over time, the historical pattern of partisan voting suggested by the instrumental variables estimates is essentially identical to that suggested by the original probit results, with partisan voting rebounding significantly at the presidential level and stabilizing at the congressional level in the 1990s by comparison with the 1970s.

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