

# **Measuring Partisanship as a Social Identity in Multi-Party Systems**

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## Abstract

Partisanship remains a powerful influence on democratic political behavior (Green et al 2002; Brader and Tucker 2009; Brader, Tucker and Duell 2013; Dalton and Weldon 2007). But there remains a lively debate on its nature and origins: Is it largely instrumental in nature and shaped by party performance and issues stances? Or is it basically a long-standing expressive identity held in place by biased reasoning and strong emotion (Fernandez-Vazquez 2014; Green et al 2002; Huddy et al 2015)? The expressive approach is grounded in social identity theory and has generated a multi-item scale of partisan identity. In this study, we assess the virtues of this scale in a European context examining its measurement properties and predictive validity in national surveys conducted in the Netherlands, Sweden, and the U.K. Using a latent variable model, we show that an eight-item partisan identity scale provides greater information about partisan intensity than a standard single-item and has the same measurement properties across the three countries. In addition, the identity scale better predicts in-party voting and political participation than the single partisan strength item. It also accounts for far more variance in political outcomes than an ideological intensity measure (based on both left-right self-placement and agreement with the party on key issues), providing initial support for an expressive approach to partisanship in several European democracies. We conclude with a discussion of a short four-item version of the partisan identity scale that could be readily adopted in diverse national election surveys.

Partisanship remains a powerful influence on political behavior within developed and developing democracies (Green et al 2002; Brader and Tucker 2009; Brader, Tucker and Duell 2013; Dalton and Weldon 2007). In the U.S., partisanship has increased in strength in recent years and continues to wield impressive influence on a range of political behavior including vote choice, voter turnout, and electoral campaign activity (Huddy et al 2015; Nicholson 2012). In other developed democracies, levels of partisanship have declined (Dalton 2000) but partisanship remains a potent political force nonetheless (Bartle and Bellucci 2009; Holmberg 2007).

### **Instrumental and Expressive Partisanship**

If the influence of partisanship on political behavior is not in dispute, there remains a lively debate on its nature and origins. From a normative democratic perspective, the extent to which partisanship reflects issue preferences, a reasoned and informed understanding of the parties' positions, and is responsive to ongoing events and political leadership remain central concerns. We refer to partisanship grounded in this type of responsive and informed deliberation as *instrumental*. As a test of instrumental partisanship, researchers have examined its origins in long standing socio-economic cleavages and contemporary forces such as leader evaluations and issue proximity (Dalton and Weldon 2007; Garzia 2013). Garzia (2013) reports, for example, a decline in recent decades in the link between social cleavages and partisanship in the U.K., Germany, Italy and the Netherlands. He also reports a corresponding increase in the link between partisanship and leader evaluations. In another strand of work, researchers have examined the degree to which partisans are aware of ideological shifts in a party's platform. Adams et al (2011) find no shift in public awareness when a party's platform changes whereas Fernandez-Vazquez (2014) reports change but finds that it falls well short of the full magnitude of a party's ideological shift. Based on this accumulated research, it appears that in various democratic nations partisanship is at least modestly responsive to

contemporary forces such as changing leaders and shifting party positions, lending support to an instrumental model.

In the U.S, another approach to partisanship has gained credence. We refer to this as an *expressive identity* model in which partisanship is viewed as a social identity that motivates defense of the party in order to maintain its positive standing. Expressive partisanship generates political activity in support of the party, rests on biased political reasoning, and leads to vilification of out-parties. Most importantly these activities and mental processes reinforce partisanship resulting in a relatively stable political identity. Such psychological processes serve to defend a partisan identity, making it less likely a partisan will modify their partisanship in response to a party's shift on issues or poor performance in office especially when such attacks emanate from partisan rivals (Greene 2002). A partisan identity is likely to strengthen over time as a young voter consistently supports one party over others in successive elections (Dalton and Walden 2007). The expressive approach to partisanship is grounded in social identity theory (Green et al 2002; Huddy et al 2015).

The expressive partisanship model has generated a new multi-item measure of partisan identity in the United States (Huddy et al 2015). From an identity standpoint, measuring gradations in social identity strength is crucial to identifying the individuals who are most likely to engage in expressive partisan activities such as taking action in defense of the party (Huddy 2001; 2013). As a consequence, psychologists typically measure social identities with multiple items to create a fine-grained scale of identity strength. Several identity scales have been developed to assess partisan identity in the U.S. Steven Greene (2002, 2004) developed a ten-item scale of partisan social identity, based on Mael and Tetric's (1992) Identification with a Psychological Group Scale, which had good measurement properties and proved to be a better predictor than the standard partisanship measure of a range of political variables including political involvement. Huddy and colleagues (2015) developed a four-item scale with items that tap identity importance and sense of party belonging (see

also Huddy and Khatib 2007). This scale is also a better predictor than the standard partisanship measure of campaign activity and emotional reactions to partisan threat and reassurance. In the current study, we developed the Identification with a Psychological Group (IDPG) scale created by Mael and Tetrick (1992), and adapted by Green for partisan identity, for inclusion in national surveys in the U.K., Sweden, and the Netherlands.

Multi-item partisan identity scales have proven to be quite effective in predicting political outcomes in the U.S., suggesting that the traditional partisanship measure underestimates the partisan nature of political activity. But there are reasons to question whether or not such a partisan identity scale is needed and will be equally successful in predicting political outcomes in Europe. Partisan identity may be more complex in Europe than in the U.S. because of the existence of multi-party systems that could dampen loyalty to any one party (Niemi et al. 1991; Weisberg 1980). Moreover, frequent coalitional governments aligned along ideological lines may also blur loyalty to a single party (Hagevi 2015; Meffert et al. 2012; Gonzalez et al. 2008). To determine the value of a partisan identity scale in Europe, we examine several key properties of the scale.

First, the measurement properties of the new multi-item scale will determine its utility beyond the U.S. It should differentiate equally well among low, middling, and high levels of identity. It is important for the scale to differentiate among partisans across the full range of partisan intensity to ensure that it works in European nations that differ in levels of partisan intensity. It is especially critical to capture good variation at low levels of partisanship in light of evidence that partisanship has declined in Europe in recent decades (Hagevi 2015; Dalton 2000). It is also important to determine whether the partisan identity scale has the same meaning and properties across countries even when such countries exhibit different levels of partisanship. Ideally, the scale can provide a standardized measure of partisan intensity to remedy past inconsistencies in the measurement of partisanship in the European context (Johnston 2006).

Second, a multi-item partisan identity scale is an unneeded luxury if it has no greater predictive validity than the existing single-item. Partisan intensity is often measured more finely in European countries than in the U.S. because the typical partisanship question contains a slightly greater number of points than the 2 (i.e., strong, not so strong) employed in the U.S. For this reason, the single partisan strength item employed in European countries may detect considerable variance in political outcomes, making the new multi-item partisan identity scale unnecessary. It is therefore, important to demonstrate that the partisan identity scale is a better predictor than the extant single-item of key political variables such as in-party voting and working on the party's behalf.

Third, it is also important to demonstrate that the partisan identity scale has theoretical validity. To that end, it is important to assess whether it better predicts political outcomes than an indicator of instrumental partisanship such as issue-based ideological indicators. This brings us back to the debate over whether partisanship is largely instrumental or expressive in nature. The multi-item partisan identity items are crafted to reflect identity and in that sense explicitly measure identity. But instrumental factors such as the advancement or protection of ideological values or specific policy positions may also influence the identity scale. It is thus important to differentiate between instrumental and expressive partisanship.

### **Partisanship in Europe**

There is an obvious need to standardize the measurement of partisanship in Europe. The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) asks respondents' in numerous countries to indicate whether they are close to a party, or closer to one than another, using a standard set of questions (Dalton and Weldon 2007). But this approach has not been widely adopted in single-country election surveys in Europe where the wording, as well as the specific combination of items used to gauge partisan attachments, varies across countries. The creation of a standardized scale is obviously complicated by language differences which make it difficult to use precisely the same wording to

measure partisanship and draw valid conclusions about differences in the absolute value of partisanship in different countries (Campbell and Valen 1961). A multi-item scale may help to evade some of these problems by relying on a number of different items to measure the same concept.

But the development of a multi-item scale confronts several measurement hurdles that need to be crossed before a partisan identity scale can be widely adopted across different European polities. The first hurdle is to create a scale that identifies partisan strength equally well at low and high levels of partisan identification. This is especially important in studying the effects of partisanship across the full range of political behavior. Strong partisanship is a likely precursor of effortful political behaviors such as working for a candidate. In contrast, an accurate assessment of low levels of partisanship may be needed to predict less effortful political activity such as voting for the party of advocating that others do so. Second, the scale should have the same measurement properties in different countries in order to identify equally well individuals with high and low levels of partisanship in multi-nation datasets, regardless of nationality.

To gauge the properties of a partisan identity scale, we rely on latent trait models to assess the ability of items to differentiate equally across all levels of partisan strength and to do so in the same way across countries. We thus regard partisanship as a latent construct that cannot be directly measured (for similar approaches, see Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Green and Palmquist 1990).

### **Latent Trait Models as a Scale Assessment Tool**

#### *Item Response Theory*

We first draw on Item Response Theory (IRT) to analyze the measurement properties of a partisan identity scale. In essence, the IRT model determines how well each item in a scale measures an underlying latent construct. This is broken down into several steps. In the first stage, the IRT model estimates an item response function for each of an item's response options. The item

response function can be expressed as the *probability of agreeing* with a response category on a given item and is based on both an individual's score on the latent trait and attributes of the items used to assess the latent trait (see Alen and Yen 1979; de Ayala 2009).

In the case of ordinal variables, a response function is calculated for each option using the Graded Response Model (Samejima 1969). More formally, the item response function can be expressed as:

$$I_{x_j}(\theta) = \left\{ -\frac{\partial^2 \ln p_k}{\partial \theta^2} \right\} p_k ,$$

where  $\theta$  denotes the latent trait,  $x$  refers to the ordinal manifest variable with  $j$  possible response categories and  $P_k$  refers to the probability of an individual picking a particular response category. A response function is estimated for each response option and can be plotted, graphing the underlying latent trait on the  $x$  axis and the probability of picking that option for a specific item on the  $y$  axis. An item's response functions are typically plotted on the same graph to indicate how well each response option measures the underlying latent trait. Such depictions help to identify items that are good at detecting high but not low, low but not high, and middling levels of the trait. In a next step, item response functions are summated to obtain the information function for each item in the scale. The item information function (IIF) represents the information provided by a specific item  $x$  across the range of the latent trait.

Graphing the information function is particularly useful as a way to visually examine each item's ability to cover the latent trait's range while discriminating among its various levels. In general, a scale item with narrowly peaked response functions at locations across the latent trait's range is highly discriminating and provides considerable information about the trait overall (de Ayala 2009:230). In essence, a peak in an item's information function indicates that a specific level of the underlying trait is captured with precision. Thus, polytomous items tend to provide more information about the latent trait than dichotomous items.



Finally, the individual item information functions can be further summed to generate an information function for the entire scale, indicating how well it discriminates among values of the latent trait:

$$I(\theta) = \sum_{j=1}^L I_j(\theta).$$

### *Invariance Analysis*

To test the scale's invariance we employ a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to determine if the underlying latent trait is measured in the same way across countries. Invariance is defined here as "whether or not, under different conditions of observing and studying phenomena, measurement operations yield measures of the same attribute" (Horn and McArdle 1992:117).

Measurement invariance is established by comparing the fit of a series of hierarchical CFA models with increasingly stringent equality constraints (Cheung and Rensvold 1999; Vandenberg and Lance 2000).

The most basic type of invariance, *configural invariance*, is established if the same items load on the same factor across countries. Put differently, configural variance ensures that items measure the same construct in all countries. Once configural invariance is established, the next most stringent form of invariance is *metric invariance* which assumes that all items load on the same factor (as in configural) but that their loadings are constrained to be equal in each country. Metric invariance is established if the metric invariance model is no worse a fit to the data than the baseline model that establishes configural invariance (Hirschfeld and Brachel 2014; Asparouhov and Muthén 2014). Evidence for metric invariance indicates "...that the people in different nations understand the items in the same way" (Davidov 2009: 69). While metric invariance allows researchers to compare analytic models across countries, it does not guarantee that observed differences in the mean levels of the scale reflect differences in the mean levels of the underlying latent trait. Thus, the final step in a hierarchical invariance analysis involves testing for scalar invariance. In this model, factor loadings

and the intercepts are constrained to be equal. If the fit of the scalar variance model is not significantly worse than the fit of the metric invariance model, there is evidence that the scale's scores can be compared across countries.

### **Hypotheses**

We first examine the measurement properties of the partisan identity scale in the Netherlands, Sweden and the U.K. and expect each scale item to provide more complete information about partisan strength than the traditional single party identification item. In terms of the IRT analysis, this means each item's information function will be more peaked and contain greater information than the standard single measure of partisan strength. In the three European multi-party systems under study, we expect both lower and higher levels of partisan intensity to remain less well detected when measured with the traditional item

Second, we examine the scale's configural, metric, and scalar invariance in the three countries. We expect the partisan identity scale to exhibit all three types of invariance, which means that the fit of the metric invariance model will be no worse than the fit of the configural model, and that the fit of the scalar model will be no worse than that of the metric model.

Third, we test the partisan identity scale's predictive validity. We expect partisan identity to more powerfully predict in-party voting and political engagement than the traditional party identification item. We also expect the partisan identity scale to better predict political behavior than a multi-item indicator of ideological intensity in support of an expressive model of partisanship. If successful, this last test also helps to rule out the possibility that the identity scale has greater predictive validity than the traditional single-item because of its better measurement properties

## Methodology

### Sample

*Netherlands.* We report on data from the Dutch Parliamentary 2012 Election Studies conducted with data from the Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences (LISS) panel. The LISS contains 4,691 households, entailing 8,000 individuals, drawn as a true probability sample of households in the national population register maintained by *Statistics Netherlands*. Non-computer households are provided with a computer and internet connection and the panel members complete monthly online surveys and receive payment for each completed questionnaire. We examine data from 4,691 respondents interviewed in August 2012 which included the partisan identity items, after the national election in September 2012, and again as part of a values and politics module in December 2012.<sup>1</sup>

*Sweden.* Swedish data were drawn from the Swedish Citizen Panel, a largely opt-in online panel run by the Laboratory of Opinion Research (LORE) at the University of Gothenburg.<sup>2</sup> We utilize data from Panel 8 which was conducted between the 14th of November 2013 and 18th of December 2013, and add-on Panel 8-2 conducted between December 10, 2013 and January 7, 2014. 16,130 panelists were invited to take the Panel 8 survey and 9,279 completed it for a completion rate of 64%. The add-on Panel 8-2 was sent out to 2,000 panelists, of which 1,496 answered the survey. The partisan identity module had a split sample and was run in two steps: 2,000 respondents in Citizen Panel 8 and 2,000 in Citizen Panel 8-2. Of these 4,000 respondents, 2,464 completed the battery of items.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Roughly 5,000 individuals responded to each wave (5,195 for the pre, 5,225 for post, and 5,732 for the values module). The 9/12 and 12/12 waves contained additional items needed for this analysis.

<sup>2</sup> The sample of respondents in this wave is mixed with 70 % representing opt-in panelists and 30 % selected via probability-based population methods. The opt-in panel was recruited through internet advertising on the websites of newspapers, Twitter, Facebook and blogs.

<sup>3</sup> The sample of Panel 8 is a mixed, but mainly self-recruited, sample: 70 % is opt-in, while 30 % is probability based recruitment from population samples. The second sample was drawn using a probability-based recruitment method only.

*United Kingdom.* Data for the U.K were taken from the 2015 British Election Study (BES), an online panel study conducted by YouGov.<sup>4</sup> We draw on data from pre-election wave 3 of the BES, conducted between September 19, 2014 and October 17, 2014 and pre-election wave 4, conducted in March 2015. In total, 27,839 respondents participated in wave 3 and 6,141 were randomly assigned to a module that included the partisan identity items. In wave 4, 16,629 respondents participated and 3,500 of them completed the partisan identity module. The more numerous data from wave 3 are used to examine the measurement properties of the partisan identity scale in the U.K. and data from wave 4, which includes key political dependent variables, are used to assess its predictive validity.

### Measures

*Partisanship Strength:* The partisanship question was asked differently in each of the three countries, underscoring the lack of uniformity in its assessment. In the Netherlands, respondents in the pre-election survey were first asked if they supported a party. If yes, they were asked how strongly they supported it (very strongly, strongly, not so strongly). If they did not support a party, they were asked if they were attracted to one and if yes how strongly (very strongly, fairly strongly, not so strongly). In Sweden, respondents were asked if they felt close to a particular political party. If they named a party, they were then asked if they felt very close, rather close, or not very close. U.K. respondents were asked “Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or what?” If no party was provided, respondents were asked “Do you generally think of yourself as a little closer to one of the parties than the others? If yes, which party?”

Respondents who listed a party in response to either question were then asked “Would you call

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<sup>4</sup> Panel members are recruited from various different sources such as advertising on a wide range of website. For each recruited panel member, YouGov records a large number of socio-demographic information in order to ensure a nationally representative adult sample in terms of age, gender, and social class. Everyone taking part in a YouGov survey receives a modest cash incentive for their participation.

yourself very strong, fairly strong, or not very strong [partisan]?” The partisan strength item thus had at least three categories in each country.

Comparable and large numbers of respondents indicated some level of partisanship. In the Netherlands, 90% of respondents indicated a preference for a party (supporters, attracted, had voted for a party in the last election), in Sweden, 91% indicated that they were close to a party, and 86% of those in the U.K. indicated a party preference.<sup>5</sup> It is difficult to compare partisan strength with this measure, however, because of the differing way in which it was asked and constructed in each nation. In the U.K., partisans and those close to a party were asked partisan strength in a single question. In contrast, the Dutch were asked a series of differing questions to get at partisan strength. We made the traditional partisanship measure comparable across countries through the creation of a three-item measure in Sweden and the U.K., ranging from very close/very strong to not very close/not very strong. As seen in Table 1, these numbers are comparable indicating that a majority or near-majority placed themselves in the middle of the strength scale. In the Netherlands, we created a three-level partisanship measure (supporter, not a supporter but attracted to a party, neither supporter nor attracted but had voted for the party in the last election). When constructed in this way, the number of supporters in the Netherlands is comparable to those who said they were very close or strong partisans in Sweden and the U.K., but overall the responses suggest lower levels of affiliation in the Netherlands. From this three-level measure, we created a 0-1 measure of partisan strength with 1 representing the strongest partisan.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> These numbers are based on the entire sample in each country, not just those who received the partisan identity module.

<sup>6</sup> A five-item strength measure (very strong supporter, strong supporter, not strong supporter, adherent, voted for a party) provides more information than the three-item strength measure on in-party voting in the Netherlands, and its coefficient is comparable in size to that of partisan identity. But it does not account as well as partisan identity for political participation.

**Table 1: Partisan Strength By Country (Traditional Partisanship Measure)**

|   | <b>Netherlands<br/>(Supporter)</b> | <b>Sweden<br/>(Close)</b> | <b>United<br/>Kingdom<br/>(Strong)</b> |
|---|------------------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| <b>Supporter/very close/very strong</b>                   | 24                                 | 17                        | 20                                     |
| <b>Attracted/rather close/fairly strong</b>               | 47                                 | 63                        | 48                                     |
| <b>Voted for Party/not very close/not<br/>very strong</b> | 29                                 | 20                        | 32                                     |
| <b>N</b>  | 4,680                              | 2,405                     | 5,882                                  |

*Note:* Entries are the percentage of respondents who provided a party preference in each country. Numbers are calculated for those asked the partisan identity questions. Numbers for the U.K. are based on wave 3. See text for details.

### *Partisan Identity Items*

The partisan identity items were asked of respondents who had indicated a party preference in response to the standard partisanship question. This resulted in 4,691 respondents who completed the partisan identity battery in the Netherlands, and 2,464 in Sweden.<sup>7</sup> In the BES, a randomly selected 25% of those with a party preference were asked and 5,954 completed the partisan identity battery in wave 3 and 24% of respondents with a party preference were randomly assigned to the partisan identity module resulting in an effective sample of 3,500 respondents<sup>8</sup>

The partisan identity index is composed of eight items such as “I have a lot in common with other supporters of this party” and “When I speak about this party, I usually say ‘we’ instead of ‘they.’” Unfortunately, the response options differ between the UK (“agree-disagree”) and the Netherlands and Sweden (frequency response format). Table 2 provides wording and responses to all 8 partisan identity questions in each of the three countries (for wording in Dutch and Swedish see Table A1,

<sup>7</sup> Respondents who did not indicate any party preferences were not asked the partisan identity questions. In Sweden this included those who said they did not feel close to any party, did not want to, or did not answer the question resulting in the omission of 254 respondents. In the Netherlands, 499 respondents were dropped because they had never voted or left the question blank. In wave 3 of the BES, roughly 13% (3616) of respondents in the full sample did not provide a party preference. Similarly, 13% of respondents (2234) in wave 4 of the BES did not indicate a party preference.

<sup>8</sup> UK respondents were also asked the identity battery in wave 1 but there are fewer cases allotted to the module and we thus rely on data from wave 3 for the IRT analysis. However, since only wave 4 contains a battery of questions regarding political engagement, we utilize data from wave 4 for the regression analyses.

Online Appendix). There is considerable variance across countries in response to the partisan identity questions (although this is also coterminous with differing response formats). Partisan strength is highest in the U.K., followed by Sweden, and then the Netherlands. For example, when asked if they say ‘we’ rather than ‘they’ when talking about their party, only 25% of those in the BES strongly disagree whereas 79% of the Dutch and 65% of Swedes say they never feel this way. When asked if they feel connected with someone who supports their party, 57% of wave 3 BES respondents agree; 27% of Swedes and 16% of the Dutch say they feel this way always or often. We created an additive partisan identity scale from these eight items. The scale ranges from 0 to 1 with 0 representing no party identity and 1 representing the strongest identity. All three data sets include the complete eight item partisan index.

### **The Partisan Identity Scale**

*Scale Measurement Properties (IRT)* Since each item in the partisan identity scale contains four response categories (i.e. rarely/never, sometimes, often and always), we apply a Non- Rasch Model for ordered polytomous data, namely the Graded Response Model (Samejima 1974)<sup>9</sup>. Based on the estimated item response function for each item’s response categories, we generated an information function for each item and then for the scale as a whole within each country. Figure 1 contains the graphical representation of each item information function by country. Graphs were created using the *ltm* package (Rizopoulos 2006) in R (see Figure A1 in the Online Appendix for item response functions).

Dichotomous items tend to generate unimodal item information functions in IRT but polytomous items, as in this scale, tend to have multiple peaks, as seen in Figure 1. The multiple peaks occur because adjacent response functions for a specific item are combined to form an overall

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<sup>9</sup> The Graded Response Model is an extension of the two-parameter logistic (2PL) model for graded response data in the sense that it allows the discrimination parameter  $\alpha$  to vary across items.

item information curve. The peaks in Figure 1 represent the location on the underlying partisan identity trait at which an item provides the greatest amount of information. For example, an information function that peaks in the middle of the latent trait suggests an item with considerable ability to distinguish middling from higher and lower levels of identity.



**Table 2: Partisan Identity Items by Country**

|   | Netherlands |       |            |       | Sweden      |       |            |       | United Kingdom (Wave 3) |       |           |                   |
|---|-------------|-------|------------|-------|-------------|-------|------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|-----------|-------------------|
|   | Always      | Often | Some-times | Never | Always      | Often | Some-times | Never | Strongly agree          | Agree | Dis-agree | Strongly disagree |
| When I speak about this party, I usually say “we” instead of “they”.              | 2           | 5     | 14         | 79    | 5           | 10    | 20         | 65    | 7                       | 18    | 50        | 25                |
| I am interested in what other people think about this party.                      | 3           | 22    | 51         | 24    | 7           | 30    | 45         | 19    | 12                      | 61    | 21        | 6                 |
| When people criticize this party, it feels like a personal insult. *              | 1           | 3     | 23         | 74    | 1           | 6     | 33         | 59    | 5                       | 22    | 50        | 23                |
| I have a lot in common with other supporters of this party.                       | 3           | 26    | 46         | 25    | 2           | 33    | 50         | 14    | 12                      | 65    | 18        | 5                 |
| If this party does badly in opinion polls, my day is ruined.                      | 1           | 5     | 29         | 65    | 1           | 3     | 20         | 77    | 2                       | 12    | 55        | 31                |
| When I meet someone who supports this party, I feel connected with this person. * | 2           | 14    | 44         | 40    | 3           | 24    | 52         | 21    | 6                       | 51    | 32        | 11                |
| When I speak about this party, I refer to them as “my party”. *                   | 1           | 6     | 17         | 76    | 3           | 7     | 17         | 73    | 5                       | 15    | 54        | 26                |
| When people praise this party, it makes me feel good. *                           | 5           | 24    | 44         | 28    | 6           | 21    | 42         | 30    | 6                       | 47    | 34        | 13                |
| <b>N</b>  | 4,691       |       |            |       | 2,464       |       |            |       | 5,954                   |       |           |                   |
| <b><math>\bar{x}</math> (St. Err)</b>   | 1.66 (0.5)  |       |            |       | 1.79 (0.5)  |       |            |       | 2.30 (0.57)             |       |           |                   |
| <b>Alpha</b>  | 0.86        |       |            |       | 0.83        |       |            |       | 0.88                    |       |           |                   |
| <b>Traditional Partisan Strength</b>  |             |       |            |       |             |       |            |       |                         |       |           |                   |
| <b><math>\bar{x}</math> (St. Err)</b>   | 1.94 (0.72) |       |            |       | 1.97 (0.61) |       |            |       | 1.89 (0.71)             |       |           |                   |

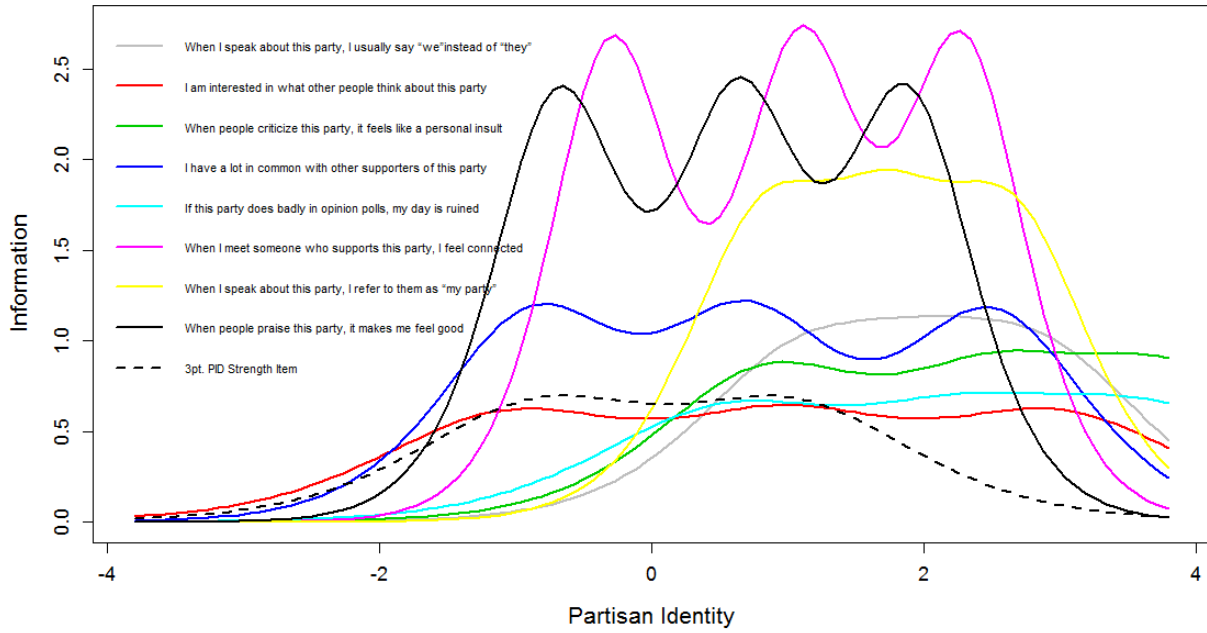
Note: Entries are percentages. \* Items included in the short four-item partisan identity scale.

Whereas the amount of information provided by an item represents its ability to differentiate between partisans of different strength, the distance between each peak suggests how much of the range of partisan identity is covered by an item. If the distance between two adjacent peaks is large, the item provides less information about levels of partisan identity in between peaks. When the distance is smaller and the peaks are located more closely together on the latent trait continuum, the loss of information becomes less severe. Thus, ideal items should cover a wide range of partisan identity strength and be able to discriminate effectively among different levels. To compare the information provided by each item in the partisan identity scale with the traditional three-point strength measure, we added the item information function for the latter to each figure. Figure 1, Panels A, B, and C depict the item information function for all eight scale items and the traditional strength measure in the Netherlands, Sweden, and U.K. respectively.

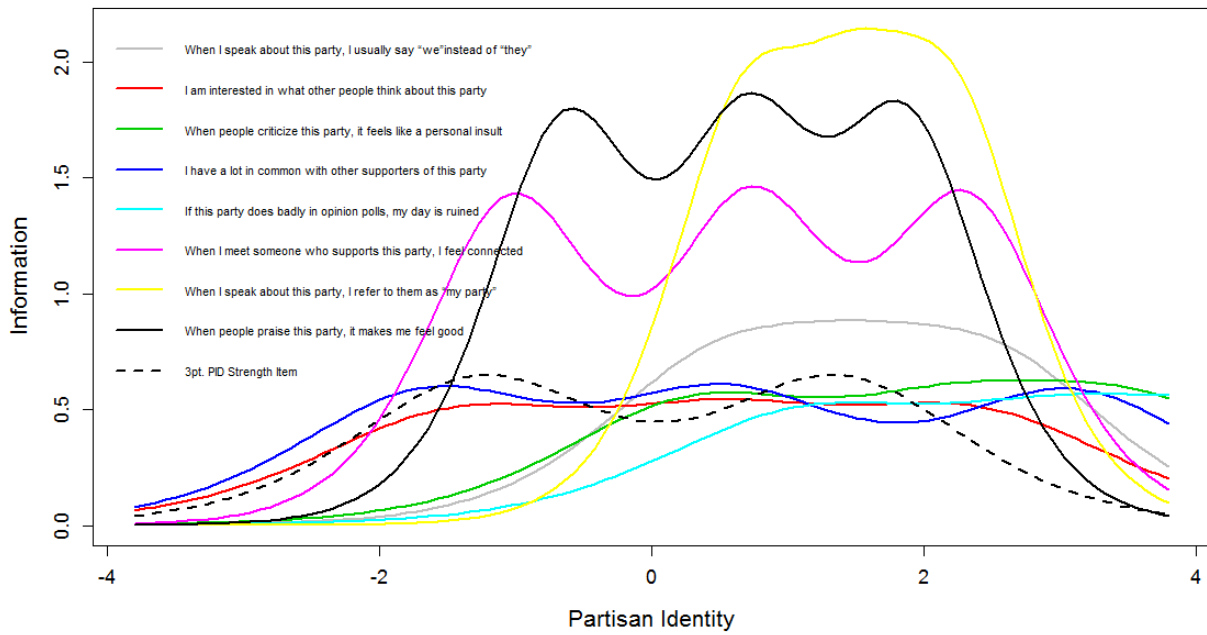
Our first hypothesis concerns the ability of the items in the partisan identity scale to provide more information than the standard single measure about partisan strength across its full range. Figure 1 demonstrates that the eight items supplement each other to cover a broad range of the underlying partisan identity trait in each country. The individual items vary in amount of information as well as in their ability to capture high or low levels of partisan identity (equivalent to an item's level of difficulty in IRT parlance).

Figure 1: Partisan Identity Item Information Functions

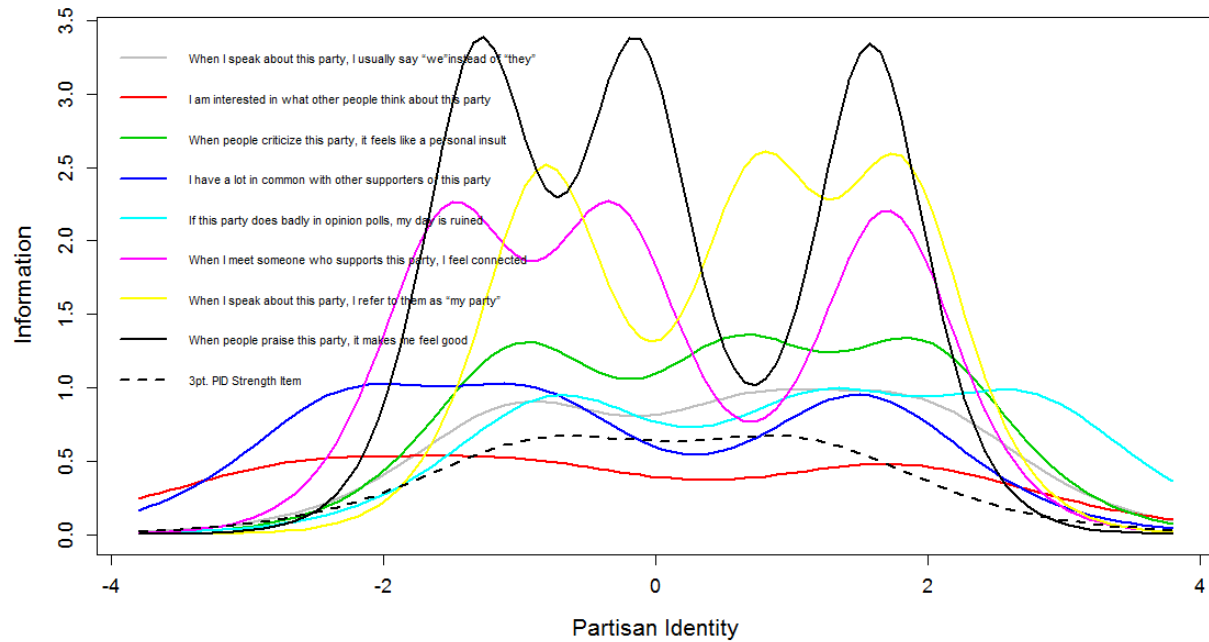
A. Netherlands



B. Sweden



### C. United Kingdom



In all three countries, two items provide especially good coverage of lower levels of partisan identity: “When I meet someone who supports this party, I feel connected”, indicated in purple, and “When people praise this party it makes me feel good” indicated in black. A third item, “I have a lot in common with other supporters of this party,” indicated in dark blue, also provides reasonable information at lower levels of partisan identity. In contrast, the item “When I speak about them, I refer to them as my party” provides good coverage of higher levels of partisan identity in all three countries.

Combining these items into a scale helps to compensate for weaknesses in any one item. For example, there is a large gap in the U.K. (Panel C, Figure 1) between 0 and 1 on the partisan identification continuum for the item “When I meet someone who supports this party, I feel connected.” This gap is covered, however, by the item “When I speak about this party, I refer to them as ‘my party’”. The remaining four items in the scale vary in the amount of information they provide about partisan identity. The item “I am interested in what other people think about this party” (red line) is by far the weakest, providing little information and failing to discriminate among

those at low, middling or high levels of partisan identity. Thus, the combination of several items provides the scale with the ability to cover a broad range of party identification levels while effectively differentiating among them.

Interestingly, the information function for the weakest of the 8 items (“I am interested...”) looks very similar to the information function for the traditional partisan strength measure, depicted as a black broken line in Figure 1. This demonstrates that the simple three-point measure provides little information and poorly discriminates across the range of the latent partisan identity trait, in support of our first hypothesis. In the Netherlands (Panel A), the traditional strength measure is characterized by a wide bell curve ranging from -2 to 2 on the latent trait continuum. This shape suggests that the measure captures party identification strength at both the low and high end respectively but that it does not provide a great deal of information relative to the scale items. Partisan strength performs a little better in Sweden (Panel B) but provides similarly modest information in the U.K. – as shown in Panel C. The single strength items performs best in Sweden where it provides additional information on both sides of 0, suggesting that it does discriminate between weak and strong partisans to a greater degree than in the Netherlands or the U.K. Overall, the partisan identity scale measures partisan identity well across its range, a distinction that is captured far more poorly by the traditional single-item of partisan strength.

#### *Cross-National Partisan Identity Scale Invariance*

We next consider the partisan identity scale’s cross-national properties in a test of our second hypothesis, beginning with the scale’s configural invariance, the weakest level of invariance. We then move to assess more stringent invariance tests (Davidov 2009). We expected the partisan identity scale to exhibit all three levels of invariance We conducted a multi-group confirmatory

factor analysis (CFA) using the *lavaan* package in R.<sup>10</sup> *Lavaan* provides several fit measures such as the Chi-square statistic, the Tucker- Lewis Index (TLI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), as well as gamma-hat and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) which we present for each invariance model in Table 3.

**Table 3: Scale Invariance Fit Measures**

| <b>Model</b>                 | <b>Chi-Square</b> | <b>Degrees of Freedom</b> | <b>TLI</b> | <b>CFI</b> | <b>RMSEA</b> | <b>Adj. Gamma Hat</b> |
|------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|------------|------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Configural Invariance</b> | 386.119           | 48                        | 0.997      | 0.998      | 0.045        | 1.000                 |
| <b>Metric Invariance</b>     | 542.325           | 62                        | 0.996      | 0.997      | 0.048        | 1.000                 |
| <b>Scalar Invariance</b>     | 3566.214          | 92                        | 0.983      | 0.981      | 0.105        | 1.000                 |

The fit indices for the configural invariance model presented in the first row of Table 3 indicate a good model fit. The TLI, CFI are above the cutoff value of 0.95 (Hu and Bentler 1999) and the RMSEA value is below 0.05, a threshold commonly to determine model fit (Kenny et al. 2014; Browne and Cudeck 1993). The Chi-square statistic is relatively high given the degrees of freedom but in contrast to other fit indices the test is more sensitive to overall sample size, differences in sample sizes between groups, non-normality and model complexity (e.g. Hu and Bentler 1999, 1998; Bentler and Bonnet 1980). Hence, we rely on the alternative fit indices to evaluate the model performance. From this vantage point, we cannot reject the configural model and conclude that the partisan identity scale measures the same construct in the Swedish, Dutch and British sample with all items loading on one factor in each country.

The fit indices for metric invariance are presented in the second row of Table 3. In this model, factor loadings for all items are constrained to be equal across countries. Once again, we

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<sup>10</sup> Due to similar wording of some items, we allowed the error terms of certain pairs of items to covary. These pairs are: "When I speak about this party, I usually say 'we' instead of 'they'" and "When I speak about this party, I refer to them as 'my party.'"; "When people criticize this party, it feels like a personal insult" and "When people praise this party, it makes me feel good" as well as "I have a lot in common with other supporters of this party" and "When I meet someone who supports this party, I feel connected with this person."

cannot reject the metric model because there are minimal changes in the fit indices between it and the configural model (e.g.  $\Delta CFI = 0.001$ ;  $\Delta TLI = -0.001$ ). In fact, the RMSEA increases by as little as 0.003 and the Gamma-Hat remains constant. The Chi-square difference again indicates a significant increase in this model ( $p < .05$ ) but, as noted, large sample sizes can generate large Chi-square differences. Thus, we do not apply the Chi-square difference test as a measure of fit (Cheung and Rensvold 2002; Dovidov 2009). Table 4 summarizes the invariant factor loadings for the Dutch, Swedish and British samples. All factor loadings are substantial and significant. These results suggest that the partisan identity scale has the same metric across countries. In other words, a unit increase in the partisan identity scale means the same thing in the Netherlands, Sweden and the U.K.

**Table 4: Metric Invariance in the Partisan Identity Scale**

| Scale Item   | Partisan Identity Factor Loading |
|--|----------------------------------|
| When I speak about this party, I usually say “we” instead of “they”. | 1.000                            |
| I am interested in what other people think about this party.         | 0.967                            |
| When people criticize this party, it feels like a personal insult.   | 1.117                            |
| I have a lot in common with other supporters of this party.          | 1.102                            |
| If this party does badly in opinion polls, my day is ruined.         | 1.056                            |
| When I meet someone who supports this party, I feel connected.       | 1.309                            |
| When I speak about this party, I refer to them as “my party”.        | 1.231                            |
| When people praise this party, it makes me feel good.                | 1.368                            |

*Note:* Entries are unstandardized factor loadings in the metric invariance model in which loadings are constrained to be equivalent across countries. All coefficients are significantly different from 0 ( $p < .01$ ).

Finally, we test the most stringent model: scalar invariance. In this CFA model, the intercepts of the eight scale items are constrained to be equal across countries (in addition to prior constraints placed on the factor loadings). This model tests whether a given observed value of the partisan identity scale indicates the same level of the latent partisan identity trait in each country. In other words, if the scale is arrayed from 0 to 1, zero would mean the complete absence of identity and 1 would indicate maximum identity strength across countries. Fit indices presented in Table 3

provide mixed evidence on this point. The CFI, TFI, and the Gamma-Hat values indicate a good fit. The RMSEA value, however, is above the cutoff point of 0.05.

It is difficult to advocate cross-national use of the partisan identity scale in the absence of metric invariance and we turn to an alternative test. Following Oberski (2014), we examine invariance sensitivity, "...the likely impact of measurement differences on substantive comparisons of interest" (Oberski 2014:3). Sensitivity analyses are used to supplement the results of traditional invariance tests which often rely on arbitrary cutoff lines (for a thorough critique of cutoff values for fit measures, see Barrett 2007). We thus compute the EPC-interest which is a measure of the expected change in the parameter of interest, partisan identity in this case, when freeing a particular equality constraint. With the EPC-interest we can evaluate whether it is feasible to compare partisan identity means across countries by estimating the change in partisan identity if certain invariance restrictions (such as equivalence constraints on a scale item's intercept) are removed. Put differently, the EPC-interest evaluates directly whether a violation of measurement invariance also leads to biased estimates of partisan identity in different countries (Oberski 2014).

In the previous invariance analyses, RMSEA was above the cutoff point indicating that the scalar invariance model was a poor fit to the data. Table 5 shows the EPC-interest values that exceeded .01 when the scalar invariance restrictions of equal factor loadings and intercepts are relaxed. As can be seen in Table 5, very few items shift in terms of the mean value of the latent partisan identity trait. Overall, dropping the equivalence restrictions on item 1 ("When I talk about this party, I say 'we' instead of 'they'.") in the U.K. and the Sweden increases very slightly the mean value of latent partisan identity in the Netherlands and Sweden. Dropping the intercept equivalence restrictions for item 8 ("When people praise this party, it makes me feel good.") in the U.K. decreases the latent partisan identity score slightly in Sweden and the Netherlands, whereas dropping the same restriction in Sweden leads to a slight decrease in latent partisan identity in Sweden and a



slight increase in the Netherlands. Finally dropping the intercept equivalence restriction in the Netherlands for item 6 (“When I meet someone who supports this party, I feel connected.”) slightly decreased the mean value of partisan identity in Netherlands. Overall, these changes are minor in magnitude with all EPC-interest values at or below 0.028 in absolute value. This number is significantly smaller than the latent mean differences of partisan identity across countries (shown in Figure A2 in the Online Appendix) indicating that substantive conclusions regarding the comparison of partisan identity across countries are not changed by potential model misspecifications. Even when the requirements of the metric invariance model are relaxed the magnitude of partisan identity remains relatively constant. Overall, these results provide evidence for our claim that the partisan identity scale exhibits features of scalar invariance, in addition to configural and metric invariance. This means that the partisan identity scale works similarly in all three countries.

**Table 5: Changes in Mean Level of Latent Partisan Identity**

|                    | <b>Equivalence Assumption Dropped For:</b> |                         |                     |                         |                              |
|--------------------|--|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
|                    | Item 1 in UK sample                        | Item 1 in Sweden sample | Item 8 in UK sample | Item 8 in Sweden sample | Item 6 in Netherlands sample |
| <b>Sweden</b>      | <b>0.025</b>                               | <b>0.028</b>            | <b>-0.018</b>       | <b>-0.015</b>           | <b>--</b>                    |
| <b>Netherlands</b> | <b>0.019</b>                               | <b>0.017</b>            | <b>-0.020</b>       | <b>0.003</b>            | <b>-0.013</b>                |

*Note:* Entries are EPC-interest values, or expected change in the mean value of partisan identity in each country, as the equivalence constraint on the listed item’s intercept and factor loading is removed. The partisan identity scale ranges from 0 to 1.

### **Partisan Identity and Political Behavior**

Our third hypothesis is that partisan identity better predicts political behavior than the traditional single-item measure of partisan strength and a multi-item scale of ideological strength in the three countries under study. To determine the identity scale’s predictive validity, we examine in-party voting, and political participation. In-party voting is an especially tough dependent variable on which to determine the influence of partisan identity because it is a binary choice that may be well explained by simple party preference.

## Measures

*In-Party Voting.* Surveys were conducted at different stages of the electoral cycle in each country. In the Netherlands, respondents were asked if they had “voted in the most recent parliamentary elections held on September 20, 2012.” 85% of Dutch respondents said they had. They were then asked which party they had voted for and were scored 1 if they voted for their party. In Sweden and the U.K., respondents were asked prospective questions about their likely vote. In Sweden, respondents were asked “How likely are you to vote in next year’s Swedish election?” and regardless of whether they intended to vote or not were asked “Which party do you intend to vote for in next year’s Swedish national election?” 91% said they were very likely to vote. Those intending to vote for their party were coded 1 on the in-party vote variable. In the U.K., respondents were asked “And if there were a U.K. General Election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?” In-party vote was coded 1 for those who indicated that they would vote for their party. In-party voting was highest in Sweden (88%), intermediate in the UK (76%)<sup>11</sup>, and lowest in the Netherlands (61%).

*Political Participation.* Political participation was gauged differently in each country. In the Netherlands, respondents were asked if they had raised a political issue or influenced politicians or government over the past five years in one of four ways: (1) by making use of a political party or organization, (2) through participation in a government-organized public hearing, discussion or citizen participation meeting, (3) contacting a politician or civil servant, or (4) participating in a political discussion or campaign by Internet, e-mail or SMS. These questions were included in the post-election values module administered in late 2012 and early 2013. 12% had performed at least one activity. A scale was created by adding all four items and rescaling from 0 to 1.

In Sweden, only a subset of respondents was randomly assigned to receive the political participation questions. In total, 915 Swedish respondents answered four questions concerning

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<sup>11</sup> These percentages remain stable across wave 3 and wave 4.

whether they had ever undertaken certain political actions: (1) contacted a politician, (2) given/raised money to/for a political organization, (3) contacted a civil servant, or (4) attended a political rally. All four questions were asked in each of the three survey waves. All 12 items (4 items in 3 waves) were additively combined and rescaled on a 0 to 1 scale.

In the U.K., all respondents in wave 4 were asked whether in the last four weeks they visited the website of a candidate or party and whether they signed up or officially registered online to help a party or candidate in their campaign and if so, which party. Both items were coded 1 if the respondent (1) visited their in-party's website and (2) signed up online to help their in-party. Wave 4 also included questions on whether the respondent had read or found information in the last four weeks tweeted by (1) political parties or candidates, (2) a personal acquaintance, or (3) others, such as a commentator, journalist, or activist. The same three questions were repeated for election information obtained on Facebook. Five additional questions asked whether the respondent has shared political information through (1) Facebook, (2) Twitter, (3) email, (4) instant messaging or (5) another website or online platform. All 13 questions were combined additively and rescaled on a 0 to 1 scale. These questions clearly reflect a heterogeneous set of activities and time frames across countries. Data from all three countries is combined in the following analysis and dummy variables for country are included as a control for such differences in the nature of political participation. We also analyze each country's data separately (shown in the Online Appendix) and report any observed differences in the text.

*Ideological Intensity.* We constructed an ideological intensity scale that reflects the respondent's ideological strength and alignment with the in-party so that higher values reflect ideological intensity and consistency with the in-party's ideological stance. In the U.K., this scale consists of 5 left-right values such as "Government should redistribute incomes" and "Management will always try to get the better of employees" (all items are listed in Table A2 in the Online Appendix). All five items

were combined on a -.5 to +.5 scale, with -.5 representing the most right-leaning position and .5 representing the most left-leaning position, and then folded around 0. Respondents whose overall score was at odds with their party preference were given a score of 0. Thus, a Labour supporter who strongly agreed with all five left-leaning items received an ideological intensity score of 1. A Labour supporter who disagreed on average with the left-leaning items received an ideological intensity score of 0.

In Sweden, the ideological intensity scale was created from five ideologically tinged issues, including the reduction of the public sector, lowering taxes, and increasing unemployment benefits. The same steps were followed as in the U.K. The items were combined to reflect a left-right dimension and then folded around 0 to reflect intensity. Once again, those whose average score conflicted with their party's left-right stance received a score of 0. In the Netherlands, we did not have a multi-item ideological scale and used the respondent's self-placement on a left-right dimension to assess ideological intensity. Those whose left-right placement conflicted with that of their party received a score of 0.

### **Determinants of In-Party Voting**

The third hypothesis predicts stronger effects of partisan identity than the traditional measure or ideological intensity on political behaviour. We begin by analysing the determinants of in-party voting in all three countries combined, consistent with the partisan identity scale's demonstrated measurement invariance, using a logistic regression model. The results are shown in Table 6. Similar results are obtained when the data are analysed within each country (Table A5, Online Appendix).

The first column in Table 6 estimates an equation in which in-party voting is regressed on partisan identity; the second column contains the same analysis replacing partisan identity with the single-item measure of partisan strength. Partisan identity has a larger effect than partisan strength

on in-party voting although both coefficients are significant and both forms of partisanship dramatically increase the likelihood of voting for one's party. As we had noted at the outset, the binary nature of vote choice makes it a difficult test of the greater political effects of partisan identity. Nonetheless, when the predicted values of in-party voting are plotted across the range of the partisan identity scale for each country, with other values in the equation in Table 6 set at their mean, it is apparent that in-party voting better predicts voting for the party than partisan strength.

**Table 6: Determinants of In-Party Voting and Political Participation**

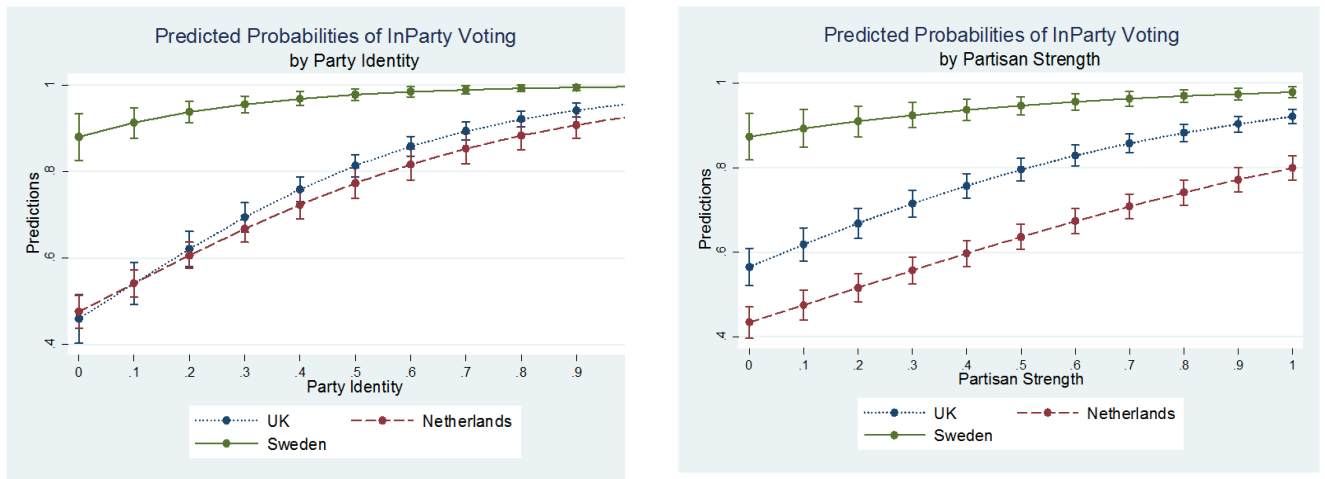
|                                      | In-Party Vote       |                     | Political Participation |                     |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
|                                      | 1                   | 2                   | 3                       | 4                   |
| <b>Party Identity</b>                | <b>2.91 (0.22)</b>  | ---                 | <b>0.28 (0.01)</b>      | --                  |
| <b>Partisan strength</b>             | ---                 | <b>2.04 (0.12)</b>  | ---                     | <b>0.12 (0.00)</b>  |
| <b>Ideological intensity</b>         | <b>0.21 (0.08)</b>  | 0.08 (0.08)         | <b>0.06 (0.00)</b>      | <b>0.07 (0.00)</b>  |
| <b>Country</b>                       |                     |                     |                         |                     |
| <b>Netherlands</b>                   | 0.00 (0.11)         | <b>-0.52 (0.08)</b> | <b>0.07 (0.00)</b>      | 0.01 (0.00)         |
| <b>Sweden</b>                        | <b>1.87 (0.21)</b>  | <b>1.50 (0.18)</b>  | <b>0.38 (0.01)</b>      | <b>0.31 (0.01)</b>  |
| <b>Country X Party Identity</b>      |                     |                     |                         |                     |
| <b>Netherlands X Party Identity</b>  | 0.26 (0.32)         | ---                 | <b>-0.11 (0.02)</b>     | --                  |
| <b>Sweden X Party Identity</b>       | 0.36 (0.76)         | ---                 | <b>0.11 (0.04)</b>      | --                  |
| <b>Country X Partisan Strength</b>   |                     |                     |                         |                     |
| <b>Netherlands X Partisan Str.</b>   | ---                 | -0.14 (0.16)        | ---                     | <b>-0.05 (0.01)</b> |
| <b>Sweden X Partisan Strength</b>    | ---                 | -0.17 (0.37)        | ---                     | <b>0.09 (0.02)</b>  |
| <b>Education</b>                     | 0.11 (0.09)         | 0.03 (0.09)         | <b>0.09 (0.00)</b>      | <b>0.09 (0.00)</b>  |
| <b>Gender (Female)</b>               | 0.00 (0.05)         | 0.04 (0.05)         | <b>-0.02 (0.00)</b>     | <b>-0.02 (0.00)</b> |
| <b>Age</b>                           | 0.03 (0.01)         | 0.02 (0.01)         | <b>-0.00 (0.00)</b>     | <b>-0.00 (0.00)</b> |
| <b>Employed</b>                      | <b>0.15 (0.05)</b>  | <b>0.13 (0.06)</b>  | -0.00 (0.00)            | -0.00 (0.00)        |
| <b>Constant</b>                      | <b>-0.58 (0.17)</b> | -0.11 (0.16)        | <b>-0.04 (0.01)</b>     | 0.01 (0.01)         |
| <b>Pseudo R- squared/ R- squared</b> | 0.10                | 0.12                | 0.33                    | 0.32                |
| <b>N</b>                             | 8,459               | 8,459               | 7,962                   | 7,962               |

*Note:* Logistic regression was used to analyze in-party vote; political participation is analyzed with OLS regression. The U.K. is the omitted country in columns 1 and 2. Bolded coefficients are significant at  $p < 0.05$  in a two-tailed test. All variables are scaled between 0 and 1 for ease of interpretation, except for age which is measured in decades.

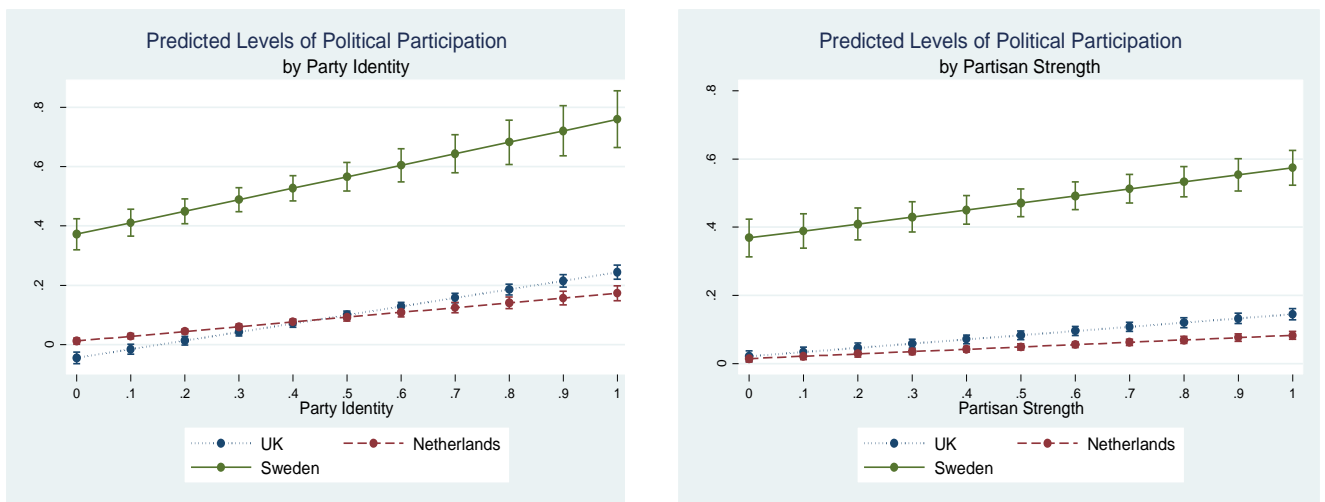
As seen in Figure 4, the probability of voting for one's party ranges from a low of approximately .45 in the Netherlands and .5 in the U.K. at the lowest levels of partisan identity to a high of .9 for those at the highest levels. This means that someone with the highest level of partisan identity is almost certain to vote for their party. In contrast, the probability of in-party voting changes somewhat less dramatically across the range of partisan strength, ranging from a low of .4 to

a high of .75 across the range of strength in the Netherlands, and just under .6 to above .8 in the U.K. The effect of both partisan strength and identity on in-party voting is reduced in Sweden where voter partisan loyalty was high across the board, as seen in the top panel of Figure 4. There is one other noteworthy aspect of the trends depicted in Figure 4. Voting for one's party increases rapidly at lower levels of partisan identity and tends to decelerate at higher levels. This trend is less apparent for partisan strength, suggesting that the partisan identity scale's ability to better detect partisanship across its range improves its predictive validity.

**Figure 4: Predicted Probability of In-Party Voting**



**Figure 5: Predicted Level of Political Participation**



Holding a strong ideological position that is consistent with one's party also significantly increases in-party voting, as seen in Column 1 of Table 6, although this effect evaporates in column 2 when paired in the equation with partisan strength. This suggests that the political effects of partisan strength but not partisan identity overlap with that of ideological intensity. In that sense, partisan identity may provide a conceptually cleaner, less instrumental measure of partisanship than the traditional partisan strength item. The effects of ideological intensity are also far weaker than those of partisan identity: The probability of in-party voting changes only from .75 (0.01) to .78 (0.01) across the range of ideological intensity. In contrast, the probability of voting for one's party ranges from a low of .54 (0.01) at the lowest levels of partisan identity to a high of .96 (0.00) for those at the highest levels (predicted probabilities of in-party vote by country are shown in Table A7 in the Online Appendix). Overall, these results provide evidence for an expressive approach to partisanship in several European contexts.

### **Determinants of Political Participation**

The analysis of political participation unfolds in parallel to that of in-party voting, although analyses are estimated using ordinary least squares regression, making it possible to directly compare the size of parameter coefficients. As seen in columns 3 and 4 of Table 6, both partisan identity and strength are significant predictors of political engagement, although the effects of partisan identity are roughly twice as large as those of strength. Predicted levels of participation across the range of party identity and partisan strength (based on equations in columns 3 and 4) are shown in Figure 5. This figure makes clear the greater power of partisan identity than partisan strength to drive political participation. The effects of party identity and strength also differ by country. A negative interaction between the Netherlands and party identity and a positive interaction between Sweden and party identity, as seen in column 3 of Table 6, indicates the greater power of partisan identity in Sweden

and reduced effects in the Netherlands<sup>12</sup>. Similar interactions exist between the two countries and partisan strength. These trends are depicted in Figure 5, showing the dramatic effect of partisan identity on participation in Sweden where participation goes from .37 at the lowest level of partisan identity to .75 at the highest. In contrast, the effects of partisan strength in Sweden are more muted with participation ranging from .36 to .57 across the range of partisan strength. Figure 5 also makes clear that the differing time frames within which political activity was assessed (“ever” in Sweden compared to shorter time frames in the U.K. and Netherlands) affected mean levels of reported activity, not surprisingly.

Ideological intensity has a small significant effect on participation but its coefficient (.06) is far smaller than the coefficients for the two partisan variables (.28 for identity and .12 for strength). As noted, ideological intensity is better measured by multi-item issue/value scales in the U.K. and Sweden than in the Netherlands where it was based on a single self-placement left-right intensity measure. This may have led to an underestimation of the effects of ideological intensity in the combined analyses shown in Table 6 because the estimated effects of ideological intensity are greater in Sweden and the U.K. than in the Netherlands (Table A5, Online Appendix). Nonetheless, the coefficient for partisan identity is more than twice the size of that for ideological intensity in the Netherlands and almost 3.5 times as large in Sweden. These findings provides ample support for hypothesis 3 and the expressive partisan model.

Finally, to underscore the additional predictive power of the partisan identity measure, we regressed in-party voting and participation on partisan identity, country, the interaction between country and partisan identity and basic demographics at each level of partisan strength (i.e., “not so strong”, “fairly strong” and “very strong”). Partisan identity predicted in-party vote and participation

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<sup>12</sup> We re-ran the analysis of political participation for the Netherlands, using an ordered probit model since the political participation variable has only 5 points in the Dutch data set. Regardless of the model specification, however, the results remain robust.



at each level of partisan strength providing additional information about the dependent variable (analyses shown in Table A6 in the Online Appendix). Among weak, moderate, and strong partisans, partisan identity has a significant positive effect on in-party voting and political participation.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

In this paper, we revisit the measurement and conception of partisanship, examining the properties of a multi-item scale of partisan identity in three European nations. While Greene (1999, 2002, 2004) and others (Green et al 2002; Huddy et al 2015) have argued for a multi-item approach to the measurement of partisanship, most national election studies continue to rely on a single measure of partisan intensity. The greater predictive validity of the identity scale, especially in accounting for political participation but also in-party voting, provides a powerful rationale for the broad adoption of a multi-item scale of partisan identity. The ability of the partisan identity scale to better detect than the traditional item weak, middling, and strong levels of partisanship also provides a strong reason for its inclusion in political behavior research. The scale may prove to be especially useful in experimental studies in which many experimental treatments depend on the strength of partisan identity.

Many surveys have space limitations and may lack sufficient space for an eight-item scale. We examined a shorter four-item scale that performed especially well in differentiating across the range of partisan identity. The four items were chosen based on the information they conveyed about partisan identity in the IRT analyses. We re-ran all analyses presented in this manuscript with the shorter scale comprised of these items (marked with an asterisk in Table 1). These results are shown in Tables A7-A9 (Online Appendix) and confirm that the predictive power of the partisan identity scale does not depend solely on its finely differentiated measurement. The short scale attains results very similar to those shown in Table 6.

In sum, our results underscore the value of standardizing the measurement of partisanship in diverse polities. This standardization already occurs within the CSES in which respondents are asked the following question regardless of country: “Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?” If the answer is yes, respondents are asked “Which party do you feel closest to?” and then “Do you feel very close to this party, somewhat close, or not very close?” If the answer to the closeness question is no, respondents are asked “Do you feel yourself a little closer to one of the political parties than the others?” In most countries in the CSES, this series of questions garners a majority of respondents who feel at least closer to one party than another, although there are a few countries in which this does not occur. To implement the partisan identity scale, we recommend employing the CSES questions to identify those with a party affiliation and then follow up with the eight (or four) partisan identity questions. In the current research, party affiliation was especially low in the Netherlands where respondents were asked about being a party supporter, adherent, or having voted for a party in order to obtain a respondent’s party affiliation. But even in the Netherlands, the close and closer questions in the 2010 CSES identified 70% of the electorate as having a party affiliation. The social identity approach to partisanship holds considerable potential for the study of comparative politics more broadly. In the U.S., a similar partisan identity scale predicts political behavior in a political system that is dominated by two parties and characterized by strong levels of partisanship (Huddy et al 2015). In the three European countries studied in this research, the partisan identity scale also predicted political behavior despite varied levels of national partisan strength and number of political parties. We have focused to a considerable degree in this research on the promising measurement properties of the partisan identity scale. But the study also hints at its conceptual heft. Partisan identity was a far better predictor of political behavior than a measure of ideological intensity, at odds with an instrumental model of partisanship. Partisan identity was also an especially good predictor of political activity in support of the expressive approach.

In conclusion, we urge the adoption of a multi-item partisan identity scale in political behavior research to better assess the degree to which citizens are attached to their political party. This is especially important at a time of declining partisanship in Europe. We have demonstrated that strong identifiers remain loyal to their party and continue to support it electorally. At the highest levels of partisan identity, this electoral support is almost universal regardless of country. But it is also the case, that in-party voting was much reduced at lower levels of identity. It is thus important to track partisan identity over time with the best measures available in order to understand why and how it changes in response to political events. The accurate measurement of partisanship is also important from a normative democratic perspective. In the current research, strong partisan identities increased political activity in all three countries. If partisanship is part of the glue that ties citizens to their electoral system, the decline of partisanship is cause for some considerable concern and a worthy topic of further investigation. In the end, a robust measure of partisan identity that is identical across countries may prove to be an important theoretical and empirical addition to research on the study of partisanship and political engagement.

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