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LONG-TERM FACTORS

Class and religious cleavages

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Introduction

The extent to which party choices are structured by social divisions and the origins of these divisions, as well as change in their strength over time, is important for understanding the politics of contemporary democracies. The Michigan Model stresses that class position helps account for perceptions and attitudes which in turn shape political choices (see Hutchings and Jefferson, this volume). It can explain, for example, why some people endorse income redistribution while others do not. Moreover, changes in the sizes of classes, the evolution of the class structure, can help explain the menu of party choices available to voters, as well as the consequences this has for their choices and whether they vote at all. Similarly, religious denomination and religiosity continue to form prominent cleavages in several societies; religion is after all one of the "triumvirate" of social bases of cleavages (class, religion, and language) identified in Lijphart's seminal article (1979) and is identified as the oldest prominent cleavage in Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) classic analysis. In the same way that class position can shape perceptions and attitudes, so does religion, though in areas such as abortion, euthanasia, and gay marriage rather than distribution of economic resources. Changes in levels of religiosity can likewise be expected to influence the nature of party competition and the political choices presented to voters. Most research into the social bases of political divisions has been of a descriptive nature, focusing on the strength of cleavages across time and space. This chapter addresses that approach, but also covers a newer body of work that aims to address explanations for variations in the strength of these cleavages.

In the rest of the chapter, we first consider what we mean by cleavages. We then examine class politics and class voting, considering first what we mean by class. Finally, we examine research into religious denomination, religiosity, and voting.

The theory of cleavages

The related but separate concepts of *social* and *political* cleavages are central to understanding how class and religion can inform political choice. Social cleavages refer to distinctions in social and political values held between different social groups such as social classes as well as ethnic and religious groups that may or may not be relevant as the basis of political competition and hence political choice. Political cleavages, on the other hand, refer to divisions in political and social values that are directly relevant to political competition and thus political choice. Differences in values are usually conceptualized along two dimensions: the economic and social. The economic dimension is usually understood to provide a contrast between pro-market and anti-market views (for example, one being for lower taxation and the other for greater redistribution), whereas the social dimension is understood as a contrast between liberal and authoritarian/conservative values.

Although the study of the social and political cleavages is often combined in empirical work, the study of *social* cleavages primarily relates to purely social stratification and divisions and, in the case of religion, to conflicts in social values in societies and their impact on political behavior, whereas the study of *political* cleavages tends to focus on political institutions and their ability to shape social values (Bartolini and Mair 1990: 215). The first is very much a "bottom-up" approach that focuses on long-term social change such as the secularization of societies as they modernize or the changes in class identities driven by the rising dominance of service industries over traditional sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture. In contrast, the second emphasizes the "top-down" influence of political institutions and elites on shaping and activating a latent division in the population. These two perspectives, although combined in empirical studies, represent distinct theoretical traditions that have shaped debate on the social bases of politics. We first examine how they are manifest in the study of class and politics.

What do we mean by class?

Characterizations of class position have included numerous occupational classifications, employment status (e.g., owner versus employee), status rankings, income level, educational level, various combinations of education and income and occupation, and subjective class identification. In American voting studies, it has not been unusual to treat current income as a measure of class position, typically trichotomized into upper/middle/lower income classes (see, for example, Bartels 2008; Leighley and Nagler 1992, 2007). Outside of the USA, however, researchers have typically focused on occupational class position. A simple manual versus nonmanual occupational class distinction was used extensively in the mid–late twentieth century, but has since tended to give way to more complex classifications. Most contemporary researchers studying voting behavior have tended to adopt a validated and widely-used measure of occupational class position originally developed by sociologists, particularly Goldthorpe, Llewellyn, and Payne (1987; Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992). The main classes identified in this measure are the higher and lower professional and managerial classes (classes I and II), the "routine nonmanual class" (typically lower-grade clerical "white-collar workers," class III), the "petty bourgeoisie" (small employers and self-employed, class IV), and the "working class" (foremen and technicians, skilled, semi-, and unskilled manual workers, classes V, VI, and VII). These classes differ significantly in terms of wages, job security, flexible working hours, pension provision, sickness benefits, autonomy, future career prospects, and life-time expected income, and have been rigorously validated (e.g., Evans 1992; Evans and Mills 1998; Goldthorpe and McKnight 2006). As a result, they now form the basis of both the UK Census measure of class position (Rose and Pevalin 2003) and the European Socio-Economic Classification (Rose and Harrison 2010).

Going beyond two classes and two parties

Classic texts in political sociology saw elections as the expression of "the democratic class struggle" (Anderson and Davidson 1943) between just two classes, the working and the middle, and their representatives, the parties of the left and right. Early surveys observed that, in general, working class voters were more likely to vote for left-wing political parties than were those in the middle class, though with substantial cross-national differences. Scandinavia and Britain displayed the highest levels of class voting and the United States and Canada the lowest, though the cross-national comparability of such studies was limited by a lack of standardized measures of social class (see, for example, Lipset 1981 [1960]; Rose 1974). The first study to undertake a more directly comparable assessment of class voting was Alford's (1963) analysis of Australia, Britain, Canada, and the US between 1936 and 1962 in which he introduced the commonly used "Alford index." The Alford index is the difference between the percentage of manual workers that voted for left-wing parties on the one hand and the percentage of nonmanual workers that voted for these parties on the other. This became the standard instrument in many studies in ensuing decades, most of which found that class voting was in decline (Lipset 1981 [1960]: 505; Inglehart 1990: 260; Sainsbury 1987; Listhaug 1993; Lane and Ersson 1994: 94).

This position was further endorsed by two extensive cross-national studies of electoral change and cleavage politics: Nieuwbeerta (1995) and Franklin, Mackie, and Valen (1992). As a result, by the 1990s many commentators agreed that class voting in modern industrial societies had all but disappeared (see, for example, Clark and Lipset 1991: 408). Class was thought to have lost its importance as a determinant of life-chances and political interests because either the working class had become richer, white-collar workers had been "proletarianized," or social mobility between classes had increased. At the same time, post-industrial cleavages such as gender, race, ethnicity, public versus private sector, and various identity groups had emerged and replaced class-based conflict, while new post-material values had supposedly led to the "new left" drawing its support from the middle classes, thus weakening the class basis of left–right divisions. Moreover, rising levels of education had ostensibly produced voters who were calculating and "issue oriented" rather than being driven by collective identities such as class (Franklin, Mackie, and Valen 1992).

Although these studies have been influential, during the 1980s a body of research emerged that questioned the robustness of their findings, arguing that reliance on the manual/nonmanual distinction obscured important variations in the composition of these highly aggregated classes (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 1985). For example, if skilled manual workers are more right-wing than unskilled workers and the number of skilled workers increases, the Alford estimate of difference between manual and nonmanual workers will decline even if the relative political positions of skilled, unskilled, and nonmanual workers remain the same. Accordingly, studies using the Goldthorpe class schema and more extensive categories of political choice found little evidence of declining class voting in Britain (see, for example, Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 1985; Heath et al. 1991; Evans, Heath, and Payne 1991), but only "trendless fluctuations." Comparative research found that the linear decline in left versus non-left voting proposed, most notably, by Nieuwbeerta (1995) was not universal. In Norway (Ringdal and Hines 1999), the decline in traditional class voting is confined to a short period in the 1960s. The decline in Denmark disappears (Hobolt 2013). There is also evidence of *rises* in levels of class voting. In Britain, levels of class voting increased in the 1940s and 1950s before falling again in the 1960s (Weakliem and Heath 1999). Also, in some of the new post-communist democracies, the pressures of marketization and increasing economic inequalities strengthened class voting (Mateju, Rehakova, and Evans 1999; Evans 2006; Evans and Whitefield 2006).

The discussion below of the "bottom-up" and "top-down" approaches will show, however, that the cleavage decline and "trendless fluctuation" stories can be viewed as different aspects of a greater process of "unfreezing" of the traditional links between social groups and parties. This "unfreezing" process occurs through several interacting mechanisms, such as the phasing out of traditional party loyalties through generational replacement of voters (see van der Brug and

Franklin in this volume) as well as changes in the social structure and political elite strategies, which will be discussed further.

In recent years, the debate about the decline of class voting has arguably lost its intensity: there is evidence of decline (Jansen, Evans, and De Graaf 2013), but the cross-national picture shows considerable variation with little or no evidence of a fall in class voting in some societies (see Brooks, Nieuwbeerta, and Manza 2006, and relevant case studies in Evans and De Graaf 2013). Interest instead has turned to *explanations* for variations in the strength of the class–vote relationship across time and societies.

Explaining the evolution of class politics: bottom-up or top-down?

Most early scholars assumed a sociological, relatively deterministic "bottom-up" explanation in which the transition to a post-industrial society was accompanied by a diffusing of the class structure resulting in weaker patterns of voting between classes. However, an opposing view to this socially deterministic argument emphasizes the role of the political elite in the structuring of class political divisions. This approach claims that "variations in class voting are argued to derive from differences in the redistributive policy choices offered to voters" (Evans 2000: 411). Often referred to as a "top-down" approach, variations in the strength of social divisions in political preferences are argued to derive from the choices offered to voters by politicians and parties. Studies focus primarily on the extent to which parties take differing positions along dimensions of ideologies or values and thus shape voters' political choice sets. To the degree that voters are responsive to the programs offered by parties, rather than simply voting on the basis of habit, or long-term party attachment, differentiation between parties on relevant ideological dimensions increases the strength of the association between class position and party choice. Conversely, where parties do not offer different choices, class divisions are weaker. In short, voter responses to party polarization and the extent to which this drives changes in the class bases of party preference depend upon the choices voters are offered (the supply side), as well as the presence of differences in ideological and value preferences within the electorate (the demand side).

The thesis is not new (see, for example, Converse 1958; Kelley, McAllister, and Mughan 1985; Przeworski and Sprague 1986; Kitschelt 1994) but only recently has there been extensive empirical analysis of the impact of the choices offered by parties on social divisions in voting. Moreover, it differs from some earlier top-down arguments in that it moves away from the assumption that class-based values and preferences are themselves shaped by the way parties frame choices and talk about politics (see, for example, Sartori 1969). Such "preference shaping" implies that parties influence the attitudes of their supporters, so that class differences in ideology and values derive from the positions taken by the parties associated with different social classes. However, recent studies (see, for example, Baldassarri and Gelman 2008; Adams, Green, and Milazzo 2012) indicate that sorting takes place rather than "indoctrination" – thus on issues where voters differ from their party they will, over time, shift away from that party. In the British case, for example, the distancing of the political left from the working class occurs because the Labour Party failed to carry the working class with it as it moved to more liberal positions on economic and social issues, resulting in increased defection to parties such as UKIP (Ford and Goodwin 2014; Evans and Mellon 2016). Class divisions in preferences are robust even when the parties shift their positions (Evans and Tilley 2012b). A similar resistance to preference shaping explains the emergence of a working class basis to radical right rather than left-wing parties as the latter have shifted to court the votes of the new middle classes (e.g., McGann and Kitschelt 2005; Spies 2013; Rennwald and Evans 2014).

Evidence for the impact of changes in parties' left–right ideological positions on levels of class voting was initially provided in Britain by Evans, Heath, and Payne (1999), who show a close relationship over a 20-year period between left–right polarization in parties' manifesto positions and the extent of class voting. A further study extended this analysis to more than 40 years and estimated that without convergence in party programs no convergence in class voting would have been observed (Evans and Tilley 2012a). Studies by Oskarson (2005) and Elff (2009) suggest that this pattern is found elsewhere in Europe. Most recently, the "political choice" model of class voting has been consolidated by a broad-ranging comparative combination of case studies and cross-nationally pooled over-time analyses of the relationship between party manifesto positions and the strength of class voting (Evans and De Graaf 2013). A 15-nation analysis combining up to 50 years of evidence finds a correlation of 0.42 between left–right polarization in party manifesto programs and the strength of class voting, even when controlling for other aspects of social change (Jansen, Evans, and De Graaf 2013). This growing body of evidence points to the importance of political choices for patterns of class voting, in addition to any social changes that might influence them.

Whether to vote or not: the new class cleavage?

An interest in how the choices offered by parties influence voting has also led to a focus on the political consequences of the shape of the class structure: specifically, the declining size of the working class. Early voting research focused on the working class, especially in Britain (see, for example, Butler and Stokes 1969), where studies explored in detail the phenomenon of "working class Conservatives" (McKenzie and Silver 1968; Nordlinger 1967), as it was assumed that it was only the failure of such voters to fully express their "true" class interests electorally that prevented a left-wing, working class electoral hegemony. Since then, however, the reduction in the size of the working class, as industrial societies have become post-industrial, has led to it no longer constituting the largest class, nor being the primary source of left-party support. This process has been argued to lead to a vicious circle in which parties stop representing working class people, who in turn stop turning out to vote, further reducing the incentive for parties to appeal to them (Evans and Tilley 2017). Whereas the social attitudes and policy preferences of the working class were at one time considered mainstream by virtue of the working class constituting a significant proportion of the population, they have become increasingly marginal as the working class has become a minority. This marginalization has been exacerbated by changes in the recruitment patterns of the parties: even parties of the left are now dominated by professional politicians with middle class backgrounds, an elite university education, and the values associated with such milieu (Carnes 2012; Heath 2015; Evans and Tilley 2017). Increasingly, these politicians are socially alien to working class voters. Arguably an important growing class cleavage therefore is between voting or not voting: political parties aim their campaigns at a new middle class constituency who are more likely to turn out at the polls (Evans and Tilley 2017), while ignoring working class voters and further dis-incentivizing their participation. This process was identified in the US some time ago by Hill and Leighley (1996), who linked state-level left policy programs to class differences in turnout. Once the habit of voting is lost it is difficult to reinstate: Leighley and Nagler (2014) find no increase in poor/working class participation since the late twentieth century, despite the ideological polarization of the main US parties, thus shifting the center of political gravity toward a new, middle class electoral hegemony.

The waning influence of religion?

There are similarities in the debates about class and those about our other significant social cleavage, religion. Until quite recently the dominant consensus has been that religion is declining in importance across modern societies and thus of little relevance to understanding political competition. The modernization of societies has been said to lead to the gradual secularization of societies. In what is very much a "bottom-up" approach, the secularization thesis argues that the rising levels of urbanization and education have increased the dominance of scientific rationality (Swatos and Christiano 1999); economic development, on the other hand, is said to alleviate the economic vulnerabilities that underpin the attractiveness of religion as a source of social support and security to marginalized socio-economic groups (Norris and Inglehart 2004). On the whole, the gradual secularization of Western societies leads to the loss of religious identity as a source of distinct social and political values such as social conservatism.

Although most scholars throughout the twentieth century tended to agree that secularization characterizes most European societies irrespective of denomination (Dobbelaere 1985; Lechner 1991; Tschannen 1991; Wilson 1982), the secularization paradigm has been challenged on various fronts. There seems to be little evidence of secularization in competitive religious "markets" such as the United States (Finke and Stark 1998; see Gill 2001 for a review) or in Eastern European societies undergoing religious revivals (Evans and Northmore-Ball 2012; Northmore-Ball and Evans 2016). Several authors have also pointed out flaws in the secularization argument such as the use of a "romanticized" religious past as a reference point and excessive Eurocentrism (Swatos and Christiano 1999) as well as a restrictive focus on formal expressions of religiosity such as affiliation and church attendance (Davie 1994).

Religiosity and religious denominations have formed the basis of cleavages in several societies, with political parties stressing traditional moral issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and gay marriage (De Graaf, Heath, and Need 2001; Bolzendahl and Brooks 2005). These issues have been conceptualized as the social dimension of political competition contrasting moral traditionalism and conservatism with "progressive" liberal positions. Studies of the impact of religion on politics focus primarily on this dimension.

Top-down versus bottom-up drivers of religious cleavages: mechanisms and agents of change

The study of religious cleavages and political choice very much falls into two perspectives, which differ in their understanding of sources of the influence of religious cleavages on political choice, how they change, and most importantly the mechanism linking religious cleavages and political choice. These perspectives echo the "bottom-up" versus "top-down" perspectives already presented for class voting. The earlier "bottom-up" perspective is rooted in three main bodies of research: first, that stemming from Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) seminal work on the historical origins of cleavages in Europe, the sociological work on the general process of secularization and waning of religion in Western societies, and finally the literature on the effects of economic modernization on social change. The second and newer perspective is based in the studies of the recent changes in party competition on Western democracies and focuses very much on the ability of political parties and elites to activate/de-activate the relevance of religious social divisions for political competition as well as the diversity in the strength of religious cleavages across countries and time (Evans and De Graaf 2013).

Lipset and Rokkan (1967) trace the origin of religious cleavages as the basis of political competition in Western societies to the Reformation and the ensuing conflict between the newly ascendant nation-states and the Catholic Church. They show how today's political competition between religious voters who support conservative parties (particularly Social Democratic parties), which are often linked to the Catholic Church, and non-religious voters who support secular liberal parties can be traced back to the "frozen" church-state conflict of the Reformation. More recent work in this tradition looks at the legacies of communism in Eastern Europe for creating a secular-religious/nationalist cleavage thus creating competition between reformed communist parties and nationalist parties (Kitschelt 1994, 1999). The two later bodies of literature focus on the declining role of religion in society as scientific rationality becomes mainstream and increasing economic security reduces the attractiveness of religion as a source of social support. Overall, the "bottom-up" perspective emphasizes the blurring of religious divisions as the key mechanism of change: as religion loses its significance, the values of the nominally religious become increasingly similar to those of the non-religious. These changes are driven by large-scale, socio-structural processes such as modernization or industrialization, or major historical events such as the European Reformation (Lipset and Rokkan 1967) or the rise and collapse of Communism (Kitschelt 1999; Evans and Whitefield 1993; Whitefield 2002). The emphasis on these macro-level slow-moving processes and "frozen" social conflicts, however, limits the ability of the "bottom-up" approach to explain shorter term fluctuations in the relevance of religion for political choice; the "bottom-up" approach is fundamentally unidirectional.

The second "top-down" approach emphasizes that political elites determine the relevance of religion to political choice through their strategic considerations and position on ideological dimensions. The most recent version of the "top-down" approach focuses on the restriction of electoral choices rather than preference shaping as the mechanisms linking religiosity to political choice (Evans and De Graaf 2013). This supply-side approach emphasizes that political parties need to diverge on moral issues in order to make religion relevant. With a wider variety of options along the social dimension, the value differences between religious and non-religious people take on importance for political choice; these value differences will matter even if the overall numbers of religious voters may have declined due to secularization. Party polarization on the relevant value dimension should increase the magnitude of the association between religiosity and party choice, whereas convergence should weaken the association. The pressures for convergence tend to be more apparent in majoritarian than PR systems. The agents of change are political parties, although the impetus for the strategic behavior of political elites can lie in long-term social change.

Empirical considerations: the measurement of religiosity and religious cleavages

The measurement of the effect of religiosity on vote choice, particularly in a comparative context, is complicated by difficulties in measuring religiosity itself. The common measures of denominational affiliation and church attendance vary in their meaning in different countries and for different denominations. For example, in Catholic contexts there is far greater social pressure for people to attend church, raising overall church attendance rates. Denominational affiliation as a measure raises the possibility of failing to capture religiosity due to "believing but not belonging" (Davie 1994, 2000) or over-estimating religiosity in contexts where nominal affiliation may have a strong presence (Evans and Northmore-Ball 2012). Also denomination is not a useful indicator in countries dominated by one religion (i.e., Catholicism in Poland or Spain, or Eastern Orthodoxy in Bulgaria or Russia). Church attendance however has not been found to under-estimate religiosity (Aarts et al. 2010) and church attendance levels have been found to be associated with levels of traditional religious belief (De Graaf and Te Grotenhius 2008).

The issues of measuring religiosity are related to the complexity in conceptualizing the idea of religious cleavage. The concept of religious cleavage can be said to capture two aspects: the individual and contextual. At the individual level, religiosity is related to how religious a person is; this can be captured by the frequency of church attendance or some measure of the intensity of religious belief (for example, the World Values Survey religious belief measures used in Norris and Inglehart 2004). The contextual effects of shared group consciousness can be captured by denomination. Presumably the contextual effects can persist even in the presence of declining levels of religiosity, for example, through the politicization of collective social identities.

Empirical evidence: a general decline or a diverse set of patterns?

After a few decades of much attention being devoted to religious cleavages by the likes of Lijphart, Lipset, and Rokkan, the study of religious cleavages entered a phase of neglect; in the 1980s and early 1990s most studies concluded that religion was in general decline and therefore irrelevant as a basis of competition for religious parties and even right-wing parties (Franklin, Mackie, and Valen 1992: 40; Franklin 1992), mirroring the general consensus on the decline of class and other social cleavages at the time (see Evans 1999; Evans and Norris 1999 for summaries of debate). This consensus on religious cleavages was challenged in the mid-1990s by arguments about the limits of the secularization thesis as well as the documented rise of "religious issues" in politics. Several studies began to show evidence for the persistence of religious cleavages (i.e., Elff 2007; van der Brug, Hobolt, and De Vreese 2009; Tilley 2015).

The latest empirical evidence on the impact of religiosity on voting shows a variety of patterns across both established and new democracies. The evidence shows that religion matters to vote choice overall but not in every country and to varying degrees. In several countries, religion is a more relevant cleavage than social class; these include the Netherlands, the United States, West Germany, and France (Evans and De Graaf 2013). The trends in religious voting show a decline in France, West Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands (Heath and Bellucci 2013; De Graaf, Jansen, and Need 2013; Gougou and Roux 2013; Elff 2013), but, in newer democracies such as Poland, Spain, and East Germany, religious voting appears stable (Orriols 2013; Letki 2013; Elff 2013). The United States stands alone among established democracies in displaying both strong evidence of religious voting as well as an absence of any decline; rather, there is evidence of a realignment as, for example, Catholic voters switched from the Democratic to the Republican Parties (Weakliem 2013).

The "top-down" political choice and "bottom-up" social change explanations apply to varying extents across the different countries, reflecting the variety of political and cultural conditions. Overall, however, recent empirical evidence favors the political choice explanation; with the exception of a few new democracies, the ideological differences between parties explain the strength of religious voting (Evans and De Graaf 2013). The effects of social change, in particular secularization, are clearly apparent in all Western European democracies as religion loses its importance. Secularization is even evident in the United States (Aarts et al. 2010; Evans and De Graaf 2013). However, the evidence on effects of secularization on political choice is not unequivocal given the lack of clarity in the links between social conservatism and religious attendance. Furthermore, the classic secularization thesis which points to the blurring of social heterogeneity and consequent decline in religiosity as societies modernize (Norris and Inglehart 2004) is of more limited relevance in countries outside Western Europe, such as Romania, Bulgaria, and Russia (Evans and Northmore-Ball 2012; Northmore-Ball and Evans 2016).

Conclusions

Until recently, studies on class and religious cleavages have argued that both have progressively faded as societies have undergone modernization and secularization; however, recent work on class and religious cleavages has displayed a more complex picture of fluctuations and varied trends. Current studies are more explanatory than descriptive, focusing on a "top-down" approach to cleavages which demonstrates the ability of party elites to activate and de-activate *political* cleavages by offering more or less choice on relevant issue dimensions. This "top-down" approach indicates that the strength and over-time changes in cleavages are country-specific and can fluctuate depending on the dynamics of party competition. The ability of parties to shape cleavages is connected with the decline of the intergenerational transmission of partisanship (see van der Brug and Franklin, this volume), thus enabling party signals to more effectively influence voter decision-making. Though class voting is less pronounced than during the late-industrial era, economic and social differences between classes (namely *social* cleavages; see earlier discussion on the distinction between cleavages types) have persisted, and what the parties do and say to maintain or minimize class *political* cleavages, or to re-shape those cleavages with the rise of radical right parties and the decline of working class electoral participation, is significant. To summarize: the contributions of the seemingly contradictory approaches all point to a more general shift from vote choices being made based on long-term party loyalties to more fluid issue-based voting; class remains relevant but as the basis for issue positions rather than party loyalty.

Turning to religion, we find that, despite evidence of a general process of secularization in many Western societies, recent studies indicate that religious cleavages continue to be an important basis of party choice across many societies. In new democracies, particularly in Eastern Europe, religion has even undergone a revival, possibly providing a renewed basis of party preference. Again, party signals matter for levels of religious voting as they do for class.

In conclusion, the general pattern of development in this research tradition has been from descriptive concerns with more or less class/religious voting to an understanding of the sources of those differences in terms of the choices offered to voters, the dynamics of the relationships between parties and voters and, rather more weakly, examination of the mechanisms accounting for the relationship between social classes, religious groupings, and parties. These explanatory rather than descriptive concerns are likely to be the focus of new class and religious voting research in coming decades.

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11

IDEOLOGY AND ELECTORAL CHOICE

Martin Elff

Introduction

Few topics in Political Science appear as burdened with difficulties as the term "ideology." On the one hand, the term "ideological" is often used in political discussions to criticize or vilify opponents either as irrational and intransigent – as sticking to principles beyond reason – or as insincere – as masquerading special interests as a common good. On the other hand, the meaning of the term "ideology" in Political Science seems to have been "thoroughly muddied by diverse uses" (Converse 1964: 207). Yet the diversity of uses does not indicate that it is impossible to associate a meaning with the term. While "ideology" is used to refer to different phenomena in different areas of scholarship, this does rarely lead to disagreements about its denotation *within* a particular field. Furthermore, despite this diversity, the usages of the term are not unrelated. Usually they refer to a set of *abstract* or *general* ideas, distinct from parties', candidates' or citizens' positions on particular issues or from specific policy plans. Disregarding the more polemic uses of the term, "ideology" has been used to refer to (see also Sartori 1969a; Jost 2006; Knight 2006):

1. a set of ideas that justify a social or political state of affairs
2. a set of ideas that give the (usually economic) interests of a certain social group a moral or (more generally) normative appeal
3. a particular line or tradition of political thought, such as Liberalism, Conservatism, Socialism, Fascism, etc.
4. the set of ideas that determine the political aims and policy positions of a political party
5. factors that structure citizens' attitudes and values.

While the first four of these uses are coherent with Downs' definition of ideology as "a verbal image of the good society and of the chief means of constructing such a society" (Downs 1957: 96), it is the fifth of these that appears to be immediately relevant for voting behavior. But the third and the fourth uses of the term "ideology" are also relevant for voting behavior and its analysis, though in a less obvious way. Their relevance comes from the consideration that it would be surprising to find persistent and coherent patterns of voting if not for persistent and coherent differences between parties in terms of the polices they announce or promise to voters. These differences between parties may be related to their membership in a party family – for example, of the liberal, conservative or social democratic parties – which are each rooted in one of the grand traditions of political thought that emerged in the nineteenth century – that is, Liberalism, Conservatism, Socialism, etc. (see Heywood 2003). Yet while categorizing parties in party families may facilitate the comparative description of class voting or voting along religious-secular lines, it masks out the variability of parties' policy positions. If parties that compete for voters in a country become more similar in terms of their policy positions, announcements and promises, they give fewer incentives to voters from different social groups to diverge in terms of voting behavior. Thus the political convergence of parties of the left and the center/right has been suggested as an explanation of the decline in class voting in Western Europe (see, for example, Elff 2009 and Evans and Northmore-Ball in this volume).

The spatial theory of party competition in the tradition of Downs (1957) views parties' ideologies as positions in an abstract unidimensional space, the principal directions of which are typically identified with the labels "left" and "right" (when applied to European politics) or "liberal" and "conservative" (when applied to American politics). The idea of such an overarching political dimension that lies behind the various policy or issue positions is however not confined to the spatial theory of party competition, but also common in the empirical analysis of patterns in citizens' political opinions and attitudes. Therefore, the question of whether such "citizen ideologies" (as distinguished from party ideologies) are adequately described by a single dimension or by multiple dimensions will be a central one in this chapter as well as the question about the origins of such dimensions. Another question addressed in this chapter is whether ideologies can be the foundation of new lines of cleavage, especially if traditional social cleavages based on class and religion have faded away. Yet the first question to be addressed is to what degree citizens have ideologies at all, since it was argued early on (Converse 1964) that ideologically coherent patterns of citizens' attitudes and values are a rare phenomenon and that – at least in the United States of the 1950s – most citizens are (or were) "innocent of ideology" (but see Jost 2006; Bølstad in this volume).

The question of coherence in belief systems

In his seminal contribution "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," Philip Converse suggested substituting the "muddied" concept of ideology with the concept of a belief system, which he defines as "a configuration of attitudes and ideas in which the elements are bound together by some form of constraint or functional interdependence" (Converse 1964: 207). While such a "constraint" is understood as an *intra-individual* connection between these beliefs and ideas, so that the change of one idea or attitude would "psychologically" require the change of another idea or attitude, in actual empirical research such constraint is usually operationalized as a *correlation* between attitudes or ideas. Based on the low correlation among attitudes toward political issues that are related in content or in terms of their ideological significance, Converse argues that such belief systems in the (then) contemporary American public are quite rare, restricted to a thin elite of highly involved political activists and experts.

Intra-individual connections between beliefs and ideas are however not sufficient for the existence of correlations between ideas or attitudes in the general public, which poses a problem for the operationalization of constraint in terms of correlations. That is, if there is a high variety of *different* belief systems – each with a different pattern of constraint – the correlation among measurements of ideas and attitudes from different people may be quite low. For strong correlations to exist there must also be a high level of *polarization* between a small number of types of individual belief systems. Indeed, Converse's pessimistic assessment has been questioned and criticized repeatedly, if only for slightly different reasons. The first type of criticism was methodological. One argument, which goes back to Achen (1975), is that the low correlation among issue attitudes that Converse found were not indicative of a lack of constraint, but of a lack of reliability in attitude measures. The idea of inter-individually differing belief systems has led other authors to posit the existence of "hierarchical" or "vertical" patterns of constraint. These are constraints between abstract principles and attitudes toward the issues in a particular policy area that citizens might be particularly interested or engaged in (Peffley and Hurwitz 1985). The other type of criticism questioned the general relevance of the finding of low constraint. Thus it has been suggested that the apparent low level of constraint was a phenomenon of the halcyon American politics of the 1950s and that attitude constraint and polarization was much higher in the more turbulent 1970s (see, for example, Nie and Andersen 1974) and in the highly polarized politics of the current decade (see, for example, Jewitt and Goren 2016). Yet there are also disagreeing voices that state that partisan polarization and issue polarization between parties has increased, but not issue constraint (see, for example, Mason 2015). A result that still stands, however, is that ideological constraint is related to political sophistication and to education and indeed the gains in constraint appear to be restricted to the educated and politically engaged (see, for example, Jewitt and Goren 2016); but ideological constraint varies not only systematically across individuals but also across countries. For example, a high visibility of the welfare state also increases the constraint among attitudes toward the welfare state (Gingrich 2014).

As just discussed, there is evidence of systematic differences between individuals in terms of belief system constraint, at least if measured in terms of correlations among attitudes. Those correlations are however inter-individual patterns, while constraint really is a concept that concerns intra-individual patterns of attitudes. Thus the findings of variations over time and across countries may be the artifacts of variations in the polarization of attitudes, which in turn may be affected by the polarization at the level of political elites. On the other hand, it is quite plausible that the variations across individuals, in so far as they are related to education and political involvement, may indeed reflect variations in intra-individual constraint. To uncover these effects of political context and individuals' political sophistication, it is necessary to find ways to measure intra-individual constraint of political attitudes independent from correlations across individuals, which is still an unmet challenge (but see Erikson this volume).

Ideology as a means to facilitate electoral choice

A fundamental idea of the spatial theory of ideologies, which goes back to Downs' *Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957), is that they can be represented by locations on a single dimension, usually identified with a left–right or liberal–conservative axis: The more similar two ideologies are, the closer to each other they are on this axis. Extreme ideologies are more distant from the middle of the axis than centrist ideologies. In so far as ideology is relevant for citizens' voting decisions, they choose the party or candidate that has the closest to their own ideological position.

In Downs' version of the theory (1957), neither parties nor voters are interested in ideologies themselves. For parties and candidates, ideologies are just means to win elections. For voters, ideologies are means for the reduction of information costs. They simplify the choice between parties, because voters do not need to acquire detailed information about parties' potential government activities and to evaluate these in terms of their own well-being. Instead, voters can identify a party's notion of the good society and what place they themselves would have in it. That is, parties' or candidates' ideological positions are some sort of heuristics.

It is not immediately clear how this spatial notion of ideologies can be reconciled with the idea that they are descriptions of "good societies" and the way toward them. In order to be able to compare parties' ideological positions with their own position, they need to be able to have such ideological positions, and that means to have their own notion of a good society. This seems to require a certain degree of abstract thinking, which, as we saw previously, not many citizens are capable of or engaged in. Alternatively, one could assume that citizens do not care about the ideologies in themselves. Instead they look at ideologies only in terms of those aspects they are affected by. These aspects then do not need to lie on the same dimension as the ideologies. This idea was formalized by Hinich and Pollard (1981) and Enelow and Hinich (1982), who posit that voters care about parties' or candidates' positions on issues, but find it costly to learn about these positions directly. Instead, they use linear mappings to predict these positions from parties' or candidates' ideological positions. While this idea has nice mathematical properties, it actually begs the question of how citizens construct these mappings. Irrespective of whether these mappings are the product of logical inference or of learning from experience, they would constitute a considerable cognitive achievement. In fact, this idea of linear mappings between ideological positions and particular issue positions seem to fit together with the idea of attitude constraint manifested in correlations among attitudes: Like in the general factor analysis model, the less "noisy" individuals' mappings between ideological positions and issue positions are, the higher the absolute correlation among issue attitudes will be.

The idea of ideological distinctions as inferential devices is not restricted to research motivated by the spatial theory of voting. From cognitive psychology comes the idea of the left–right distinction as a *schema* (Conover and Feldman 1984). A schema is a cognitive structure that helps individuals to organize diverse experience. Schemas can have different levels of abstraction and are typically domain-specific, that is, used (only) in a particular area of experience. But this means that if the notions of "left" and "right" each refer to a schema or if the left–right axis is a schema, as it appears to be in West European politics (Fuchs and Klingemann 1990), it is not necessarily the only one. There may be other, general or domain-specific, schemata that are used as an alternative or as a supplement to the left–right schema to make sense of political information and to take positions on particular issues (see, for example, Medina 2015).

If voters do not care for each and every implication that an ideology has, then a complete and coherent belief system may not be necessary for ideological cues to be useful for them. But at least they will need a basic understanding of what it means for a party or candidate to be either "left" or "right," "liberal" or "conservative." Again it was Converse who brought dismal tidings: Only a small section of the citizenry – at least at the time of his writing – actively used ideological categories explicitly in their evaluation of parties and an only somewhat broader section appeared able to make sense of ideological labels when presented with them (Converse 1964). While results for West European countries are somewhat more favorable, there are still differences between educational groups in terms of recognition and understanding of "left" and "right," even though they appear small in comparison to the differences between the West European countries and the US (Klingemann 1972). Yet respondents in the study by Fuchs and Klingemann (1990) often use dichotomies of "progressive" vs. "conservative" and "communism" vs. "fascism" as interpretations of "left" and "right" and thus use categories no less abstract than the original terms, while they rarely use more concrete meanings such as "worker" vs. "entrepreneur" or "poor" vs. "rich." But if citizens are only able to paraphrase abstract terms with different abstract terms, there is room for doubt that they are able to make any specific inferences with regards to parties' or candidates' policy positions.

Even if a citizen is able to associate substantial issue content with labels such as "left" and "right" in a wide range of policy areas, and place themselves and parties correctly on a left–right scale, this will not prove that he or she uses left–right positions to *infer* positions on particular issues. While such a finding would be consistent with such a use, it is also possible that he or she has just merely learned, *after* picking up a certain set of positions, that certain positions and the use of "left" and "right" go together. To prove his or her inferential use of left–right positions, one will need to provide him or her with left–right positions of (fictitious) parties and candidates and record whether he or she makes correct predictions about these parties' issue positions. It appears that no research in this direction has been undertaken yet.

The content and dimensionality of "left" and "right"

It would be a fallacy to conclude from the ubiquity of the use of "left" and "right" as political categories that there exists a consensus about their issue content. This insight has led many scholars to look into the correlates of citizens' left–right self-placement. If these correlates are indicative of the content of "left" and "right," then there is ample evidence that it varies considerably across space (i.e., countries) and time (see, for example, van Elsas and van der Brug 2015).

Further, there is evidence that ideological positions cannot or can no longer be adequately described by positions on a single axis. A growing literature (see, for example, Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; Feldman and Johnston 2014) suggests that there are instead at least two ideological dimensions:

- an economic left–right or "materialist" dimension that contrasts
    - demands for redistribution of assets and income toward more equality, public provision of welfare benefits and an active role of the state in controlling the economy, with
    - an affirmation of the freedom from interventions into property rights and demands for the state to let markets run their course
- a "non-materialist," "post-materialist," "social," "authoritarian-libertarian" or "GAL/TAN" dimension that contrasts
    - the affirmation of citizens' political rights and individuals' liberties to choose their way of life, with
    - an emphasis of authority of the state to constrain or coerce citizens in the name of public security and an affirmation of traditional norms of piety and modesty.

The notion of two ideological dimensions has become popular in the literature that postulates that a value change from materialist to post-materialist priorities has occurred. This value change is supposed to have led to a confrontation between "old politics" and "new politics," which cuts across traditional left–right alignments based on economic interests and class divisions (see, for example, Inglehart 1984). But this second dimension is arguably a quite old one, which derives from religious-secular divisions and conflicts about the contrast between individual freedom and the authority of the national state, conflicts that go back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and that have become manifest in the divergent ideological movements of Liberalism and Conservatism. Considering that in some cases the authority of the nation-state could get into conflict with Catholic church religiosity, it might be reasonable to distinguish *two* non-economic ideological dimensions (see, for example, Elff 2009), one contrasting individual way-of-life liberties with traditional-religious norms and one contrasting citizens' rights with the authority of the nation-state (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Elff and Rossteutscher 2017).

So how many dimensions of ideology exist? The significance of the answer to this question depends on whether ideological dimensions are genuine (latent) factors or epiphenomenal to clusters of ideas. In the first case, if ideologies are genuine latent factors, they will restrict the degrees of freedom of positional changes by parties – for example, by restricting them to movements on a single left–right axis. The number of ideological dimensions could then be determined by a combination of theoretical reasoning and sophisticated analysis of data on parties' electoral platforms and/or voters' issue preferences. In the second case, if ideologies are primarily sets or clusters of ideas, each cluster being held together by a common origin and/or logical or factual coherence, then ideological dimensions are a mere means for the description of differences among these idea clusters. Sophisticated data analysis may still lead to results that suggest a representation of ideologies by a small number of dimensions, but the implications of such findings will be limited and likely to be dependent on context and time. But the different clusters/dimensions may also be ephemeral side-effects of an evolution of the meaning of left–right itself as new issues arise that will eventually be absorbed into the left–right dimension (van der Brug and Franklin in this volume), perhaps as a pre-condition for their having effects on party support.

Operational and symbolic ideology

It is tempting to equate citizens' self-placement on a scale with ideological labels such as "left" and "right" or "liberal" and "conservative," etc. with actually having corresponding ideological orientations. Yet if someone reports a "moderately leftist" score of 3 on a 10-point left–right scale, for example, then this does not imply that he or she will support all the issue stances that a party or candidate with such an ideological position will assume. Instead, respondents' left–right or liberal–conservative self-placements and their issue positions may empirically diverge and in some instances they do. Ellis and Stimson (2009) therefore distinguish between an "operational ideology" and a "symbolic ideology." An operational ideology is a coherent set of attitudes and beliefs similar to Converse's concept of a belief system. An individual's symbolic ideology is his or her self-identification with ideological labels, such as "left" or "right," or with groups denoted by such labels, such as "liberals" or "conservatives." The phenomenon of "conflicted conservatives," who identify themselves with an ideological symbol without actually supporting any of the policies that members of the political elite would ascribe to it (Ellis and Stimson 2012), are an instructive example for such a divergence.

While the concept of symbolic ideology suggests that it is causally prior to vote decisions and to some degree also to operational ideology, other interpretations of ideological self-identification view it as a *consequence* of partisanship and/or party preference. Thus when Inglehart and Klingemann (1976) examine the relative influence of value orientations and partisanship on left–right self-placement, they find that the latter dominates. Thus the question may arise about the relative priority of party identification and partisanship on the one hand and ideological self-placement or symbolic ideological identification on the other. Both causal pathways appear equally plausible. If partisanship is a product of socialization (by parents and perhaps also by peer groups) and the meanings of ideological "labels" are learned from their application to the policy positions of the party one identifies with, then partisanship is causally prior. This is likely to be the case in the US where the ideological polarization between parties used to be low (even if it has increased recently). In contrast, if political socialization does not lead so much to the identification with parties than with ideological labels or ideologically labeled groups, then ideological self-identification is likely to condition individuals' adoption of issue positions and electoral choices, which may then coagulate into partisan attachments. This is more likely to be the case in countries with several small to medium-size parties that sort themselves into ideological "camps," such as in pre-1990 Italy. The causal relation between partisanship and ideological identification may however be reciprocal if the party system is sufficiently concentrated so that certain parties can, at least in public perception, be the exclusive "owners" of particular ideological brands. For example, if there is a major party calling itself the "Socialist Party" or similar and if this party describes itself as "moderate leftist" – as in many West European countries before 1990 – then partisan attachments and ideological identifications are likely to develop in tandem. It is of course difficult to disentangle these causal pathways empirically, because this requires panel survey studies with the right instruments. These are quite rare, with the various studies conducted by Michael Lewis-Beck and his co-workers on France as exceptions (e.g., Fleury and Lewis-Beck 1993). They find ideology to be a cause of partisanship rather than the other way around – though the findings are consistent with a view that party choice is a cause of both (see Dinas in this volume).

Psychological underpinnings

Much of the discussion about the concept of ideology and the causes and consequences of ideological thought and conceptualization considered so far can be characterized by a "top-down" perspective, where ideologies are originally systems of thought adopted by parties and political elites, which then color the perceptions of those who identify with those parties (see Heath in this volume). A more psychologically oriented "bottom-up" perspective can be contrasted with this (Jost, Federico and Napier 2009). In this perspective, ideologies are patterns of sentiments and cognition, rooted in individuals' personality, their particular situation or experience, or even their genetic makeup.

Much of the research tradition on the psychological underpinnings of ideology goes back to Adorno et al.'s (1950) *Authoritarian Personality* and focuses on personality traits that dispose individuals toward right-wing authoritarian attitudes (see, for example, Altemeyer 1981) or hierarchical relations between groups (see, for example, Pratto et al. 1994). This research thus favors a uni-polar conception of ideologies or is restricted to a particular ideological content. Later authors focus on more general attitudes such as (in)egalitarianism and resistance to change and their relation to liberal–conservative or left–right self-placement (see, for example, Thorisdottir et al. 2007). Explanations of these phenomena appear to draw from the full inventory of psychological factors. They include situational factors such as perceived threat (see, for example, Jost 2009), psychological needs (see, for example, Thorisdottir et al. 2007), experiences during youth and childhood (see, for example, Block and Block 2006), personality factors such as the "Big Five" (Jost 2006), or even physiological and genetic factors (Smith et al. 2011; Funk et al. 2013).

Another area of psychological research is less focused on the content of ideological thinking than on the psychological foundation of what Sartori (1969b) calls the ideological mind-set. The central concept of this research is "motivated reasoning" (Redlawsk 2002), which involves not so much the deductive search for implications and consequences from certain premises as it tries to find reasons to justify a given and predetermined political decision – that is, to *rationalize* them. In particular, such research focuses on to what degree and under what conditions individuals retain certain political positions or preferences, despite being faced with factual information that contradicts the reasons that appear to justify these positions or preferences (see, for example, Kahan 2012).

While these lines of research contribute important insights into phenomena that are related to ideologies in the various meanings discussed at the beginning of this chapter, care must be taken that phenomena such as resistance to change are not confused with ideologies themselves. Furthermore, it seems worthwhile to explore the relation of psychological factors to politics in more refined ways than with reference to left–right or liberal–conservative self-placements. Finally, it appears that psychological factors are perhaps rather moderators than primary factors since, for example, the need for security varies between Eastern and Western Europe in terms of the relation with left–right self-placements (Thorisdottir et al. 2007).

Outlook: an ideology-based cleavage structure?

Apart from giving an overview of the role played by ideology in shaping electoral choices, a main purpose of this chapter is to examine whether ideologies can be the basis of new political cleavages after the traditional ones based on social structure have faded away, as often is claimed (see Evans and Northmore-Ball in this volume). As it turns out, the answer is (as ever so often) "it depends." In the present case, it depends on the meaning of the terms "cleavage" and "ideology."

While the concept of cleavage is no more clear than that of ideology, for reasons of space the following "minimal" definition will have to suffice: A cleavage is a persistent division of groups with systematically divergent patterns in political behavior, including patterns of voting (this minimal definition is inspired by Rae and Taylor 1970). A "social cleavage" is a group division where members of different groups differ in their position in the system of social stratification or other major aspects of their social life – such as religiosity or church attendance or religious non-affiliation. An "ideological cleavage" then would be a division between groups that differ in their ideologies, irrespective of their social position. Since one can distinguish between symbolic ideology and operational ideology, one can analogously distinguish between symbolic ideological cleavages and operational ideological cleavages.

While stable programmatic divisions between parties may be important for the existence of social cleavages, they are obviously even more important for cleavages based on operational ideology. It will be hard to understand why voters with different operational ideologies vote for different parties, if not for differences between parties in terms of ideological messages or ideologically relevant policy proposals. But the existence of such cleavages also requires a sufficient amount of constraint among voters' political opinions and attitudes to produce such coherent responses to parties' messages. Clearly, the dependence of such cleavages on party agency makes it unlikely that such cleavages will be uniform across countries and over time. If most citizens lack the necessary structuration of opinions and attitudes, it will be unlikely that such cleavages will range deep into society, if they occur at all. The matter may be different in the case of cleavages based on symbolic ideology, at least at first glance. If there are groups defined by the identification with ideological symbols and if certain parties can be associated with these symbols, then a more or less stable pattern of voter alignments may result. But it is possible that symbolic and operational ideology do not match, and it is plausible that such a mismatch undermines such ideological cleavages. Whether this is empirically the case is still an open question.

Another question is whether the psychological dispositions that are at the center of the "bottom-up" perspective could form the basis of new political cleavages. On the one hand, being affective dispositions, they are less cognitively demanding than operational ideologies and thus potentially more widespread. On the other hand, the psychological dispositions on which the "bottom-up" approach focuses are not really ideologies in any of the senses discussed at the beginning of this chapter. It is however plausible that these dispositions contribute to the psychological underpinnings of the value conflicts that lead to the tension between liberal and conservative ideologies.

The discussion so far focused on the possibility that ideological cleavages emerge at all. This leaves open the question about the content of potential ideological cleavages, provided that the conditions are met for their manifestation: If ideological cleavages substituted social cleavages, what would they be about? While inventive scholars will always try to demonstrate otherwise, it does not seem plausible that ideological cleavages will result in the emergence of something radically new. First, ideologies with mass appeal cannot be invented out of the blue, but take time to evolve, so that socialism, liberalism, conservatism, Christian democracy, etc. are likely here to stay. Second, the major issues of the day, inequality and immigration, are far from alien to the historical currents of ideology. Inequality has always been a foundational concern of socialism, and ethnic divisions, which are created or highlighted by immigration, have been exploited by right-wing nationalism since the beginning on the twentieth century. The new populist movements virulent in certain European countries and elsewhere are thus not much more than old wine in new bottles, while socialism may again become resurgent should the parties of the moderate left cease or undo their attempt to re-define themselves in terms of a "New Center" or a "Third Way." The only genuinely new ideological current that has emerged in the last few decades is ecologism. Yet its electoral impact has remained limited, even though demands for fighting pollution and wildlife protection have often been picked up by the "traditional" political left or even addressed by supranational regulations. Whether further climate change lends new fervor to this movement remains a matter of future research.

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12

PARTY IDENTIFICATION

Shaun Bowler

Introduction

The classical definition of party identification is that it is a "sense of personal attachment which the individual feels towards the [party] of his (*sic*) choice" (Campbell, Gurin and Miller 1954: 88–89). That is, voters have long-running attachments to particular parties regardless of candidates or issues in specific elections. Voters may defect from "their" party every now and then – they may choose a candidate from another party – but over the long run, more often than not, voters will have a homing tendency and return to support "their" party for which they have a sense of attachment. Party identification is probably the central conceptual building block in behavioral research and is a standard, one might even say required, factor to be included in models of vote choice, being seen as a precursor to the vote and party preference. One crude indication of its importance is found in Google Scholar where a search for the terms "party identification" AND "political science" produces over 27,000 results. Clearly, such a large literature presents challenges for any review. This chapter on party identification is therefore necessarily limited and organizes a discussion of party identification around three main questions. The first question is: what does party identification do? The second is: how (and why) do people develop party identification? And the third question asks: what kinds of variations do we see in party identification?

What does party identification do?

One of the more important features of party identification is that it not only helps to shape choices directly by capturing a long-term loyalty or standing decision to support a given party, it also shapes choices indirectly by helping make sense of information we receive. Perhaps the clearest way in which this happens is when considering economic information. We know that voters take government performance into account when making their choices: incumbents are punished for bad performance news, rewarded for good. But what makes performance "good" or "bad" is not simply a matter of an objective number but may also be subject to interpretation. Once there is room for interpretation there is room for information to be filtered by party identification. A 7 percent unemployment rate under a Conservative government may be seen as a good level of unemployment so far as Conservative identifiers are concerned, not so good if the voter identifies with Labour (see, for example, Wlezien, Franklin and Twiggs 1997). It is not just economic news that is filtered in this way. Anduiza, Gallego and Muñoz (2013) show that party identifiers are even willing to turn a blind eye toward corruption.

Party identifications also provide short cuts that reduce the amount of information voters need to process. Voters do not need to develop complex ideologies or think out positions for specific issues; using parties as heuristics allows people to develop information short cuts and to cue-take from party leaders. Brader, Tucker and Duell (2013), for example, demonstrate some of the limits to cue-taking but also show it in action, concluding that more established parties are likely to be able to send cues that voters respond to with regard to specific policies.

Party identifications are also associated with several positive attributes that help support what was termed in early literature as a "democratic political culture." We know that party identification is associated with interest in politics and elections. Those with strong identifications are more likely to be engaged in the system – to pay attention to politics and to turn out and vote. That said, one of the difficulties of this list of functions is that the direction(s) of causal relationships are not always clearly established or simple. Take, for example the relationship between party identification and interest in politics: is it the case that those who are interested in politics develop a party identification? Or does party id strengthen an interest in politics? Or does the relationship go both ways? At the very least, what this discussion suggests is that the familiar model specifications in which party is included side by side with interest, or, alternatively, where interest is predicted by partisanship, probably over-states the size of the relationship.

Party identification is also useful at the level of the system as well as individual voters. Party loyalties help promote turnout and also provide a tie between individuals and the political system and gives people a way of locating themselves in the wide political context. These effects, in addition to the individual level effects on interest, attention and turnout, are all consistent with a vibrant and active democratic process and so are valuable from a system perspective. Consequently, aggregate levels of party identification among the electorate are often seen as a marker for the overall health of a democratic system since those levels are associated with levels of engagement and turnout.

Take, for example, the pattern we see in Figure 12.1, which shows the relationship between party identification and a sense of whether people feel elections make a difference.

Figure 12.1 displays aggregate level data from CSES 2 and CSES 3.[1] We find a bivariate correlation of 0.41 (p = 0.0002, N = 75) between the national level percentage of people who identify with a party and the national level percentage of people who respond that elections make a difference. A similar, if somewhat weaker, relationship exists between the aggregate level percentage of those who say they are close to a party with the percentage of those responding that they are "very" satisfied with democracy (correlation = 0.26, p = 0.019, N = 78). We will return to definitional issues relating to "closeness" to a party and other issues arising from Figure 12.1 below. For the moment, the point made by Figure 12.1 is simply to provide some evidence that there is indeed a relationship between partisanship and system level indicators of democratic health.

The short answer to the question of what do party identifications do is that "they do a lot." Given the value of partisanship to both citizens and political systems alike it is not surprising that a large body of literature has considered how citizens acquire partisanship.

Why (and how) do we have party identifications?

One of the major distinctions to be made is whether partisanship is either a consequence of socialization or simply a matter of habituation. Both strands of thought are present in the

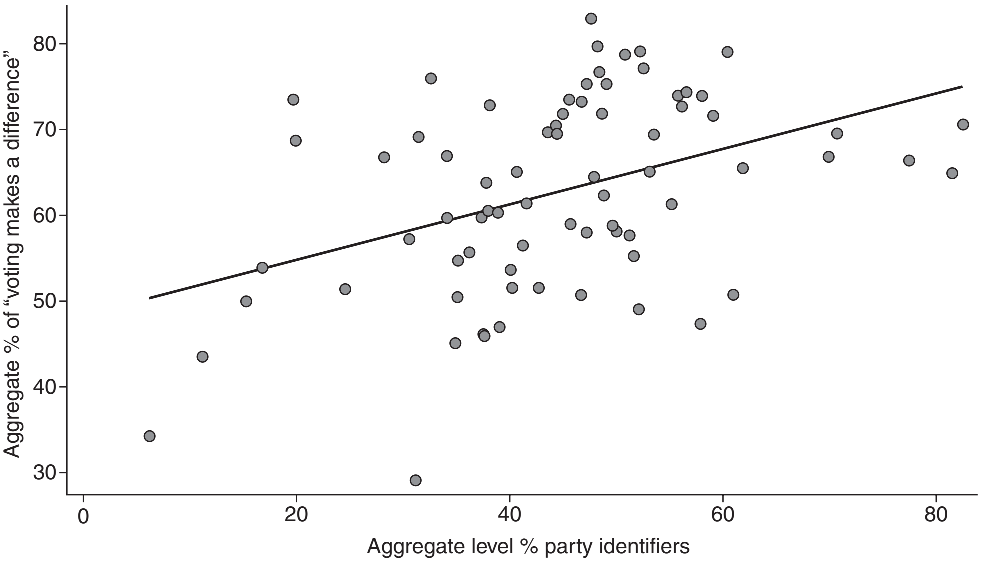

Figure 12.1 Who people vote for makes a difference

literature and, as we will see, both are able to point to evidence in their support. Although the degree to which party identification is seen as a property of one rather than the other does seems to depend in part on where, and when, we look. We begin, however, where the literature on party identification began, which is an understanding of party id in terms of socialization.

The earliest work on party identification, that of the 1960s and 1970s, emphasized childhood socialization and that children "acquired" the party loyalties of their parents. Research shows that children share the party loyalties of their parents to a surprising degree. One set of scholars highlight that the size of effect is comparable to religiosity:

> The high levels of concordance [between parents and children] found for partisan orientations compare favorably with those for levels of religiosity, as indexed by frequency of church attendance and beliefs about the inerrancy of the Bible. Parents are expected to exert a powerful influence on the religious practices and beliefs of their children.
>
> *(Jennings, Stoker and Bowers 2009: 796)*

A more recent body of work has begun to revisit those earlier findings and found that those earlier findings largely persist (Jennings and Markus 1984: Jennings, Stoker and Bowers 2009)

> As expected (…), children are more likely to adopt their parents' political orientations if the family is highly politicized and if the parents provide consistent cues over time. The direct transmission model is robust, as it withstands an extensive set of controls. Early acquisition of parental characteristics influences the subsequent nature of adult political development.
>
> *(Jennings, Stoker and Bowers 2009: 782)*

Other work on the psychology of vote choice anchored an understanding of partisanship in social identity theory in which citizens chose to identify with a group and/or the relationship between parties and groups (left parties and labor unions; center-right parties and religious affiliation) meant that voters would acquire partisanship more or less as part of their group-based social identity. To the extent that groups in society are becoming more complex and/or people join multiple groups then we may see these kinds of relationships shift. While there has been some renewal of interest in childhood and adolescent socialization processes, there has been less new work on the social identity basis of partisanship. Green, Palmquist and Schickler (2004) represent something of an exception but there is less work done in the comparative context (Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2004; Sapiro 2004). One exception is that of Huber, Kernell and Leoni (2005) with a study that uses a 25-country sample from CSES 1 and concludes that: "We find that voters are most likely to form party attachments when group identities are salient and complimentary" (Huber, Kernell and Leoni 2005: 365).

If partisanship is seen as something that develops from fundamental social contexts like family or group this suggests that citizens acquire – and so hold onto – partisanship in an almost unthinking and unconscious way. To borrow a phrase from Medeiros and Noël, these works reinforce the sense that party identification can be seen as a "prepolitical and arational" foundation of political behavior, a "psychological attachment" based on affect more than on cognition, and one likely to stand the test of time because it was anchored in "a person's self-concept" (Medeiros and Noël 2013: 3–4).[2]

To the extent that party identifications are rooted in "arational" factors there may be no need to explain why people choose to have them. The answer is that it simply is not a choice for people. Yet, despite the socialization processes and identifications and despite the usefulness of party identification, it is less clear why voters have them in the first place. That is, it is worth asking whether, left to themselves, voters would choose to acquire a party identification. While party identifications have many benefits once acquired, those benefits may not provide sufficient reason for an individual to acquire a party identification to begin with. It would likely seem to be the case that individual voters may care very little for system level functions – for example, they may care little that get out the vote campaigns are easier for parties if voters are staunch partisans. Voters may even not care too much about how party identifications may make them feel better about the political system. After all, a body of evidence shows that, for many people, politics is not just low salience but an irritant (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002). In acquiring a party identification voters choose a number of frustrations – including the frustration for many minor party supporters of supporting a party that never wins. To borrow an analogy from the sporting world, it is almost as if someone who does not like soccer becomes a fan of a team perennially at the bottom of the league. On the face of it, then, it is surprising that voters keep hold of party identification, especially in the face of repeated frustrations and irritations. Yet the evidence suggests voters not only hold on to party identifications but that those identifications strengthen over the life cycle.

It is possible, however, to see voters developing party identifications without having the need to invoke social identity theory or childhood socialization as explanations. Before moving on to develop this point, it is important to note that, even in the earlier work on party identification socialization, life experiences had some role to play. Someone's life experiences could interrupt and in some instances over-ride early socialization. Dinas' (2014) work is perhaps the best recent example of demonstrating this point. For Dinas, the combination of politically engaged parents with politically engaged children can lead to changes in political views later in life that may lead people to differ from their parents. Nevertheless, despite the role of experiences, the received view of partisanship often emphasized socialization processes within the family, or within social groups.

A consideration of life experiences helps to open the door to explanations of party identification not grounded in socialization but grounded more in habituation. While socialization processes of various kinds may provide a sufficient explanation for the existence of party identification, such processes may not provide a necessary explanation. After all, parties and party government are a highly visible, even ever-present, part of society. Even between elections it is hard to avoid seeing or hearing from the main political parties. It is thus hard for citizens to avoid having some response to political parties as agents or actors in the society. At election time the prominence of political parties in the media and public debate peaks. This prominence of political parties must go some way to explaining why people may acquire partisanship independent of the kind of long-term socialization/social identity processes.

One group of voters that is interesting in terms of whether/how voters develop partisanship separate from socialization are citizens in the new democracies. In these countries party systems were formed anew, implying that there is no relevant childhood socialization experience.[3] In the wave of democratizations in the 1990s and 2000s, people were suddenly asked about their relationship to parties. Again referring back to Figure 12.1 and the CSES aggregate level data, simply distinguishing between "old" and "new" (< 25 years old) democracies with a dummy variable produces a correlation of –0.31 (p = 0.005, N = 78). Dalton and Weldon (2007: 192) rightly note the chicken and egg problem for new democracies: partisanship promotes stable party systems, which in turn promote partisanship, but when party systems are unstable and/or electoral volatility is high there may be a less stable set of party identifications among individual votes. Mainwaring and Zoco (2007) highlight the importance of the conditions at the start of democratic formation as a factor shaping the stability of party systems: they find that newer democracies tend to have higher levels of volatility, which is consistent with there being lower levels of partisanship in newer democracies.

Even if we see party identification as a response to circumstance – to "nature" not "nurture" – there still remains a role for socialization in the acquisition of party id. For example, "the third-wave democracies also display evidence of latent socialization carried over from the old regime. The results suggest that party identities can develop in new democracies if the party system creates the conditions to develop these bonds" (Dalton and Weldon 2007: 179). But citizens in new democracies do eventually begin to acquire partisanship, even absent socialization processes of the kind seen in more established democracies, in part because elections are held, and so parties become prominent mobilizing forces (Dalton and Weldon 2007: 192). A version of this pattern is also seen in Kroh (2014), who shows that partisanship is endogenous to the system, coming about as a consequence of holding elections.

Adult immigrants are also interesting from the point of view of understanding whether partisanship can develop absent socialization. Such voters do not have childhood experiences that socialize them into the party system of their new home. Immigrants may bring with them party leanings from their previous home (Wals 2011, 2013) – hence there is still scope for a version of the socialization argument – but obviously that scope is limited. In new democracies, some families still have memories of pre-dictatorship political patterns and some immigrants may remember the affiliations/orientations of their native country. In both instances, those memories may persist and color current orientations. But, while there may be some similarities between ideology of parties between the old and new countries, or the same country in a previous generation, the current set of parties facing voters will be quite different. Even immigrants from one established democracy to another and with similar institutions – say Canada to the UK or vice versa – will face a very different choice set: the NDP is not the same as the Labour Party and the Canadian Conservative Party has a different set of concerns than the UK Conservative Party. Once in their new home, however, it is expected that people will acquire party attachments as part of their new citizenship. In fact, acquiring a party identification is almost seen as part and parcel of citizenship for new citizens.

A body of literature in the US case has begun to address the question of how people orient themselves to their new home (see, for example, Cain, Kiewiet and Uhlaner 1991; Wong 2000; Hajnal and Lee 2011). As we saw in the case of new democracies, the longer a person is in the political system the more likely it is that s/he will develop a party predisposition. Wong (2000), for example, finds that:

> A strong relationship between the number of years an immigrant has lived in the US and the acquisition of partisanship is found. Further analysis shows that naturalization, gains in English language skills, and media use also contribute to immigrants' acquisition of partisanship. This study reveals that a process of reinforcement through exposure to the political system underlies the development of political attitudes across diverse immigrant groups.
>
> *(Wong 2000: 341)*

The experience from both new democracies and new citizens shows that early socialization is not a necessary condition for the acquisition of party affiliation. People can, and do, develop party identifications simply as a consequence of being in the system itself. To use the phrase from Medeiros and Noël, there can be a "cognitive basis" to partisanship. In itself this should not be surprising; parties and elections are prominent features of news and life in any democracy. It seems reasonable, then, to expect people to develop some kind of response to political parties. While there is scope for an argument based in socialization processes, it seems that a socialization argument is unlikely to offer a complete understanding of party identification. Nevertheless, it does seem that a cognitive argument may also fail to offer a complete explanation of party identification; a point we return to below.

How does party identification vary?

We consider two sources of variation: variation across countries and over time.

As the simple descriptive patterns in Figure 12.1 show, the level of attachment to political parties varies considerably across nations. Averaged across all countries, 44 percent of people said they were close to a political party. The range around that average, however, is substantial, spreading from around 6 percent at the low end (Thailand) to 80 percent at the high end (Australia). As we noted above, some of that variation is attributable to variation in the stage of democratic development. But other cross-system variations are attributable to other factors.

One misleadingly simple issue is that of translating party identification into languages other than English. Schickler and Green (1997: 454) and Sinnott (1998), for example, document issues with translation between countries. Appendix A lists some notes on question wording taken from the CSES 3 survey, which give a sense of the different wording across nations. Even accepting that the phrasing "close to" is a reasonable representation of party identification as a concept we can see that the concept does not always travel easily across linguistic boundaries.

For Blais et al. (2001), survey responses on party identification are strongly affected by question wording and the relationship between party identification and variables such as party and leader ratings and voting behavior "does not quite conform to theoretical expectations" (Blais et al. 2001: 5). The results of Blais et al. are worth quoting at some length:

> The traditional question wording suggests that somewhere between two thirds (in Canada) and seven eighths (in Britain) of the electorate think of themselves as partisans. Yet, when the same people are asked if they think of themselves as close to

> a party, the percentages of identifiers drop to between two and three fifths (Canada and the United States respectively). The overall average for the three countries goes from 76% to 48%.
>
> *(Blais et al. 2001: 18)*[4]

At least one part of the issue is what to do with respondents who say they have "no identification" (Blais et al. 2001: 18). In the US case this has also surfaced in terms of how to address "independents" or those who "identify" as Independent. In 1954, the time of *The American Voter*, roughly 97 percent of the Californian electorate were registered either Democrat or Republican. By 2014 the share of registration by the two main parties had dropped to around 72 percent with roughly 25 percent of Californians reporting that they were "Independent." Independent voters are a source of some discussion within the US literature. For the most part, these have been interpreted as being partisans "really." In surveys, Independents are pushed to respond to a question over which of the two parties they really prefer. In this way the standard 5-point scale (Strong Democrats, Weak Democrats, Independents, Weak Republicans, Strong Republicans) can become a one-dimensional 7-point scale (Strong Democrats, Weak Democrats, Leaning Democrat, Independents, Leaning Republican, Weak Republicans, Strong Republicans). Part of the problem with doing this, even if Independents are "really" some form of partisan, is it undermines the argument to the effect that partisanship is a meaningful or appealing form of social identity. If social identity is an important component of partisanship then if a sizable share of voters see a social desirability bias pressing toward denying that identity it is hard to see how partisanship overall functions in the way it was originally thought. More worrisome for those who see partisanship in largely one-dimensional terms is that many Independents simply are not "really" partisans. Some Independents are quite critical of parties and the party system and their independent status does not so much reflect a lack of affect so much as disaffection from the choices on offer. In other words, in the US context, it seems that while some Independents are "really" partisan supporters of the two main parties some others are quite different. In practice, however, voters are generally presented with just two parties from which to choose, meaning that when we look at voting, Independents appear partisan.

Comparative work raises the question of whether the concept of party identification travels outside the US. Thomassen (1993) goes furthest to unsettle the value of party identification as a concept outside the US by arguing that, at least in the Dutch case, "party identification is not causally prior to the vote but simply a reflection of the vote and therefore causally posterior" (Thomassen 1993: 266) in part because there is instability over time – partisanship will track vote choice. Possibly related to Thomassen's concern, the long-standing discussion in political science relates to whether party identification is multi-dimensional or not, even in the US case. In the US the existence of a two-party system means that partisanship is sometimes represented as an interval level scale ranging from Strong Democrat to Strong Republican. In multiparty systems, such a representation does not make much sense (are weakly identifying German Greens to the left of or the right of strongly identifying SPD supporters?) but even in the US case the argument is persuasive that there is, in effect, both a policy distance dimension and also an affective dimension.

Other sources of cross-national variation are more systematic. At least some of the differences involve institutional variation: some institutions reinforce partisanship. At its simplest, ballots can differ in their presentation of what voters are choosing between – parties or candidates. Electoral systems will also permit or deny voters the opportunity to vote for one or many candidates. Furthermore, electoral systems – through their effects on the incentives facing parties and candidates – will offer many or few choices. Where voters are given multiple choices over candidates and parties – as under the Single Transferable Vote – it is likely that they will be less dug in on party choices. Huber, Kernell and Leoni (2005) find "that institutions that assist voters in retrospectively evaluating parties – specifically, strong party discipline and few parties in government – increase partisanship" (Huber, Kernell and Leoni 2005: 365). We see institutional effects, too, within the US. Norrander, for example, finds that "cross-state variation in independent identification is due to variations in state political characteristics such as interparty competition organizational strength of parties, type of primary, and primary turnout" (Norrander 1989: 516; see also Burden and Greene 2000).

Change over time is the other element of how partisanship may vary. Different schools of thought emphasize different sides of this coin: those grounded more in psychology and sociology emphasizing the stability of party attachments. Not surprisingly, if one's relationship to parties is anchored in one's sense of self then it is likely to be more stable than unstable over time. Sources of change in party id within an individual have, then, tended to come from models more grounded in economics. The standard way of seeing change at work is in Fiorina's "retrospective voting" model in which partisanship is seen as a summary measure updated by performance assessments. If – as does seem to be the case – party operates as a strong perceptual filter, then the rate of updating will necessarily be affected: strong partisans will only very slowly take on board negative information about their party. Neundorf and Adams (2015) show that issue preferences both influence partisanship but are, in turn, influenced by partisanship.

Neundorf, Stegmueller and Scotto (2011) use German panel data to show that the electorate – perhaps not surprisingly – is heterogeneous: there are groups of stable partisans with a strong affective attachment and others who are more performance driven and – hence – more fluid or "flexible." These authors argue for a concept of bounded partisanship in which voters stay within a particular party but with varying degrees of attachment. So, in a sense, they rely on multi-dimensionality to explore variation in affect as much as variation across party. Flexible partisans do not necessarily move to another party but, rather, to some version of "independence" (Neundorf, Stegmueller and Scotto 2011: 476). This is evidence that is, at least in passing, consistent with the idea that partisanship is two- and not one-dimensional. That is, partisan Social Democrats may blow hot and cold on their party over time, but remain Social Democrats; which means, in turn, that what we mean by stability or instability in party identification turns, at least in part, on whether we are considering change in the degree of affect toward the same party over time a measure of instability or just wish to consider change in party preference over time.

Discussion

This review has highlighted several persistent difficulties about the measure and use of party identification as a concept. There are, for example, questions about measurement which, at the very least, mean that it is probably not appropriate to treat party identification as an interval measure in statistical models (see in particular Neundorf, Stegmueller and Scotto 2011 and the literature reviewed there) in part because the measure is multi- rather than uni-dimensional. There is also a lot to be said for a cognitive approach to partisanship because such a model offers a way to explain change in partisanship over time by an individual. Arguments about socialization and generational change can help us understand change at the level of the cohort or possibly level of the electorate but seem less well-suited to helping understand change at the level of the individual. More to the point, experience of both adult immigrants and newly emerged democracies suggest that while socialization arguments may well explain party identification they fail to specify necessary conditions. That is, it is possible for party identification to develop absent socialization. Moreover, one of the consistent patterns we see in the literature is that party identification is endogenous to many features of the system. At its narrowest, party identification is endogenous to choosing from the set of parties running. This choice set obviously varies cross-nationally but can also vary within a nation across federal boundaries: the Scottish National Party does not run in England, the Christian Social Union does not run candidates outside Bavaria and so on. But it also seems to be the case that features of party loyalty vary by electoral system and other institutional arrangements. These variations in party identification by context would seem more amenable to analysis based on a cognitive approach to party identification. They are also, to some extent, under-studied. How and why voters change party allegiance – and the role of the parties themselves in conditioning those changes – seem to be not well understood.

While a more cognitive approach does have considerable promise, especially when it comes to understanding changes in identification, such an approach cannot help explain the affective component of party identification. If there is anything distinctive about partisanship as a concept it is that affective component. We know from work in other areas of political behavior (e.g., Valentino et al. 2011) that the emotional aspect to politics is an important one. At the risk of some over-simplifying, there are at least some analogies between party identification and sport fandom, although it is possible to over-state the correspondence. For example:

> When sports fans identify strongly with a team, they tend to experience more extreme feelings than those who identify weakly with a team. Among the affective consequences of sports fan identification … are level of arousal, sympathy, post-game affect and enjoyment.
>
> *(Dietz-Uhler and Lanter 2008: 106)*

All of which translate fairly readily into reactions at election time and relate to the politically relevant factors noted earlier, such as interest in and engagement with the political process, although the analogy does fall down when pushed too far. Nevertheless, discussing these issues is easier if we do conceptualize partisanship as multi-dimensional rather than uni-dimensional since that does allow us to break apart the question of party choice from the question of affect. It is entirely possible, of course, that ideology and affect are correlated: more extreme parties may be associated with more extreme affect. But we can only explore these issues if we adopt a more multi-dimensional approach to party identification.

Party identification has been an invaluable construct in helping us to understand a range of political behaviors among mass publics since its introduction into the discipline. But there are some difficulties to be aware of even as we continue to rely on party identification as a concept. Despite its flaws, however, there seems to be no construct in the literature ready to rival party identification as a guide to vote voice. Party identification will remain a central component of our understanding political behavior for the foreseeable future.

Appendix A: selected notes on wording of "close to a party" question from CSES 3 codebook

ELECTION STUDY NOTES – AUSTRALIA (2007):
This variable was reconstructed from party identification question B1: "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as Liberal, Labor, National or what?"

ELECTION STUDY NOTES – BRAZIL (2010):
The wording in the Brazilian questionnaire slightly deviates from the original CSES question. It was asked as follows: "In general, is there any political party that you like?"

ELECTION STUDY NOTES – LATVIA (2010):
The wording in the Latvian questionnaire deviates from the CSES standard. The question asked was: "Do you feel yourself a little closer to one of the political parties than the others?"

ELECTION STUDY NOTES – MEXICO (2009):
Note that the Mexican wording deviates from the original CSES question. It was asked as follows: "Regardless of which party you voted for during the last election, in general, do you sympathize with any political party in particular?"

ELECTION STUDY NOTES – NETHERLANDS (2010):
Question text: "Do you think of yourself as an adherent to a certain political party?"

ELECTION STUDY NOTES – TAIWAN (2008):
Note that in the Taiwanese election study specific parties were named within the question text. It was asked as follows: "Among the main political parties in our country, including the KMT, DPP, NP, PFP and TSU, do you think of yourself as leaning towards any particular party?"

ELECTION STUDY NOTES – UNITED STATES (2008):

1. "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican or an Independent?"
2. "If R considers self a Democrat/Republican: Would you call yourself a strong or a not very strong Democrat/Republican?"
3. "If R's party preference is Independent, no preference, other, don't know: Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or to the Democratic Party?"

Notes

1 Available from: www.cses.org/datacenter/download.htm. Party identifiers are those coded as replying yes to the question "Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?" The variable "elections make a difference" is the percentage of people who respond with a 4 or 5 to the question: "Some people say that no matter who people vote for, it won't make any difference to what happens. Others say that who people vote for can make a big difference to what happens. Using the scale on this card (where ONE means that voting won't make any difference to what happens and FIVE means that voting can make a big difference), where would you place yourself?"

2 Some work suggests even more fundamental processes at work. Gerber et al. (2012) note the role of personality and partisanship. A somewhat more extreme version of this is found in the current literature on the genetic basis of politics. Settle, Dawes and Fowler (2009), for example, discuss the inheritability of party identifications – that is, there is a component of partisanship due to nature and not simply nurture. The findings on heritability are new and not uncontroversial. The more standard view of partisanship invokes processes of socialization.

3 One exception would be socialization into Communist parties in the case of post-Communist societies.

4 Although Schickler and Green (1997) find a great deal of stability over panels (see, for example, Tables 2a and 2b: 469–470), they generally report stability for Germany and the UK slightly different for Canada – average R2 between panels in the high 0.9s for Germany and UK, more like 0.8 for Canada.

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