

Race, Immigration, and Political Independents in America

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Chapter One

Party Identification: The Historical and Ontological Origins of a Concept

Political parties have so enduringly occupied the center stage of American politics that E. E. Schattschneider goes so far as to claim that “political parties created democracy and modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the political parties (1942, 1).” As central as parties may be, our understanding of just what a party is has been far from stable. In this opening chapter, we trace the historical and ontological origins of what we now call party identification. In so doing we sketch, in critical relief, the two leading theoretical accounts of party identification - the sociological, enduring view of party identification as developed by Angus Campbell and his colleagues at the University of Michigan and the more positivist, rational, and ideological view of partisanship put forward by Downs (1957) and a long list of apprentices (Key 1966, Kramer 1971, Fiorina 1981, Erikson, Mackuen, and Stimson 2002). We next identify some limitations common to each account. To preview, both accounts fail to acknowledge and incorporate racial, ethnic, or ideological heterogeneity in the electorate. As a result, neither account can fully explain the choices and actions of the many Americans who do not fit neatly along the linear scale of party identification. We propose a modified account of party identification that weaves together several strands from recent work on racial group identity and immigrant acculturation to produce a more contingent, but also more robust account of party identification. This alternate account highlights the roles played by a lack of political experience in the United States, the intersection of racial identity and party, and the inability of a two party duopoly to incorporate the range of diverse ideologies that are present in the mass public.

The Emergence of the Party in the Electorate

Although scholars of American politics have long been concerned with the impact of parties on our political system, formal discussions of the role of individual partisan supporters –

the so called party in the electorate – only begin to emerge in the mid 20th Century with the advent of the modern mass survey. As late as 1942, Schattschneider, for example, in *Party Government*, makes clear that “[w]hatever else the parties may be, they are not associations of the voters who support the party candidates (1942, 52)” and that “the concept of the parties as a mass association of partisans has no historical basis (1942, 54).”

However, by the late 1940s the shift to a focus on individual partisans in the electorate had already begun.¹ In 1949, Dayton David McKean writes that political parties exist “because of widely held opinions of two kinds, those approving of parties in general, and those approving of a particular party program, platform, or combination of party opinions and interests (111).” McKean makes his case in substantial measure with secondary analysis of Gallup (or the American Institute of Public Opinion, AIPO, as it was known at the time) poll data on self-identification with a party label. These Gallup polls represent the earliest incarnation of the survey measurement of the party in the electorate. The Gallup party identification measure was first employed in March of 1937, with respondents asked, “Do you regard yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, or a Socialist?” By November of 1939, the AIPO asked a variant of the now more familiar version of its party identification question, “In politics, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat ... or an Independent?” And this party identification question came to be a regular component of Gallup polls by the mid-1940s, when it began to be included among its standard battery of demographic items at the end of their questionnaire. In this initial conception, however, there is little indication that the attachment of ordinary individuals to party labels is a *defining* characteristic of political parties.

¹ As Herbert Weisberg (2002) and Pomper and Weiner (2002) other more recent reviews of the literature make clear, it is this latter incarnation of partisanship that has won the day.

The foundation for this stronger case is made several years later with the third, fourth, and fifth editions of V.O. Key's *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups* (1952, 1958, 1964), out of which the term "the party in the electorate" came to be a fixture in the lexicon of party scholars.² Key propounded a distinction between three different conceptions of political parties: the party as an organization, those members of political parties who hold government offices, and those ordinary individuals who identify with and support political parties through their vote and their active political participation. As Key argues, the "inner circle" of party leaders and activists "would amount to nothing without its following of faithful partisans (1958, 232)." Key describes partisanship among ordinary citizens as a "psychological attachment" of "remarkable durability" such that "[e]ven if the party member is an unfaithful attendant at party functions and an infrequent contributor to its finances, he is likely to have a strong attachment to the heroes of the party, to its principles as he interprets them, and to its candidates on election day (1958, 233)." This attachment is, however, further described as being of varying intensity "from the most unquestioning loyalty to the most casual sense of affiliation (*ibid.*)."³

Following closely on Key's heels are the efforts of social scientists at the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center to develop new methods to measure this psychological attachment. In a national survey of the American public fielded in June of 1951, George Belknap and Angus Campbell sought to establish the influence of party identification on one's foreign policy views by asking respondents, "If a presidential election were held today, do you think you would vote for the Democratic, Republican, or for some other party (Belknap and

² As Weisberg (2002) notes, Key is careful to attribute the phrase "party in the electorate" itself to Ralph Goldman's doctoral dissertation (1951).

³ Interestingly, rather than describe this variance in party identification as a linear continuum, Key uses the metaphor of concentric circles, from a "small hard core of leaders and workers" to successively distal circles of people with diminishing loyalty to the party.

Campbell 1952)?” The core expectation was that party identification mattered because “individual perceptions, evaluations, and behavior are determined in large part by the standards and values of the groups with which the person identifies (1952, 601).” This initial assessment of identification with political parties, however, was measured by one’s likely vote intention. By the authors’ own admission, the question wording “obviously represents a minimal expression of identification with a political party” and care is taken to note that “[a]dditional research is planned to explore this concept more fully and to develop a measure of degree of party identification (*ibid*, 601).”

In *The Voter Decides* (1954), the initial conceptualization of the role of partisanship is also somewhat crude. The authors assume that “many people associate themselves psychologically with one or the other of the parties, and that this identification has predictable relationships with their perceptions, evaluations, and actions (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller 1954, 90).” Party identification is described as a “personal attachment an individual feels toward his party” (1954, 111) and compared against a person’s evaluation of the candidates and issues in a given election as influences on one’s vote choice or intent. There is, however, little attention, given to what leads and what follows in the causal links between the purported antecedents of voting and the act itself. Presumably, a person’s views about a candidate and the issues she stands for could well be formed at the same time as, if not after than, one’s decision to vote for that candidate. Furthermore, it was by no means clear that party identification was anything more than a powerful indirect instrument for vote choice (Rossi 1959).

The electoral ascendance of Dwight David Eisenhower, the first Republican elected to the White House after 20 years of Democratic dominance provided scholars with a political context that spurred on the development of a firmer foundation for the relationship between party

identification and voting behavior. Clearly, vote intention for a party alone would be insufficiently discriminating to explain Eisenhower's victory, since the Democrats retained a substantial majority of both houses of Congress. To preview, the enduring contribution of the Michigan approach to party identification would be to distinguish between long-term factors (party identification) that explained the continued Democratic control of Congress and short-term factors (candidate and issue-based considerations) that explained the ability of a popular Republican war hero to carry the day in 1952 and 1956.

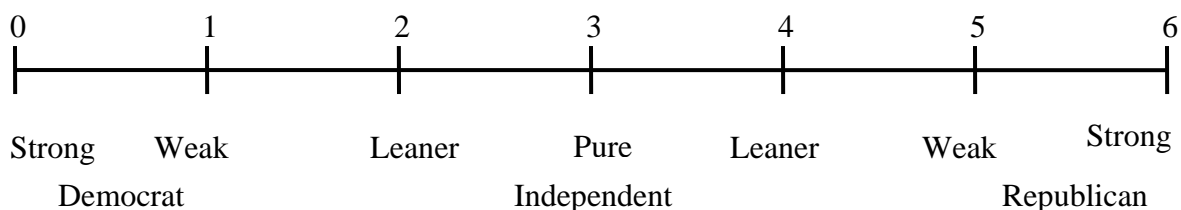
The development of a more precise and probing measure of party identification would first come in a 1951 pilot study of political attitudes in Ann Arbor by Warren Miller (Weisberg 2002). Then in the following year, the Michigan party identification measure was fully launched in the 1952 American National Election Study (ANES), and it is this multiple item format that has been asked in every ANES since (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller 1954). Respondents are asked two of the following three items about their party identification. All respondents are first asked, "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?" Those who self-identify with a party are then asked, "Would you call yourself a strong [Republican/Democrat] or not a very strong [Republican/Democrat]?" And those who self-identify as an Independent are asked, "Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party?"

As we noted earlier *vis-à-vis* the initial Gallup polls, Campbell and his colleagues did not break entirely new ground in asking individuals to self-identify with a political party. What was groundbreaking, however, was the stanch effort to develop and test a coherent account of a person's attachment to a political party and the implications this holds for her politics. On this point, there are two revealing differences between the question wording used by the Gallup poll and that designed for the ANES. First, the ANES frames the consideration of its question with

the phrase “generally speaking” and the word “usually.” There is no such prompt with the Gallup poll. The underlying motivation behind the Michigan version of the question is the desire to tap into a stable predisposition and an enduring attachment with a political party. This contrast is even more prominent with the more recent modification of the Gallup question wording, “In politics, *as of today*, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent? (italics inserted).” Note that the Gallup question cannot discriminate between the stable partisan for whom “today” is no different than yesterday or tomorrow vis-à-vis their self-identification as a Republican or Democrat from the more capricious citizen whose relationship to political parties is inconstant from one day to the next.

The second key difference is the use of follow-up questions in the ANES to distinguish between shades of attachments. As Campbell and his colleagues describe it “The partisan self-image of all but the few individuals who disclaim any involvement in politics permits us to place each person in these samples on a continuum of partisanship extending from strong Republican to strongly Democratic. We use the word “continuum” because we suppose that party identification is not simply a dichotomy but has a wide range of intensities in each partisan direction (1960, 122).” Most often, the sequence of questions in the ANES is used to construct a uni-dimensional variable comprised of seven ordered categories, such as the one below:

Figure 1.1 Party Identification as a Linear Uni-dimensional Scale



By this coding, “weak” Democrats and Republicans are those individuals who identify with these corresponding parties but whose identification is not strong. “Leaner” Democrats and Republicans are those individuals who choose to identify as an Independent to the initial question but are willing to acknowledge a partisan bent, with the term “pure Independents” reserved to those individuals who identify as an Independent to the initial question but reject any partisan inclinations to the follow-up question. Pure Independents are placed squarely in the middle of the scale. In most uses of this party identification scale today, the seven ordered categories are coded into an interval scale such as the 0 to 6 point scale above, where the difference in strength of partisanship between a strong and a weak Democrat is assumed to be identical to, say, the difference between a pure Independent and a Democratic leaner.

The Michigan School

In *The American Voter*, what we now view as the Michigan School of party identification receives its full elaboration. The story of party identification in its debut by Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes (1960) is simple and straightforward enough. Party identification is, in the first instance, a psychological attachment of an individual to an institution – specifically, a political party. As Warren Miller describes it, this “sense of belonging to the political group” constitutes “an important part of the individual’s self-identity as a political actor ... our individual sense of *personal identity* is derived from groups to which we belong (1991, 22 italics in original).”

Beyond this linkage of political institutions to personal identity, Campbell and his colleagues described three defining characteristics of party identification.⁴ Partisanship, as a habit of the heart and mind, is acquired very early in one's life, corresponding with few exceptions to the partisan habits of one's parents. About 3 out of 4 individuals with parents of the same party would also self-identify with that party (Campbell *et al* 1960, 147). This habit, moreover, is durable over the course of an individual's life. More than 90 percent of self-identified Democrats reported never having identified as a Republican and about 80 percent of self-identified Republicans reported never having identified as a Democrat (Campbell *et al* 1960, 148).

In this fuller account of party identification there is also a stronger claim that party identification is a causally "antecedent factor". More precisely, party identification is now defined as the most primitive element in a "funnel of causality" explaining vote choice, with other factors like attitudes about the Democratic and Republican candidates, attitudes about foreign and domestic issues, attitudes about the groups involved in the election, as the more immediate, proximate elements. By defining and measuring party identification as the primary mover in this chain of relationships, Campbell and his colleagues propounded the insightful and influential distinction between short-term considerations (e.g., issues and candidates specific to a campaign) and long-term predispositions like party identification (Campbell and Stokes 1959,

⁴ The full articulation of party identification in *The American Voter* is also noteworthy in defining what party identification is not. Party identification has to cover more than those formally affiliated and active members of a political party, since this leaves the vote choice of too many unaffiliated and inactive citizens unexplained. Party identification also has to be more than just one's vote intention or past voting record, since, in the first case, the relationship of vote intention to vote choice is practically tautological and, in the second case, the fact that voters switch parties across election cycles goes unexplained.

Campbell et al 1960).⁵ In placing party identification first in the causal change, the authors of the Michigan model also make clear the importance of partisanship in the political decision making of ordinary Americans. Party identification, by this account, is by all intents and purposes the main driving force in politics. In their view, “the strength and direction of party identification are facts of central importance in accounting for attitude and behavior (1960, 121).”

Thirdly, and for our purposes most critically, the authors of this view claim that almost all Americans could locate themselves somewhere on the ANES continuum of party identification. Accordingly, “Most Americans have this sense of attachment with one party or the other (1960, 121).” Across seven initial Michigan studies from October 1952 through October 1958, just about 95 percent of respondents were able to locate themselves somewhere on the party identification scale (Campbell *et al* 1960, 124).⁶

Conceptual Critiques: The Rise of Ideological Partisanship

Each of these defining characteristics has been challenged in the half-century since the first Michigan surveys. On the ubiquity of self-placement on the party identification scale, subsequent studies have found a substantially greater proportion of “partisan misfits,” ranging from 10 percent (Miller and Wattenberg 1983) to almost 30 percent (Weisberg 1980, Dennis 1988a, Niemi *et al* 1991). As we will see later in our analysis of individual racial and ethnic

⁵ This basic framework is predominant even today, in models of public opinion and political behavior such as John Zaller’s “receive-accept-sample” theory (1992).

⁶ Arguably, a fourth defining characteristic is that party identification – to the extent that cognition and affect were sharply differentiated at the time – is a distinctly “affective orientation to an important group-object in his [sic] environment (1960, 121).”

groups, even these aggregate figures understate the uncommitted and uncertain partisan status that characterizes certain demographic groups in American society.

Perhaps more devastating than the presence of this apparently uncommitted population are studies that question the stability of party identification. Subsequent research has described significant movement in party identification over time with evidence based on panel studies (Allsop and Weisberg 1988, Brody and Rothenberg 1988) and the unmistakable surge in Americans who identified as independents during the 1970s and 1980s (Wattenberg 1994). A similarly sustained attack against the enduring nature of partisanship has been reserved for the view that party identification is principally the product of one's pre-adult socialization. It may yet be the case that the single strongest predictor of an individual's party identification is the partisanship of that person's parents, but the strength of this relationship still leaves unanswered questions about the theoretical foundation of that relationship and empirical anomalies to that relationship. Theoretically, data on parental partisanship is at best an indirect instrument of the actual socialization process that generates partisan loyalties. In more precise studies of childhood socialization conducted by Kent Jennings and his colleagues using a three-wave panel study of parents and their children in 1965, 1973, and 1982, fully 40 percent of children whose parents shared the same party loyalties defected from that partisan attachment (Jennings and Niemi 1974; Jennings and Niemi 1981; Jennings and Markus 1984; Niemi and Jennings 1991).

Another forceful attack was waged against the notion of party identification as a primary mover in one's political identity. In particular, a range of studies suggested that party identification may not be the underlying predisposition in a funnel of causality leading to one's vote decision. Rather, short-term considerations that led individuals to vote against their long-term party identification appeared to influence their identification itself (Jackson 1975, Page and

Jones 1979). There is also a lively debate over whether changes in presidential approval and economic evaluations at the aggregate-level shift the distribution of “macropartisanship” (MacKuen, Erikson, and Stimson 1989; cf. Abramson and Ostrom 1991, Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 1998).

The Downsian View of Partisanship

The result that familial socialization could not account for the party identification of a significant proportion of Americans and the possibility that party identification would itself be influenced by a range of short term political developments opened the door for what has become the leading alternative to the Michigan school of thought. This alternative account views party identification as a manifestation of the perceived proximity of an individual’s policy preferences with the publicly stated issue positions or past behavior of the two parties.

The foundation for this issue-based rationalist account of party identification drew directly from Anthony Downs’ work in *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. The keystone of this Downsian perspective is the idea of “proximity voting”: that individuals have distinct preferences over the universe of possible political outcomes (with an optimal outcome and monotonically diminishing utilities as we move away from that “ideal point”) and that each individual will vote for the party or candidate whose publicly declared position on a given set of issues comes the closest to her ideal point.

Building on this foundation – and following similar footsteps taken by Jackson (1975) and Page and Jones (1979) – Morris Fiorina redefined party identification as “the difference between an individual’s past political experiences with the two parties, perturbed by a factor ... that represents effects not included directly in an individual’s political experiences (e.g., parents’

party ID)” (1981, 89). Party identification is thus re-conceptualized as the “running-tally of retrospective evaluations” of both parties or, in Achen’s (1992, 2001) rendition, it is the Bayesian process of updating one’s long-term predisposition to identify with a party with shorter-term considerations (see also Gerber and Green 1998).⁷

This instrumental, information-based, endogenous account presents a tidy alternative explanation for the bedrock empirical relationship between party identification and voting behavior. The direction and strength of one’s partisanship predicts one’s likely vote choice, presumably, because the match between voters’ and candidates’ parties reflects a match between voters’ and candidates’ ideological preference orderings. That is, underlying this Downsian view of party identification is the common presumption that there is a continuum of political preference orderings – from extremely liberal to extremely conservative – that undergirds one’s party identification (Jackson 1975, Franklin and Jackson 1983, Abramowitz and Saunders 1998). The presumed empirical relationship that results is between a linear continuum of partisanship and a linear continuum of ideology: strong liberals are the most likely group to identify as strong Democrats, strong conservatives are the most likely group to identify as strong Republicans, and staunch moderates are the most likely group to identify as pure Independents. Party identification, from this Downsian view, is the heuristic that enables us to most efficiently decode which candidate or party’s declared positions best approximates our ideal point.

This relationship is at odds with the thrust of earlier research on ideological consistency within the American public. Philip Converse’s, in particular in his “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics” (1964) had already presented an exacting and apparently devastating

⁷ Party identification, from this standpoint, is also an efficient heuristic to use low-information opinion cues to deduce more complete information about an issue or candidate (Popkin 1991, Lupia and McCubbins 1998).

refutation of the idea of ideology as a constraint on our political preferences. The publicly stated opinions of ordinary individuals – asked of the same people on the same set of policy items over different points in time – hang together so loosely and with no visible common thread of liberal or conservative ideological thinking that Converse deemed these survey responses “non-attitudes” (1964, 1970).⁸

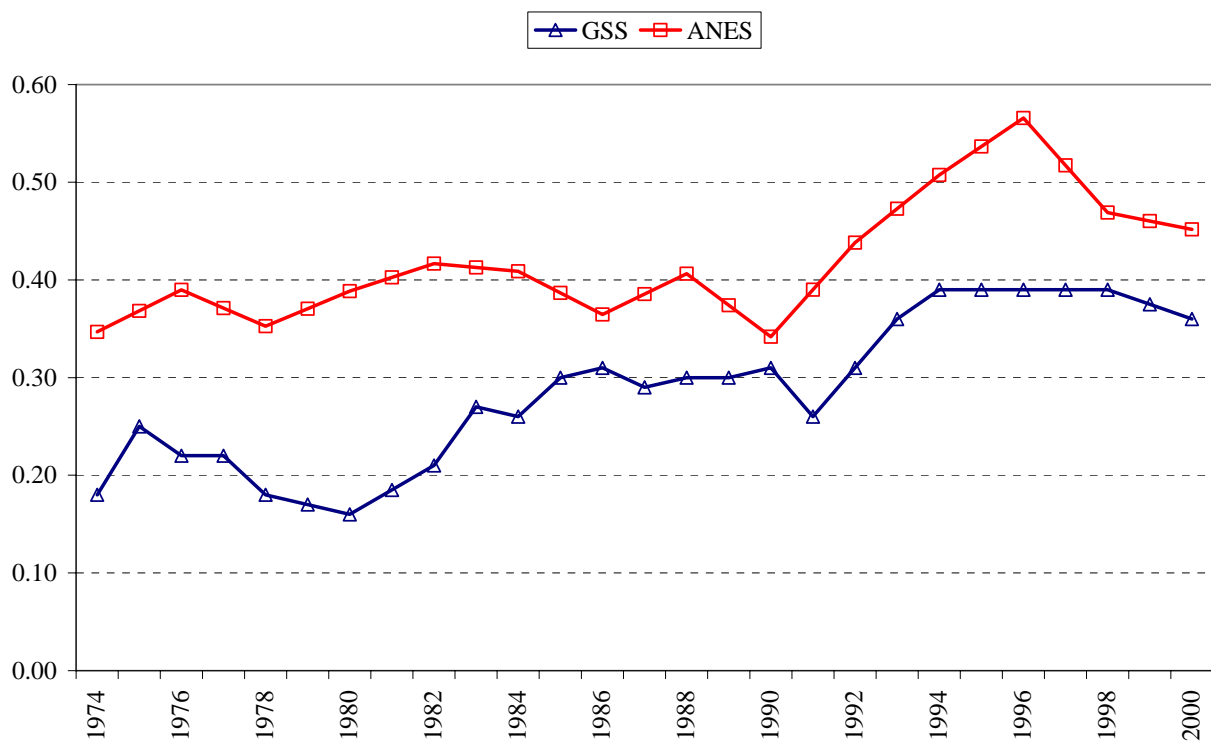
More recently, however, the evidence favoring a more intimate relationship between partisanship and ideology is gaining force. The first attempt to reestablish a more coherent, constrained basis for Americans’ public policy views floundered on the rough current of question wording (Nie, Verba, and Petrocik 1979; cf. Bishop, Oldendick, and Tuchfarber 1978, Bishop, Tuchfarber, and Oldendick 1978, Sullivan, Piereson, and Markus 1978). However, numerous studies (e.g., Poole and Rosenthal 1984, 1997; Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001) suggest a resurgence of partisanship in Congressional roll-call voting and this resurgence is read as evidence of growing ideological polarization among our political elites.

Evidence for the role of ideology in politics in the mass public has been growing as well (Carmines and Stimson 1989, Layman and Carmines 1997, Abramowitz 1995, Alvarez and Nagler 1998). To begin, there are signs of escalating levels of ideological polarization at the mass-level (Hetherington 2001, Layman 2002). Americans more and more see important differences between the two parties and are able to correctly place the Democrats and Republicans ideologically.

⁸ At roughly the same time, Herbert McCloskey and his co-authors began to suggest the irrelevance of liberalism and conservatism to one’s party identification and to one’s political orientation (McCloskey 1958; McCloskey, Hoffman, and O’Hara 1960; McCloskey 1964). Donald Stokes (1963) further contested Downs’ idea that political preferences mapped so easily onto a single ideological dimension, a critique that would later be formalized by McKelvey (1976), Enelow and Hinich (1984) and others. See also Duverger (1954, 231-33) and Sartori (1976, 335-36).

Even more importantly, the link between ideology and partisanship is becoming clearer over time. Figure 1.2 presents simple bivariate correlations over time (1974 to 2000) between two similarly scaled (seven-point) measures of party identification and liberal-conservative ideology from two separate sources – the American National Election Studies and the General Social Survey. The positive relationship between party identification and left-right ideology is consistently higher in ANES surveys than in GSS surveys, but the principal points here is that the relationship is strongly and increasingly positive, growing more than two-fold, by the GSS from 1980 to the mid-1990s.

Figure 5. Correlation of PID and Ideology, 1974-2000



Moreover, as Achen (1975) and Krosnick and Berent (1993) suggest, part of the seeming potency of party identification and seeming impotency of ideology as a constraint may result from measurement error and the incommensurability of distinct survey items.

This is not, importantly, to suggest that this resurgence of ideology as a constraint on mass beliefs refutes Converse's claim about ideological innocence (1964). Clearly, party identification still routinely appears to outperform issue preferences or ideological self-identification as predictors of vote choice (e.g., Miller and Shanks 1996; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). The rising ideological polarization, and its increasing correspondence to party identification itself, does, however, suggest that the underlying basis of party identification may change. Party identification, the regnant force on mass beliefs during the mid-century era in which Converse and his colleagues at Michigan did much of their research, may no longer reign supremely or singularly. Although recent tests by Don Green and his colleagues have generated renewed vigor for the thesis that party identification is a remarkably durable and potent attribute, especially once the exigencies of measurement error are taken into account, the view that partisanship is endogenous and ideologically based is still strongly supported in much of the field (Green and Palmquist 1990; Green and Palmquist 1994; Schickler and Palmquist 1997; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 1998; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002).

Rather than focus on adjudicating whether we are bound by the ties of habit and history *or* by the ties of information and interest, we take the standpoint that this conceptual rift is somewhat of a historically contingent and, ultimately, not-so-useful dichotomy. Like so many other competing conceptual accounts in the social sciences, it is less a case of whether the Michigan school or the Downsian view of party identification is right than it is a case of properly specifying the contexts in which *both* the Michigan *and* Downsian views add to our understanding of how we come to identify with a political party and why it matters.

Recognizing the contingent contributions of each account, however, is not equivalent to conceptual carelessness or theoretical relativism. Rather, our goal is to identify some specific

limitations of each account and build a modified account of party identification that addresses these limitations. We aim to do this by bearing our analytic and substantive focus on the choice not to self-identify with either the Democratic or the Republican party – or, more specifically, the choice to self-identify as a political Independent – and on the racially and ethnically group-specific pathways to identifying as a political Independent. These are not only relatively neglected dimensions of party identification, but they are also dimensions that have changed markedly since scholars at the University of Michigan first began to asking us to self-identify with a political organization. What is more, as we shall argue later in this chapter and in subsequent chapters, they are dimensions that give us critical vantage into the limits of the Downsian and Michigan accounts of party identification and, as a result, critical leverage into what a more capacious theory of party identification might look like.

Measurement Issues in Party Identification

In addition to this conceptual debate, scholars have engaged in a prolonged methodological discussion about the empirical scale that under girds both Michigan and Downsian party identification. In fact, few measures in political science have been as closely and critically scrutinized as party identification. Within this discussion, there have been pointed concerns both about how we measure party identification and perhaps most importantly, whether the party identification of individual Americans can be placed neatly along a single dimension.

On measurement, there have been numerous studies of alternate question wordings from the standard ANES multi-item measure. Gallup and NBC polls, for instance, use the lead-in “In politics today/as of today,” while Harris and Roper polls prompt respondents with “Regardless of how you voted/may have voted,” Associated Press polls ask the unadorned version, “Are you a Democrat, Republican, or what” and so on with other variants. These differences, it turns out,

can be consequential. Party identification is no different from any other attitude item in its vulnerability to survey context. Yet the full force of a particular question wording effect ultimately depends on the underlying conceptions of party identification at stake. The comparison between the ANES wording and the Gallup wording, for instance, rests principally on the conceptual distinction between partisanship as a long-term predisposition and partisanship as a potentially short-term attachment. Viewed thus, it is little surprise that the Gallup version leads to greater variance across surveys in the distribution of party identification (Abramson and Ostrom 1991) and a greater tendency to self-identify with the party that is leading in pre-election polls (Borrelli, Lockerbie, and Niemi 1987).

A second concern about the proper measurement of party identification is on how the multiple-item ANES party identification measure should be scaled. As we noted earlier, the most common practice is to use all the available variation in a 7-point (0 to 6) integer scale, where the measurement approach assumes that the difference between a “0” (strong Democrats, in Figure 1.1) and a “1” (weak Democrats) vis-à-vis one’s partisanship is identical to the difference between a “2” (Democratic leaners) and a “3” (pure Independents) or between a “3” (pure Independents) and a “4” (Republican leaners), and so on. As Keith *et al* (1992) and others (Lodge and Tursky 1979, Weisberg 1980, Miller and Wattenberg 1983) have shown, the differences between these categories are not always equal, especially in the virtually indistinguishable behavioral differences between weak partisans and independent leaners. William Jacoby (1982) argues that the standard 7-point scale systematically shrinks the intervals between the Republican categories of the scale. In the extreme, John Petrocik (1974) finds that the standard party identification scale violates the basic axiom of transitivity in its relationship to

key behavioral indicators of partisanship – put plainly, independent leaners appear at times more partisan in their behavior than do weak Republicans or weak Democrats.

Based on these studies, several alternatives to the standard 7-point scale have been advocated. One proposal is to combine weak partisans and independent leaners and measure party identification as a 5 point scale, but this does not take full account of the potentially errant assumption of equal intervals between categories of partisanship. Thus Morris Fiorina (1981) proposes discarding with the idea of party identification as an interval-level variable and measuring it instead categorically, with the use of polychotomous dependent variable estimators when party identification is the dependent variable and, presumably, dichotomous “dummy” variables for each category when party identification is an explanatory variable (see also Franklin and Jackson 1983). Warren Miller himself has advocated the use of only the first item in the ANES multi-item measure, in which respondents are simply asked to self-identify with the labels “Democrat,” “Republican,” and “Independent” (Miller 1991, Miller and Shanks 1996). These are compelling alternatives to minimize error in our measurement and strengthen the inferences we draw about party identification, but they fail to deliver an account of why the intervals between categories are unequal or their behavioral effects intransitive.

One influential and controversial account of these patterns is that party identification is multidimensional. That is, contrary to the Michigan party identification scale’s assumption that there is a single linear continuum from strong Republicans to strong Democrats, Herbert Weisberg (1980, 1983) and others (see especially Katz 1979, Howell 1980, Valentine and Van Wingen 1980, Jacoby 1982, Kamieniecki 1985, 1988) contend that this standard measure conflates an individual’s attitudes toward several distinct objects – one’s general views of political parties, one’s specific view towards the Republican and Democratic parties, and one’s

political independence. As Weisberg (1980) notes, the ANES measure and its accompanying 7-point scale makes several potentially errant assumptions about the concept of party identification. First, it assumes that independence is either the absence of strong partisanship or neutrality with respect to both parties. There are at least two potentially distinct and empirically testable dimensions that emerge from this assumption: one continuum in which the midpoint of one's identification as a Republican or Democrat is neutrality, another continuum from strong partisanship to independence. Each of the seven NES categories would then fit into these two dimensions as shown in Figure 1.3. This argument for party identification as a two-dimensional concept is roughly analogous to Claggett (1981) and Shively's (1979) proposals to separate out party acquisition from partisan intensity.

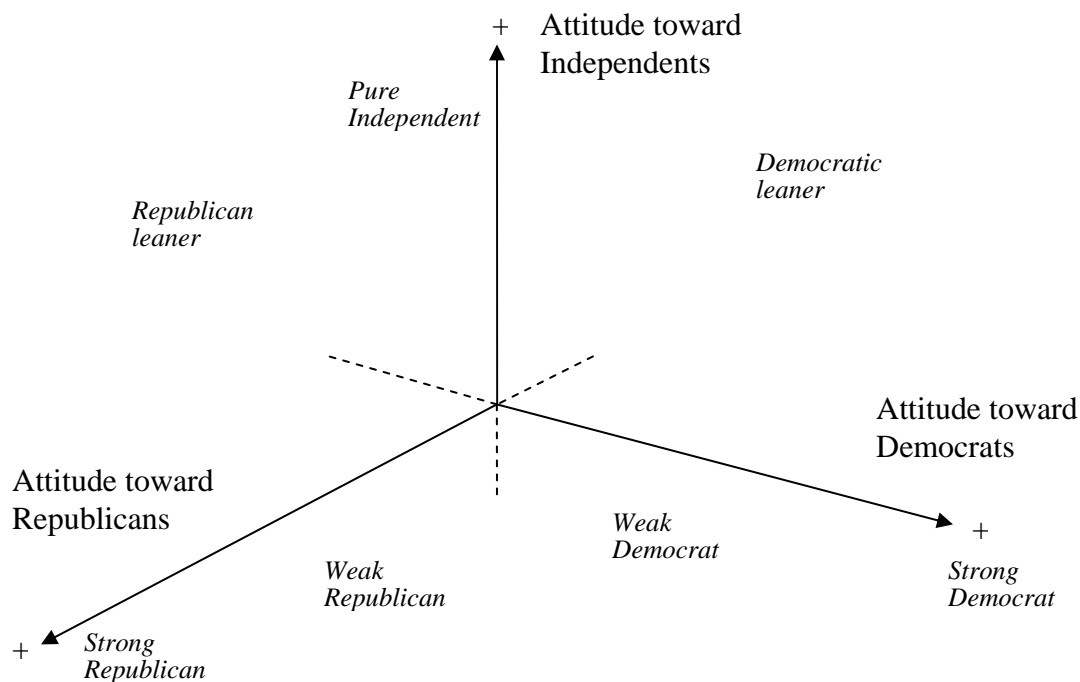
Figure 1.3 Party Identification in Two Dimensions

	Democrat	Neutral		Republican
Partisan	<i>Strong Democrat</i>	<i>Weak Democrat</i>	<i>Weak Republican</i>	<i>Strong Republican</i>
Independent	<i>Democratic leaner</i>	<i>Pure Independent</i>		<i>Republican leaner</i>

In addition to the assumption about independence, the standard ANES measure also assumes singularity and equality: that is, that each individual identifies with one and only one political party and that this attachment is equally strong and salient across individuals. More specifically, on the assumption of singularity, the tacit assumption in the standard ANES measure is that a positive valence toward the Democratic party implies a negative valence toward the Republican party. In principal, one might be positive toward both or negative toward both,

but willing to choose one as a predominant self-identification if constrained to do so. The consequence of these assumptions is that party identification might be better measured in three dimensions, with each of the seven ANES categories potentially mapped onto the three-dimensional space as shown in Figure 1.4 (also adapted from Weisberg, 1980).

Figure 1.4 Party Identification in Three Dimensions



Figures 1.3 and 1.4 make the graphical case for what a more multidimensional conception of party identification might look like. The empirical case favoring party identification as a multidimensional construct is based principally on studies that show the inconsistent ordering across the seven partisan categories and the poor convergent validity with feeling thermometer scores on political parties and independents, a reasonable alternative to the ANES linear self-identification measure. Jacoby (1982) finds that only two in three college undergraduates rank order their identification with party labels in a manner consistent with the standard linear ANES scale. Weisberg (1980) shows that only one in two respondents gave

ANES feeling thermometer scores to political parties and independents that were compatible with their party identification on the standard linear ANES scale. Weisberg also shows that the correlations between feeling thermometer scores for the Republican and Democratic parties are not highly negative (as the idea of party identification as a linear continuum presumes), but range from zero to only somewhat negative. Alvarez (1990) found that slightly more than one in three respondents to the ANES revealed transitive correspondence between their party identification and their feeling thermometer ratings.⁹ Somewhat against the weight of these findings, Green (1988) argues that a substantial measure of the seeming inconsistency between one's affect towards the Democratic and Republican party results from measurement error – specifically, the upward bias in thermometer ratings. Once this measurement error is explicitly modeled with confirmatory factor analysis, the correlation between Green's latent party factors turns out to be very strongly negative.

These measurement issues – wording, scaling, and dimensionality – do not exhaust the concerns that have been raised against the NES party identification items.¹⁰ Yet they are, in large measure, politely ignored, with their critical force often shunted in lieu of practical considerations. For instance, a typical response to the issue of dimensionality is John Kessel's view that "some citizens have multiple (partisan and Independent) reference groups, some citizens have only one such reference group, and some citizens have no such reference group. No one-dimensional taxonomy is going to capture all of this, but the traditional classification is a

⁹ One test by Greene (2000, 2004) affirms the validity of two distinct dimensions of social identity underlying partisanship. Using a well-worn psychometric scale to quantify social identification with Independents and social identification with one's preferred party (for those who are not "pure Independents") Greene finds that both scales enjoy a high degree of statistical reliability, both scales exhibit an appropriately transitive relationship to partisan strength (i.e., the mean score on the preferred party identity scale declines with diminishing partisan strength; the mean score on the independents identity scale declines with increasing partisan strength), and both scales appear to act as statistically independent forces in predicting across multiple party identification choice categories.

¹⁰ For a detailed inventory of these concerns, see Weisberg (1993).

good first approximation (1984, 529 [from Weisberg 1993, 723-4]).” Morris Fiorina even goes so far as to defend a uni-dimensional scale on the grounds that a multidimensional scale would “let methodology run away with the substance (1981, 105).” Explicit in Fiorina’s provocation and implicit in Kessel’s pragmatism is the shared feature of most methodological critiques of party identification that they capably demonstrate anomalous, contradictory empirical patterns without using these critiques as a foundation for a more substantive challenge to our existing theoretical accounts of what party identification is and why people come to have it.

In the end it is fair to say that despite this range of concerns, the basic linear scale of party identification remains ubiquitous in its use, uniform in its operationalization, and universal in its sway over the how we think and act in the political sphere. Indeed, virtually every published work in political science on public opinion, voting behavior, and political participation using survey data includes some version of the linear party identification scale. Whether undergirded by ideology as in the Downsian view of partisanship or by parental socialization as in the Michigan school, this linear model remains the tool of choice for almost all scholars of American politics. As Everett Carl Ladd of the Roper Institute put it, “[n]o other measure of voters’ partisan preferences and the parties’ strength has been deemed nearly so telling a political statistic, or used as widely as party identification” (1991, 17). Ultimately, despite the potential significance of the range of objections to a linear model of partisanship, these objections have been largely ignored or relegated to the status of methodological refinements.

We argue that, rather than being set-aside or trivialized, the force of these criticisms can be renewed by revisiting the idea of the party in the electorate—specifically, vis-à-vis some foundational changes in the composition of the electorate since the middle of the twentieth

century and some insight into the limits of a two party duopoly. In the remainder of this chapter, we begin to outline these ideas.

The Limits of Linear Partisanship

As we have previously noted, we do not seek to claim that either the Michigan school or the Downsian perspective on partisanship is wrong. We also readily admit that the conventional linear scale of party identification serves to usefully model the partisan choices of many - and perhaps most - Americans. What we would like to suggest is that these two conventional accounts and the linear partisanship scale that they have spawned are incomplete. The problem is that these accounts cannot explain the partisan choices of increasingly large segments of the electorate who do not easily fit into the linear scale that so dominates discussions of partisanship today. Partisan 'misfits,' we contend, are today not only large in number but also readily understandable. Moreover, after highlighting the attributes that help to identify these misfits, we can incorporate these attributes into a more encompassing theory of how we choose parties and ultimately a better scale for measuring partisanship in the first place. In short by focusing on the growing number of misfits, we can begin to understand much of what conventional partisan models are missing.

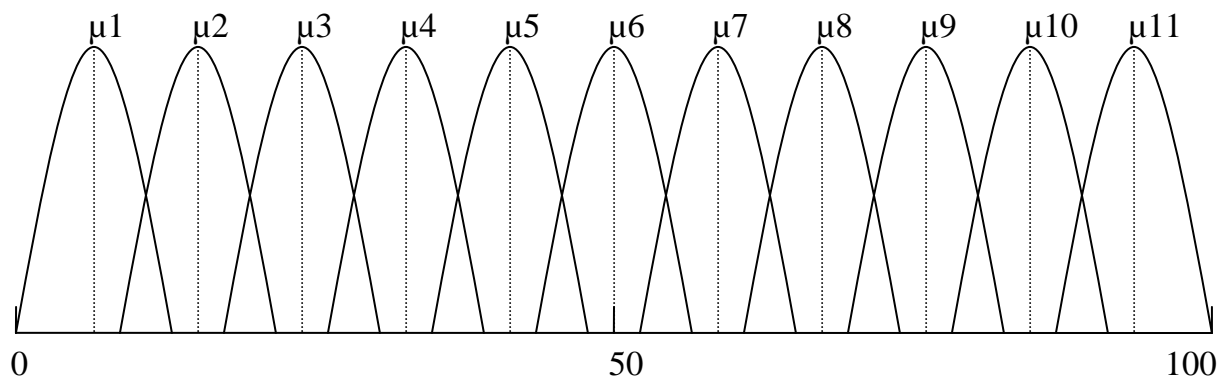
We begin this new account of partisan choice with two familiar observations that reveal important limitations of the American political system. First, America is a two party political system or in the language of the economist, a duopoly. By choosing a plurality, winner-take-all system rather than a proportional system, the founders of the nation created a democracy that effectively limited the number of political parties. This is, for our purposes, vitally important because it means that in all but a few elections, the number of options available to the American

public is limited. Individuals whose views do not conform to one of two policy platforms usually do not have an alternate advocate for their views. With a population as large and diverse as can be found within the borders of this nation, it is far from unreasonable to expect that at least some segments of the community will hold views that are not well represented by the two available partisan options.

The second important feature of the American party system that stands out is the ideological proximity of the two parties to each other and to the center of the ideological spectrum. Almost everything we know about parties suggests that in a two party duopoly, the two parties will tend to converge on a similar policy agenda that closely reflects the preferences of the median voter (Downs 1957, Calvert 1985, Enelow and Hinich 1984). The conditions necessary to get to this foundational result are minimal. We need only assume that all states of the political world relevant to collective choice can be represented along a single unidimensional ideological continuum such as the one below in Figure 1.5. As an oft-used example, the multiple dimensions of political choice might be reduced to the tax rate we are willing to pay to fund our government's activities, ranging from extreme conservatives who would not part with a dime to extreme liberals who would relinquish all their garnished wages. Where a person sits on this continuum depends on the pleasure or pain she derives over the range of possible tax rates, a relationship which can be represented by a utility function with a maximand at a person's "ideal point" (represented as $\mu_1, \mu_2, \mu_3, \dots, \mu_{11}$) and monotonically diminishing levels of pleasure as we move away from that ideal point along the continuum. Following the economic logic of utility maximization, each voter is expected to choose the candidate or party who publicly avowed ideal tax rate comes closest to the voter's own ideal point.

Set these conditions into motion and the central result of the median voter theorem obtains: when parties, or candidates, are motivated to win a majority share (50 percent plus one) of the electoral vote, they will move inexorably toward one another until they converge at the ideal point of the median voter in the electorate (in Figure 1.5, at the preferred tax rate of voter 6, or μ_6).¹¹

Figure 1.5 Mapping Ideal Tax Rates on a Single Dimension



The centripetal forces of a party duopoly are formally derived in Anthony Downs’ median voter theorem (1957) and in Duncan Black’s roughly contemporaneous work (1948, 1958). Both scholars draw from Hotelling’s (1929) initial insights on economic competition under duopolies and the most commonly-known result of the median voter theorem is perhaps still best stated by Hotelling, who observed that the “competition for votes between the Republican and Democratic parties does not lead to a clear drawing of issues, and adoption of two strongly contrasted positions between which the voter may choose. Instead, each party strives to make its platform as much like the others as possible (1929, 54).”

¹¹ Some additional technical details are necessary for the theorem to hold. First, the choice set for a given election is between two (and only two) candidates, representing two (and only two) major political. Second, elections are decided by majority rule. Third, the principal means for candidates to win or lose is by positioning themselves along the continuum. The final condition is that there are an odd number of voters in every election, although the basic intuition of the theorem is intact even when this condition is not met.

Empirical reality has closely mirrored these theoretical expectations throughout most of the nation's history. Observations concerning the ideological convergence of the parties date at least as far back as the end of the 19th century. Thus James Bryce observes that "[t]he great parties were like two bottles. Each bore a label denoting the kind of liquor it contained, but each was empty (1888)" and A. Lawrence Lowell claims that in two-party systems, the parties tend to move toward one another at the "political center of gravity" (1898). Among Downs' and Black's contemporaries, E. E. Schattschneider notes that "the most common criticism made of the American parties is not that they have been tyrannical but that they have been indistinguishable (1942, 85)"; V. O. Key observes that the act of juggling different forces within the party in the electorate tends "to pull the party leaderships from their contrasting anchorages toward the center... party appeals often sound much alike and thereby contribute to the bewilderment of observers of American politics (1964, 220; orig. 1942)."¹² Modern accounts continue to emphasize the moderation of American party platforms. Although there is evidence of increasing polarity among elites of the two parties and it may longer be accurate to depict the Democrats and Republicans as "Tweedeldee and Tweeededlum," from a comparative perspective the two parties do not represent widely divergent positions (Hetherington 2001). Empirical studies confirm that America's two parties are still closer in ideology than most other parties in most other countries (Castles and Mair 1984).

The centrist positions put forward by the Democrats and the Republicans may serve extremely well to position the parties to win elections and are likely to appeal to a wide range of individuals but we maintain that these centrist positions may also serve to alienate others. Indeed, having two ideologically similar parties almost ensures that those who are not neatly

¹² See also Sait (1942, 190) and Goodman (1956, 45-6).

placed somewhere near the median voter will have no partisan option that closely mirrors their preferences.

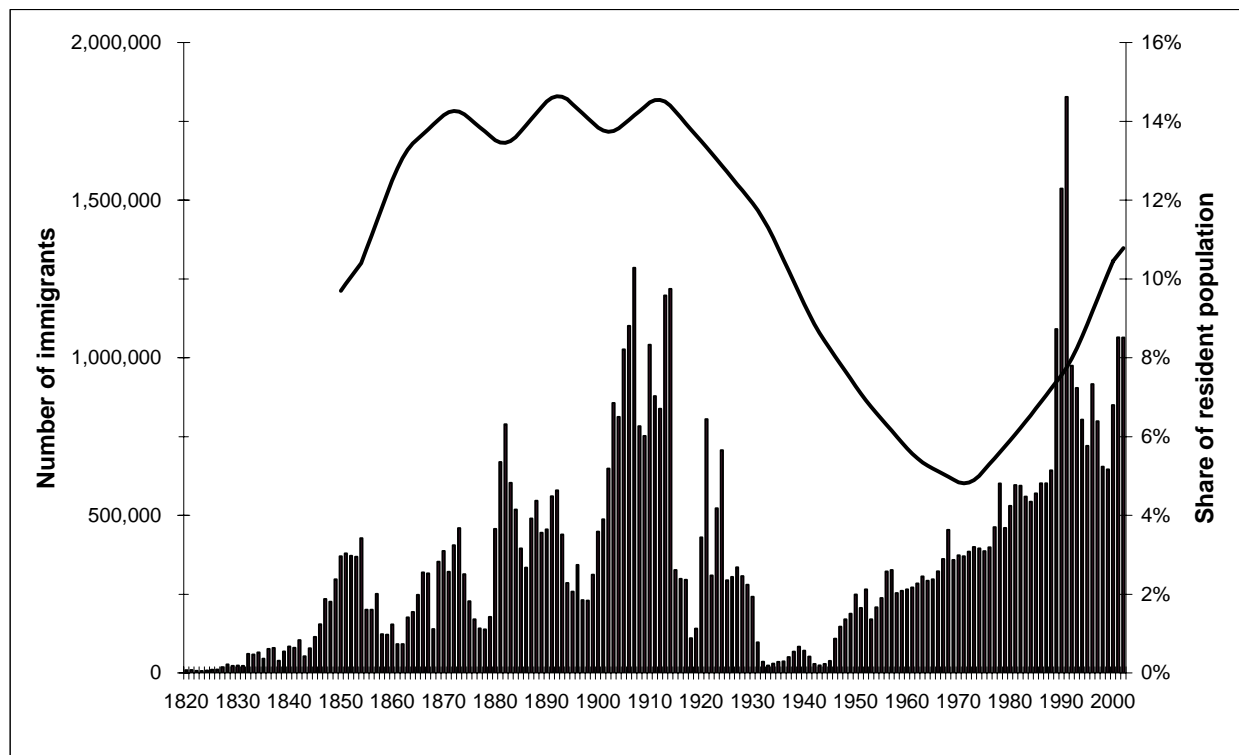
These two observations about American politics highlight the limitations of the American party system. Citizens are offered only a small number of options and the options that they are offered are likely to be clustered around the middle of the liberal-conservative ideological spectrum. Unless individual Americans hold consistently moderate liberal views or consistently moderate conservative views, they may not have a party that truly represents their interests. Despite assertions about parties being the bedrock of American democracy, the limitations of the American party system suggest that the two parties will not be able to capture the imagination of many members of the population. Explaining where these ‘misfits’ ultimately end up will be a major task of this book.

America’s Increasingly Diverse Population

Another equally important observation about American society that raises questions both about the ability of the parties to incorporate the range of individual Americans and the ability of existing models of party identification to explain the partisan choices of the population is the fact that the nation is becoming more and more diverse. Since the passage of the 1965 Hart-Cellar Act the nation has been dramatically transformed. As Figure 1.6 shows, we are currently witness to the largest influx of immigrants since the early 20th Century. According to Census Bureau statistics, immigrants and their children comprise close to one in four Americans today, with more than 34 million foreign-born and almost 32 million second generation individuals in the US in 2002 (US Census Bureau 2002). In most cases, these immigrants will have decidedly different experiences with and attachments to the American political system than more long

standing Americans. If demographics is destiny – the influx of newcomers should presage major sea changes in the landscape of American politics.

Figure 1.6 Trends in Immigration and Immigrant Share, 1821-2001¹³



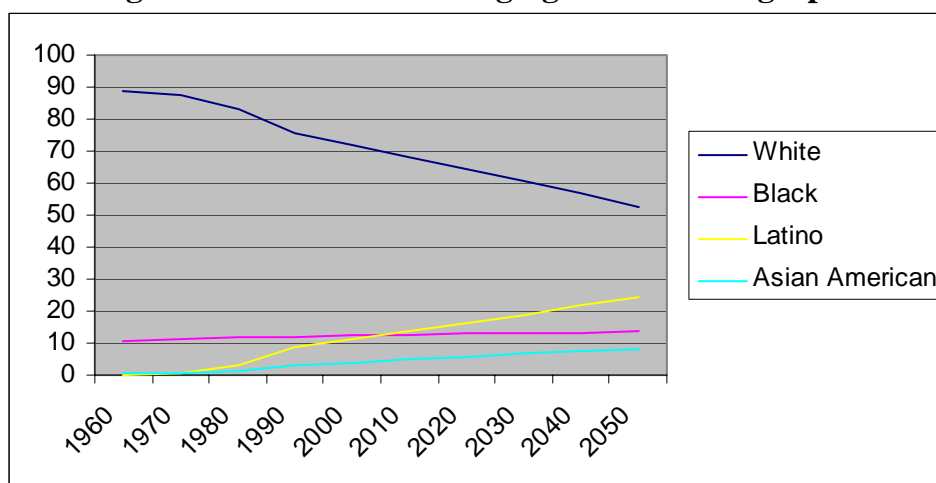
Equally importantly, this influx of newcomers has transformed the racial character of the nation. These contemporary immigrants come from different shores than the earlier waves of migration from Europe, with more than 80 percent of new Americans in recent decades coming instead from Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America.

In 1960, as Figure 1.7 illustrates, the nation was very different than it is today. Two facets of what America looked like stand out to observers of modern American politics. First, in this earlier period – when not coincidentally the main accounts of party identification were

¹³ Sources: USCIS, Census Bureau

written - one racial group predominated. Almost 90 percent of the population described itself as white. A model that provided a reasonable account of the politics of the white population could also provide a reasonable approximation of the country as a whole. Second, looking more closely at the minority population in 1960, it is apparent that only one minority group, African Americans, was present in noticeably large numbers. That meant that the nation's racial dynamics could be succinctly summed up with a black-white dichotomy.

Figure 1.7 America's Changing Racial Demographics



As is evident in Figure 1.7, the demography of the nation has become noticeably more complex in the intervening decades. The United States has gone from a nation that was predominantly white to one that is much more diverse. Whites are still the majority but racial and ethnic minorities now make-up over twenty-five percent of the population. As well, the minority community has changed and become much more multifaceted. Hispanic Americans have recently surpassed African Americans as the largest racial and ethnic minority group while the Asian American share of the population has more than tripled. The old black-white dichotomy is now hardly sufficient.

What's more, these demographic changes are likely to continue into the foreseeable future. The United States is poised to become a "majority-minority" nation sometime in the middle of this century, when the proportion of whites in America is expected to dip below fifty percent of the US adult population. Around the same time Hispanics should account for roughly a quarter of the national population, and Asian Americans will begin to challenge African Americans as the third largest racial and ethnic group.

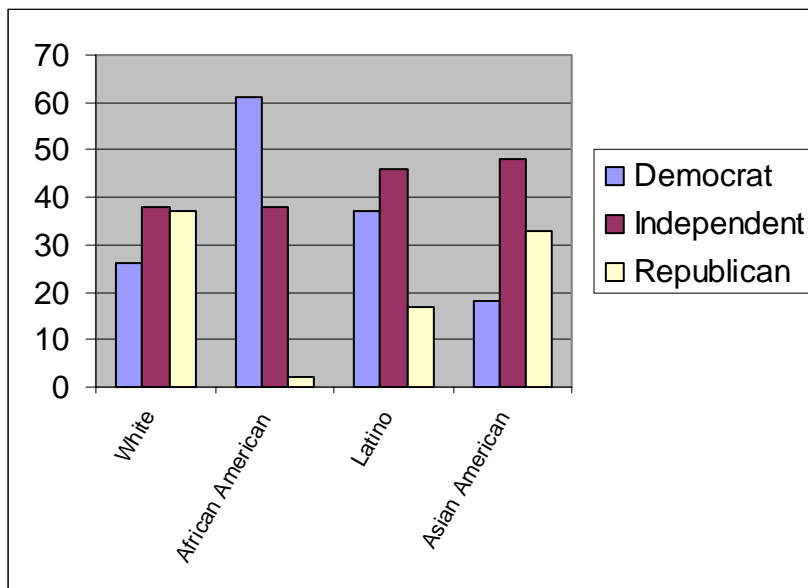
This demographic sea change has at least two important implications for studies of partisanship. First, and most obviously, it means that understanding politics and partisanship in America increasingly means understanding the decisions and actions of racial and ethnic minorities and immigrants. Simply in terms of their numbers, these new groups will have a bigger and bigger say and will become an ever more important part of the picture of national accounts of party identification. An account based solely on patterns found in the white community can no longer come close to approximating the politics of the nation.

Second, to the extent that racial and ethnic minorities matter more, there is reason to believe that our accounts of partisanship will have to become more complex. The diversity of these newcomers – measured on almost every dimension from distinctive life experiences to different economic and social locations and unique racial identities – suggests that different models of choice may apply. It would seem unlikely that a simple linear model would still be able to capture the range of interests and motivations driving the increasingly complex American population.

This diversity and at the least the potential of different models of partisan identification is underscored by a quick glance at the partisan proclivities of the different racial and ethnic groups. As can be seen in Figure 1.8, the four racial and ethnic groups end up on very different

points on the partisan scale. Whites are fairly well distributed across the three categories of Democrat, Independent, and Republican and if anything tilt more toward the Republican Party. By contrast, African Americans demonstrate an especially strong attachment to the Democratic Party – with some 66 professing allegiance to the Democratic Party and only two percent favoring the Republican Party. Latinos represent yet another set of partisan proclivities. The Latino population is largely split between the options of Independent and Democrat with Republicans running a distant third. Lastly, Asian Americans are dominated by non-partisans and to the extent that one party succeeds in capturing their hearts and minds, it is the Republican Party. None of this comes close to proving that an understanding of these different groups requires a different and more complex model of party identification but it does at least hint that different factors could be driving the different groups.

Figure 1.8 Party Identification by Race/Ethnicity



Limited Attention to Race and Immigration

Despite the very real possibility that members of the growing minority population might be altering America's party system in interesting and important ways, there is still a conspicuous paucity of attention to race, ethnicity, and immigration in theories of partisanship. This is perhaps understandable in older studies. Given that American's diversity is a relatively recent phenomenon, we can forgive the authors of the *American Voter* for maintaining that the key factors in their "funnel of causality" – party identification, evaluations of candidates, and evaluations of the relevant political issues – trumped any patterned influence of social groups in defining our electoral choices. But with diversity well in place, it is more difficult to excuse more recent accounts for failing to incorporate race and ethnicity into the analysis.

Nevertheless, in much of the literature today, the nature and dynamics of partisan choice among non-whites are ignored or assumed to fit into the same model as whites. The bulk of these studies simply subsume minority respondents within the larger white population and by doing so implicitly assume that non-whites identify with different parties for the same reasons whites do. Green et al's exhaustive study of partisanship, *Partisan Hearts and Minds*, falls into this category. Although the authors note the depth of racial identity across the population and highlight the ability of racial identity to shape politics for many individuals – especially for African American alignment with the Democratic Party - Green et al ultimately argue that racial and ethnic identities are subsumed by partisanship. The implication they draw is "not that race is unimportant but rather that its influence on electoral choice is mediated largely by partisan affiliation (2002, 3)." Moreover, after making the claim that race (qua African Americans) is distinctive and important but refereed by partisanship, African Americans are to be found virtually nowhere in any of the tables or figures or other empirical analysis in the book. Latinos and Asians Americans are totally ignored. Where racial/ethnic groups are again considered at

all, it is only to make the case that party identification is akin in its stability over time to racial/ethnic identification – falling somewhere in between the high on invariant identification as Italian Americans and the more fickle identification as English Americans (2002, 75-8).

Another standard approach is to exclude groups like African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans from the analysis altogether. The most prominent account of nonpartisanship, Keith et al's (1992) study of Independent identifiers, for example, drops blacks from the analysis altogether. Latinos and Asian Americans receive no mention in either study. The justification here is that Independence is seen as a primarily a white phenomenon. In other cases, minorities are not considered for more practical reasons. Racial and ethnic minorities, it is often argued are too small in number to analyze effectively using existing surveys. Finally, minorities are occasionally excluded because they are different. The authors of *The Myth of the Independent Voter*, for instance, further note that "[b]ecause blacks are the most disaffected of any major population group, omitting them also avoids complications if one examines relationships between alienation and Independence (32)."

This is not to say that blacks, Latinos and Asian Americans have been completely ignored in discussions of partisanship. There is, in fact, a burgeoning literature focusing specifically on the partisan choices of America's non-white population (Dawson 1994, Tate 1994, Cain et al 1991, Alvarez and Garcia-Bedolla 2003, Uhlaner and Garcia 1998, DeSipio 1995, de la Garza 1992, Segura et al 1996, Tam 1995, Lien and Wong 2003, Wong 2000, Welch and Sigelman 1993, Uhlaner and Garcia 1998, de la Garza et al 1992). While important in shifting the focus of attention away from the white majority, these studies also suffer from some potentially serious flaws.

The most obvious is that these studies have, by and large, simply adopted conventional models of party identification. The predominant assumption is that Latinos, Asian Americans, and others distinguish parties along the same linear scale and identify or fail to identify with parties for the same reasons that white Americans do (Uhlener, Gray, and Garcia 2000, DeSipio 1995, Segura et al 1996, Lien 2001, Welch and Sigelman 1993). For example, while Alvarez and Bedolla nicely demonstrate that Latino partisan choices are determined more by basic policy concerns like health care than are white partisan choices, the underlying structure of choice is the same for both groups. All of the issues mentioned in their study fall neatly on the liberal-conservative partisan divide and, in the end, the basic model of decision-making is the same. Similarly, scholars of black partisanship and voting behavior have often sought to explain black partisan choices by employing the same set of independent variables that studies of whites incorporate. Thus, the primary influences for African Americans are assumed to include socioeconomic status and liberal-conservative ideology (Tate 1994). Studies of Asian American partisanship can fall into a similar pattern (Lien 2003). The bottom line is that, with few exceptions, we are still generally left with the conventional model of partisan decision-making.

Of the ethnically specific studies that have attempted to identify new and distinct pathways to partisanship among different groups, two stand out. Cain et al (1991) make an important contribution by noting that the partisan choices of immigrants groups might be substantially shaped by their assimilation into the American political system. Similarly, Dawson's (1994) black utility heuristic offers keen insight into the motivations behind black partisan choices.

But these advances only take us so far. Cain et al and subsequent studies

(Wong 2000, Welch and Sigelman 1993, Uhlaner and Garcia 1998, de la Garza et al 1992) have been able to document a connection between time in the United States and an increasing sense of attachment to one of the two major parties but given that we know the process of assimilation is neither even nor inevitable, time in the U.S. is a poor proxy for immigrant incorporation. While a valid finding, lived years is too rough a cut to distinguish between the different facets that might vary with tenure (experiences in one's workplace and neighborhood, citizenship status, civic engagement, familiarization with political parties and left-right ideology, and the like) nor does it specify the underlying mechanisms by which time matters (e.g., information uncertainty, ideological ambivalence, identity formation). In pushing for such greater specificity and analytical clarity, we argue that proper consideration of racial formation and immigration incorporation works can generate new insights into how Americans – immigrant or native, black, white, Latino, or Asian – form their attachments to a political party. Similarly, while Dawson's (1994) black utility heuristic rightly argues that many blacks will choose the party that best serves black interests, it does not tell us how individual blacks ascertain which party that is. Thus, a remaining concern is that the studies that do attempt to identify the distinct motivations of different minority communities are unable to fully explicate these motivations and their implications.

Perhaps the most serious flaw is that these studies do not seek to integrate their models of the disparate groups into an overarching account of partisanship. Rather, the literature is divided into ethnically separate literatures that seek only to understand the peculiarities of each group. This is problematic because it means that scholars of minority politics are missing an important opportunity to shed light upon the larger political dynamics of the nation. As W.E.B. DuBois long ago noted, by studying groups like African Americans who have been marginalized by the

larger society, we can learn not only about a group that is different, but also about the motivations and structure of those that seek to keep African Americans on the outside. It is precisely because racial and ethnic minorities are ‘different’ that they offer a unique chance to gain insight on America writ large. Rather than treating immigrants or minorities as an “anomaly”, we can treat them as a mirror into the broader dynamics of American society.¹⁴

One of our main goals, then, in writing this book is to offer a coherent account of race and partisanship that unifies and expands upon the multiple, ethnic –specific literatures that currently exist. We believe non-whites groups differ fundamentally in how they choose parties and we maintain that difference is rooted in the experiences of immigration and racial/ethnic minority status. But we also contend that these differences inform us not only about the partisan choices of these individual groups but also serve to expose the inability of America’s party duopoly to effectively incorporate the diverse views of the public and highlight the inadequacies of the conventional linear model of partisanship for a range of Americans – both white and non-white. What’s more, we believe that race and immigration can serve as analytic levers to help us understand a range of foundational political processes ranging from party dynamics when new players and new issues enter the political market to opinion socialization for individuals who are exposed to a new and distinct political arena. In the next section, we begin to think about these different levers and present what we hope is a more complete and accurate explanation of party identification that accounts for the diverse experiences individual Americans.

Information, Identity, Ideology, and Multiple Pathways to Partisanship

¹⁴ One important example of this argument is that far from viewing immigrants as threats to democratic stability, we might instead view the sizeable influx of immigrants as an opportunity to better understand political processes like socialization and party acquisition (Wong 2001, Cain et al 1991, Lien 1997, Lin and Jamal 1997, Finifter and Finifter 1989).

What do we learn when we juxtapose our knowledge of the distinct experiences of America's different racial and ethnic groups with conventional accounts of partisanship? The unique context of immigration and the salience of race as an organizing principle in American life lead, we contend, to an appreciation of three distinct features that are likely to underlie the party identification of many Americans: information uncertainty, ideological ambivalence, and identity formation.

The first and most readily apparent insight to emerge from attention to race and the immigrant experience is that not all groups are equally familiar with the terrain of American politics. Latinos and Asian Americans, in particular, are predominantly foreign-born and foreign-educated. Thus, they are not socialized primarily in the U.S. two-party system. Nor, for that matter, are they *tabula rasa* that can be quickly assimilated and incorporated under such a system. Rather, as ethnic groups with a distinguishable ethnic identity and, for many foreign-borns, a distinct socialization vis-a-vis some *other* political system, the choice between parties is likely to be one filled with unfamiliarity. This unfamiliarity is likely to be coupled with a lack of trust in American political institutions. In the absence of this trust, signals from the Democratic and Republican parties about the relative advantages of identification with a party become noisy, irrespective of how informative they might be (Lupia and McCubbins, 1998). And the ground of mistrust is constantly reinforced by the pervasiveness of language barriers, residential isolation, cultural mores, and widespread perceptions of stereotyping and discrimination by the rest of American society (Lee, 2000). In short, for many immigrants and for those not far removed from the immigrant experience, the choice of identifying as a Democrat or Republican is apt to be filled with uncertainty.

This insight is also apropos to African Americans. Many blacks in the United States continue to be ailed by the Kerner Commission's diagnosis of "two nations, separate, unequal." Conditions of "hypersegregation" and concentrated neighborhood poverty not only limit African American life chances, they also isolate African Americans from the larger mainstream society (Wilson, 1987; Massey and Denton, 1993; Massey and Hajnal, 1995). Experiences with and information about mainstream political institutions are severely curtailed and in many cases distinct political world views emerge (Dawson and Cohen 1993). Rather than make a choice between parties that they know little about or commit to a party they do not yet trust, a more rational option for many blacks as well as for many members of the Latino and Asian American communities is to opt out of the partisanship competition altogether.

As obvious and as straightforward as this account of the world might be, it does stand in relatively sharp contrast with conventional theories of party identification in which a fairly intimate, lifelong relationship with party politics is assumed to exist. Downs' partisans, for example, have surveyed the partisan debate and only after determining how well the parties have served them in the past or evaluating which party's platform most closely approximates their own views do they choose to identify as either Democrat or Republican. For adherents to the Michigan School of party identification, the informational and experiential requirements are even more profound. In this latter case, we acquire our partisanship only after a lengthy socialization process that occurs over the course of lifetime and depends on generations of knowledge of the American party system. Without a doubt there exists a fundamental disjuncture between conventional models partisanship and the reality of partisan choices for large segments of the public.

A second important insight that emerges from a focus on ethnic and racial status is that all groups are not equally concerned about the liberal-conservative ideological dimension that divides the two parties and that purportedly drives partisanship. A cursory glance at traditions of political thought within racial and ethnic communities reveals several other important ideological dimensions. Dawson (2001), for instance, proposes that African American political thought is best described in five ideological dimensions – only a few of which fit neatly into the left-right continuum that the two major parties represent. For example, black nationalism, an ideology that some 40 percent of the black community supports in at least some measure, leads almost inexorably to opposition to both white-dominated parties.

For racial and ethnic immigrant populations – the majority of Latinos and Asian Americans – there are a whole different set of cultural beliefs and core issue concerns that are unlikely to lie along a uni-dimensional Democratic-Republican divide. Individuals who have been socialized in foreign countries where the policy divide does not parallel the American context will not only be unfamiliar with the issues separating the Democrats and Republicans, they may care much more about a range of other policy questions that do not parallel the American context. Issues like Puerto Rican statehood, the trade embargo with Cuba, or bilingual education may be central to the political world view of different Latino sub-groups but they are by no means central to the platforms of the Democratic or Republican parties.

And if one uses this perspective to critically reevaluate the ideologies of white Americans, there is every reason to believe that a single left-right dimension does not always fit here as well. Indeed, political theorists like Rogers Smith (1993) have recently challenged the notion – attributed to de Tocqueville, Myrdal, Hartz and others – that political ideology in the

United States is best defined by a single tradition of liberalism.¹⁵ More concretely, if we look beyond party politics today, we see a series of core issues (environmentalism, globalization, urban sprawl, etc) that are central to the political world view of many white Americans but that are not yet well represented by either major party.

Thus, there is once again a disconnect between reality and theory. The linear scale of partisanship with Democrats on the liberal left and Republicans on the conservative right presumes that the standard set of liberal-conservative ideological concerns is the only kind of ideological predisposition that matters to one's partisan identification.¹⁶ Yet the far ranging issue concerns and diverse ideologies of the American public reveal a very different context. This has two important implications. One is that in order to understand the partisan placement of an ideologically diverse American public, we will have to incorporate alternate dimensions into our model of partisan choice. The other is that many Americans will fit poorly into a two party system that divides itself along a narrow range of liberal-conservative issues. To the extent that core concerns are not represented by either party or core ideological predispositions fail to neatly align with the liberal-conservative divide separating the two parties, many individuals are likely to end up as partisan 'misfits.'

A final insight that is visible through the lens of race is that one's primary political identity is often intimately linked to one's primary social group identity. Michael Dawson has

¹⁵ Smith (1993) contends that political ideology is more faithfully defined by multiple traditions – among them, liberalism, republicanism, and ascriptive ideologies that sustain racial and gender hierarchies. For Smith, this is a distinction with a difference, as mono-traditional, liberal account will fail otherwise to explain the defining features of American political development, such as the dogged persistence of racial and gender hierarchies. See also Greenstone (1993) and Shklar (1991) in this regard.

¹⁶ To be fair, scholars of American politics have long debated whether or not political preferences can be mapped so easily onto a single ideological dimension. Donald Stokes (1996) first contested Downs' simplification and that critique would later be formalized by McKelvey (1976), Enelow and Hinich (1984) and others (see also Duverger 1954 and Sartori 1976).

shown for African Americans that social group identity as an African American is so fundamental that it mediates one's political calculus through a sense of racially "linked fate" (Dawson 1994, 2001). The implications for partisanship are, according to Dawson, clear. For blacks, "belief in the importance of black interests translates into preference for the Democratic Party" (Dawson 1994:113). For predominantly immigrant groups like Latinos and Asian Americans, by contrast, the racially and ethnically-defined social group identities may be primary, but yet multiple, hybrid, and constantly shifting.¹⁷ Scholars have shown, for example, that the political perceptions of Latinos and Asian Americans can be shaped under different contexts by their pan-ethnic identity, ethnic sub-group identity, religious identity, or perceptions of minority group status (Padilla 1984, Espiritu 1990, Pachon and DeSipio 1995, Jones-Correa and Leal 1996, Jones-Correa 1998, Bobo and Johnson 2000, Lee 2004). Thus it is far from clear which primary social group identities will predominate for these two groups and we expect the political and social group identities of Asians and Latinos to interact in often complex ways to influence how different immigrants and their children think about the American political process, the utility of civic and political engagement, and ultimately the two major parties.¹⁸ For whites too, identity may be relevant. Although racial group identity is often subconscious among whites, it can nevertheless exert considerable influence on political decision making (Miller et al 1981, Wong and Cho 2003). Thus identity as white may work with or against more conventional policy concerns to influence partisan choices.

¹⁷ For studies on the importance of a sense of panethnically linked fate for Latinos and Asian Americans – and the challenges to thinking in such panethnic terms – see Jones-Correa and Leal (1996) and Lien and Lee (2001).

¹⁸ For example, a stronger belief in the importance of race and a clearer recognition of one's status as a racial minority should affect party choice in different ways for different national origin groups. For Mexicans who already lean toward the Democratic Party, racial consciousness should reinforce existing partisanship cues and lead to strong Democratic Party preferences. For Cubans, the opposite should happen. Racial consciousness should cut against the community's traditional allegiance to the Republican party and potentially result in greater Independence.

Once again there is a divide between what we believe are the influences that guide the lives of individual Americans and the patterns of partisanship that are described in conventional models. Both the prior political socialization model of the Michigan School and the issue-based rational choice Downsian model largely ignore the racial character of American life and implicitly assume that group identity is unimportant in shaping partisanship. If, however, as we suspect, race and other group identities do work together to influence political predispositions, then conventional accounts are overlooking an important dimensions to partisanship. Rather than ignoring identity, we need to consider how one's primary political identity – as Democrat, Republican, or Independent – intersects and interacts with one's primary social group identity – as African American, Latino, woman, veteran, gay, Southerner, and the like.¹⁹ What should be clear is that party identification cannot be considered in isolation.

These three dimensions – information, ideology, and identity – form the micro-foundation of our revised general account of party identification. In subsequent chapters, we employ these dimensions to articulate in more detail specific pathways that lead toward identity as Democrat, Republican, or Independent.

For now we wish to highlight the more general implications of these three distinct pathways for our understanding of party identification. The first and most obvious implication is that by recognizing these new and different routes to partisanship we expose significant flaws in traditional models of party identification. In particular, we learn that conventional accounts of

¹⁹ This is not a superfluous plea for a proliferation of analytic categories. Some social group identities are apt to matter critically to our general political orientation and others are not. There is no prior research, for instance, that leads us to suspect that one's astrological sign is consequential for one political self-identification. There is an abundance of such research, by contrast, that demands that we consider one's racial and ethnic identity. See Lee (2002) for an extended discussion of the key role of race and ethnicity as primary political predispositions for racial and ethnic groups. For an excellent discussion of cross-cutting identity claims and cleavages within the African American community, see Cohen (1999).

partisanship minimize problems related to information, assume that the views of most Americans can be placed along a single, linear ideological scale, and tend to ignore group identities. In short, conventional accounts that dominate our understanding of partisanship may miss much of how partisanship operates today.

Empirically speaking this means that we have to begin to model partisanship in a different way. By identifying these alternate dimensions, we are raising serious concerns about the appropriateness of a single, linear scale of partisanship. With so much diversity in terms of information, ideology, and identity, the political ideal points of many will undoubtedly fall off of the linear scale. If these three accounts prove to be prescient for large segments of the population, it follows that we can no longer model partisanship along a linear scale and still hope to capture the motivations and locations of the populous. Practically speaking this calls into question the conventional practice of adding a linear variable to represent party identification on the right hand side or of using linear regression to model party identification as a dependent variable. Instead, partisanship is likely to be more fruitfully and fully represented in a multi-dimensional framework.

Finally, the presence of each of these distinct dimensions implies that many individual Americans will not fit comfortably into a partisan structure that offers only two choices that both lie somewhere near the mid-point of a liberal-conservative policy dimension. For many Americans the parties will represent clear and attractive choices but for many others there will be a range of motivations that pull them away from both parties. For this latter group, a lack of information about and trust in the parties, a set of issue concerns that are regularly ignored by the parties, and a range of mixed identities that pull in different directions will make it both rational and reasonable to refrain from engaging with either party. Widespread reluctance to join either

mainstream party in turn means that Independence or nonpartisanship will be a critical option. Thus, our challenge to the existing literature on partisanship will be thrown straight down the middle of the ANES scale, taking its aim at the category of political Independents.

Chapter Two

Beyond the Middle: Alternate Dimensions of Independence

Independents are today one of the most interesting and influential voting groups in the nation. With roughly a third of the population identifying as Independent, the fate of elections and the balance of power between Democrats and Republicans are often defined by the will and whimsy of political Independents. As such, every election cycle is saturated with intense scrutiny on the inclinations and insinuations of Independents by candidates, their consultants, and media commentators alike. Scholars, too, have expended considerable effort in trying to understand this group. As Miller and Wattenberg note, “Political independence has probably been the most intensely scrutinized and debated aspect of the concept of party identification (1983, 106).”

Despite all of this attention, our understanding of why individuals identify as Independent is in many ways limited. With the exception of a few studies that we will discuss in detail, the literature on Independents seeks more than anything else to understand the behavioral implications of Independence. The core debate has been on whether most Independents, by nature of their voting preferences, should be viewed as closet partisans rather than as Independent. Most studies ignore the prior and potentially critical question of why it is that people identify as Independent in the first place. As one of the foremost scholars of Independents, Jack Dennis, laments, “At a time when a very large proportion of Americans is embracing more non-party forms of political identity, it is hard to understand either what such emerging identities consist of, where they come from, or how they are most apt to be expressed in politics... the basis for a theory of political independence and/or non-partisanship [cannot be] found in the political science literature” (1988:198).²⁰

²⁰ Samuel Eldersveld came to the same conclusion decades earlier “Independents may be many or few; they may be increasing or not; a real patterns may or may not exist; independents may be of many undetermined types; they may

In this chapter we offer a historical overview of the often normative accounts with which scholars of American politics have portrayed Independents. We then identify the two main accounts of Independence that are present today – the Downsian Independents as ideological moderates perspective and the Michigan School’s Independents as the offspring of Independents or apolitical model – and the range of largely ignored critiques that have been put forward. In the second half of the chapter, we follow the lead of other scholars discussed in Chapter One in questioning the logic of a linear, unidimensional scale, which presumes that Independents fall squarely in between strong Democrats and strong Republicans and, often by corollary, between extreme liberals and extreme conservatives. We further articulate the limited purview of both the Michigan school and the Downsian view of party identification in explaining why members of different racial and ethnic communities come to self-identify as a political Independent. We then focus on three distinct motivations of the minority and immigrant population – informational uncertainty, ideological ambivalence, and identity formation – to build a larger framework for understanding the multiple pathways to Independence that are progressively more important in America’s increasingly diverse population.

A Historical Account of Independents

Attention to political Independents among scholars of political parties, as Samuel Eldersveld (1952) notes, has been one of “fits and starts,” dating at least as far back as A. Lawrence Lowell’s 1898 essay on “oscillations in vote choice.” Through these fits, starts, and oscillations, there has been a decided shift in the way we think about political Independents from

be intelligent or fickle; and the effects of independent voting on the political system may be beneficent or dangerous (1952, 735).”

Independents as virtuous citizens to Independents as fickle and feeble voters who threaten democratic stability. As we will see these two normative accounts are, in many ways, reflected in how we think about nonpartisans today.

This change is most visible in the contrast between the rise of Mugwump Independents in the last decades of the 19th century and the emergence of third party presidential candidates in the latter half of the 20th century. As Charles Merriam (1922) and others describe it, the rise of Independents occurs following the Civil War and the widespread perception that corruption within the parties in the name of patriotism was rampant.²¹ It is in this era that Alexis de Tocqueville writes that “What I call great political parties are those more attached to principles than to consequences ... Such parties generally have nobler features, more generous passions, more real convictions, and a bolder and more open look than others ... America has had great parties; now they no longer exist (1969, 175).”

In this milieu, the growing view among many was that “it was the right and duty of intelligent men to leave the party in a crisis (Merriam 1922, 89).” Merriam defines Independents themselves as “a movement in the direction of a new attitude toward the sacredness of party allegiance. It was a protest against blind adherence to a political party, against the persistence of party habits after their period of usefulness or reason for existence had gone by (1922, 89-90).” Merriam and Harold Gosnell hailed as “one of the triumphs of the independent voter” (1949, 196) the Mugwumps, who were widely seen as playing a decisive role in Grover Cleveland’s successful bid for the presidency, the first Democrat to be so elected in twenty-four years. This sense that Independents were critical patriots on a mission to fight for all that is right and good in

²¹ By one account, the origins of Independents is dated to the 1854 election, influenced by a “secret political society, guided by a few men and with wide ramifications, pledged to the exclusion from office of all except the native-born, and those friendly to such exclusion (Robinson 1924, 146).”

American political life was often grandiloquently defended by the leading intellectuals of the day, like Mark Twain, the reformer Carl Schurz, and the poet James Russell Lowell. The following excerpt from Lowell's essay, "The Place of Independents in Politics" vividly illustrates these sentiments:

"We should not tolerate a packed jury which is to decide on the fate of a single man, yet we are content to leave the life of the nation at the mercy of a packed convention ... the practices of which I have been speaking are slowly and surely filching from us the whole of our country – all, at least, that made it the best to live in and the easiest to die for. If parties will not look after their own drainage and ventilation, there must be people who will do it for them, who will cry out without ceasing till their fellow-citizens are aroused to the danger of infection. This duty can be done only by men dissociated from the interests of party. The Independents have undertaken it, and with God's help will carry it through (1888, 305-306).

This generally positive accounting of political Independents is even present as late as the middle of the twentieth century. In "The Independent Vote," Samuel Eldersveld interprets as political Independents that third grouping of the electorate defined by the APSA Committee on Political Parties as those individuals who "base their electoral choice upon the political performance of the two parties (1952, 90)." Importantly, vote switchers are perceived as the most influential and prized electorate. This more rational, issue-based, *independent* group of "active but less than wholly committed voters" is described as the "keepers of the public conscience" and the critical segment in deciding whether a more responsible party system can be achieved. As the Committee puts it, "It is this group that is willing to make an electoral choice and wants a choice to make; that wants to vote for a program and resents not having it carried out (1950, 91)."

Independents, at least from the mid-century *weltanschauung* of the APSA Committee on Political Parties are the equivalent of Fiorina's retrospectively rational actors a group that is for many of the time the most critical element of the electorate in reinforcing party responsibility and democratic accountability.

At roughly the same juncture in the 20th century, at the leading edge of the behavioral revolution, the conception of Independents shifts discernibly. Eldersveld's classic study of political Independents is notable for placing, even before Eldersveld's colleagues at the University of Michigan began to measure party identification as a psychological attachment, Independents at the midpoint of a continuum between loyal Republicans and staunch Democrats (1952, 739). Moreover, as the leading texts on political parties of the day evince, Independents come to be defined in behavioral terms. To put a finer point on it, Independents are viewed as those voters who act *independently from* either political party – either by basing choices without party allegiances or by periodically switching one's allegiances. Thus Eldersveld notes that Independents can be defined by self-identification in social surveys, but “self-perceptions may be completely erroneous (1952, 737).” Presaging more recent debates, a person who calls herself an Independent but consistently votes for the issues and candidates of just one party is no Independent at all.

This shift, importantly, entails an epistemological makeover in how we think about Independents. Political Independents are no longer viewed as the vanguard of political reform, the darling of the *cognoscente* or, for that matter, an entity with any positive normative bearing. Rather, Independents are either defined as the absence of a presence (i.e., the presence being partisanship) or as an artefact of social measurement (i.e., the midpoint of a continuum). Where opinions about Independents are expressed beyond the neutral confines of social scientific measurement, the evaluative standpoint turns distinctly negative. Thus implicit in Philip Converse's (1966) notion of a “normal vote” lurks the idea that voting that is not patterned by

one's enduring psychological attachments to a political party is *abnormal*.²² V.O. Key more explicitly describes Independents as “an ignorant and uninformed sector of the electorate highly susceptible to influence by factors irrelevant to the solemn performance of its civic duties (1966, 92).” Similarly, more recent scholars like William Crotty increasingly decry Independents as “an unstable vote” that “introduces into elections an increased volatility that today’s fluid politics do not need ... Its volatility and malleability does little to ease the concern of those who value stability and order in American politics (1983, 37).” Among public intellectuals, Hedrick Smith goes so far as to blame independents for triggering “the individualism of a new breed of politicians” with “highly independent campaign styles” (1988, 685-6) that effectively short-circuit the power of political parties to act responsibly. The change over the course of a few short decades could not be more stark, with Independents shifting from consideration as the stewards of responsible parties in the electorate to its vandals.²³

Current Theories of Independence

Although current theories of Independence and nonpartisanship avoid much of this normative language, many of these earlier views are reflected in the distinct ways we think about

²² Converse, of course, intends the concept of a “normal” vote to be purely descriptive and without normative content. Thus it is used to distinguish the regular partisan division of the electorate over long periods of time from deviations from such a division in any given election.

²³ Apropos of the focus in this book on political Independents and immigrant groups, there is a fascinating parallel shift in the positioning of immigrants relative to this shift in meaning conferred to Independents. In short, in the *fin-de-siecle* valorization of Independents by the Mugwumps, there is often, interwoven into criticisms of party corruption and irresponsibility, colorful and derisive mention of the political incorporation of immigrants by urban machines as proof of this corruption and irresponsibility. By contrast, in the post-1965 era of new immigrants from Asian and Latin America, the associations have been inverted. Now Independents are no longer valorized, but immigrants are also no longer as zealously mobilized into active partisanship. While an enticing parallel, a more thorough consideration of this shift is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Independents today. In this current section, we outline the two main theoretical accounts of Independents as well as the principal critique of these conventional accounts.

The most enduring view of Independents follows from *The American Voter*. Party identification and thus Independence as well is here less a function of one's own ideological predispositions, attentiveness, perceptions and more an outcome of one's initial political footprints from childhood and early adulthood (Campbell, et al, 1960; Converse and Markus, 1979). Although several variants of this model have been put forward, all maintain that partisanship is acquired early in life and remains with us throughout our remaining years (Beck and Jennings 1991, Niemi and Jennings 1991). In most cases, we simply assume the partisan choices of our parents.

A more negative, dim view of Independents also emerges in the Michigan school's accounts of nonpartisans. This latter view sees Independents not just as the offspring of Independents but also as non-ideologues who are unattached because they are uninvolved, uninformed, and uninterested in the world of politics (Miller and Watenberg 1983, Campbell et al, 1960). From this view, nonpartisanship is a default for those individuals who pay little attention to politics and have little to say about the issues, candidates, or parties.²⁴

This account strongly challenges the idealized view of the Independent as a virtuous citizen, “attentive to politics, concerned with the course of government, who weighs the rival appeals of a campaign and reaches a judgment that is unswayed by partisan prejudice (1960, 143).” It turns out, at least on the basis of the 1952-1956 CPS Panel Study data analyzed by Campbell and his

²⁴ By this account, one's degree of *politicization* is the parallel continuum that underlies party identification. Strong partisans are apt not only to be more intense about their party identification, but also more interested, informed, and active as citizens.

colleagues that this view of political Independents is a popular myth. Rather, this normative ideal

fits poorly the characteristics of the Independents in our samples. Far from being more attentive, interested, and informed, Independents tend as a group to be somewhat less involved in politics. They have somewhat poorer knowledge of the issues, their image of the candidates is fainter, their interest in the campaign is less, their concern over the outcome is relatively slight, and their choice between competing candidates ... seems much less to spring from discoverable evaluations of the elements of national politics (p. 143).

From this perspective nonpartisans represent the absence of anything concrete or meaningful. They remain detached from partisan politics because they are apolitical animals.

The main alternative to this view of nonpartisans emerges out of the rationalist, ideologically centered accounts that Downs and others put forward. In this alternate view, individuals end up identifying as Independent because their ideological ideal point lies somewhere in the middle between left-leaning Democrats and more conservative Republicans.

Although few explicitly make the claim that Independence equals ideological moderation, the view of Independents as being in the ideological center with views somewhere between the two parties is implicit in most studies of partisanship and is a clear outgrowth of the linear scale of partisanship (Carmines and Stimson 1989, Layman and Carmines 1997, Abramowitz 1995, Alvarez and Nagler 1998, Abramowitz and Saunders 1998).²⁵ When almost every study of American voting behavior incorporates this scale of party identification, they put Independents in the middle. Whether the effort is conscious or not, Independents are presumed

²⁵ To state this point more emphatically, whenever scholars attempt to explain party identification in any of its linear forms (eg a 3, 5, 7 point categorical scale) with a scale made up either of general ideological leaning or more specific policy questions, there is an underlying assumption that Independents fall near the middle of both the ideological and partisan scales.

to hold few, if any, strong views about politics and what opinions they do hold are “middle of the road.”

The common element to both of these conventional views of nonpartisanship is that Independents are placed squarely in the middle of a linear partisan scale. Either because of moderate views, disinterest in the political sphere, or long term predispositions that can be traced back to one’s parents, individuals who identify as Independent can be reasonable and logically situated between Democrats and Republicans. Someone who self-classifies as Independent thus is equally unlikely to convert to a strong Democrat as she is to convert to a strong Republican.²⁶ Importantly, while this view of Independents is widely employed, it has rarely been tested (but see Keith, et al 1992 and Rosenstone, et al 1984). Rather, most just simply assume that Independent fits into a neatly ordered, linear “continuum of partisanship” (Campbell et al, 1960: 122-3).

The principal alternative to these conventional accounts emerges out of a third strand of work that focuses on the dimensionality of party identification.²⁷ As we noted in the previous chapter, there are compelling arguments that the standard 7-point ANES scale conflates at least two empirically distinct dimensions of party identification. Following Weisberg (1980), we described in Chapter One how the standard linear scale of party identification might instead be reconfigured onto the two dimensional space of attitudes towards political parties on one axis

²⁶ For Independents there is an assumption (implicit or explicit) of monotonicity and equidistance with respect to either extremes of party identification

²⁷ To be fair, the authors of *The American Voter* were keenly aware of the possibility of multi-dimensionality. Thus they state that “we do not suppose that every person who describes himself as an Independent is indicating simply his lack of positive attraction to one of the parties. Some of these people undoubtedly are actually repelled by the parties or by partisanship itself and value their position as Independents. Certainly independence of party is an ideal of some currency in our society, and it seems likely that a portion of those who call themselves Independents are not merely reporting the absence of identification with one of the major parties” (1960, 123).

and attitudes toward political independence on the other (see also Dennis 1988a, Dennis 1988b, Valentine and Van Wingen 1980, Alvarez 1990).

This line of research has led to several alternate dimensions of Independence. In particular, Jack Dennis in his “Political Independence in America” series (1998a, 1998b, 1992) identifies four different sources of Independence. The first and for many the defining feature of Independence is neutrality or indifference between the two parties. Put plainly, we identify as Independent, when we see nothing to distinguish the two parties. A second source of Independence, according to Dennis, is self-perceived variability in voting behavior. I am Independent because I sometimes vote for Democrats and sometimes vote for Republicans. While these two dimensions certainly offer potentially important insights into Independence, neither account strongly refutes the Independents in the middle modeling approach. Indeed, it seems reasonable to place those who are indifferent between the parties and those who vote regularly for both parties somewhere near the middle of the partisan spectrum.²⁸ Thus, once again, Independents fall neatly between partisans of the two parties.

The two other dimensions that Dennis exposes are harder to fit within the confines of a linear partisan scale. Both are related to a rejection of the party system and the idea of political parties as a basis for democratic decision-making. This rejection can be manifest directly as positive views of Independence (i.e., in-group affinity) or alternatively as negative views of both parties (i.e., out-group derogation). In the former version – which Dennis calls “political autonomy” attachment to the ideals of Independence is rooted most prominently in the Lockean ideal of individualism and echoes earlier, more normatively positive accounts of Independents as

²⁸ Indifference could, however, as we will note in more detail, also be the result of extreme views. Thus, it is not always appropriate to place those with indifferent partisan views in the middle between Democrats and Republicans.

virtuous. In the latter version – which Dennis calls “antipartyism” - Independents are disaffected, disgruntled former partisans (Rosenstone et al 1984, Collett 1996). As Rosenstone et al put it, “Only when voters feel estranged from the major party candidates will they seek out information on other alternatives” (1984:128). Being Independent is thus explicitly defined as being opposed to the two major parties.²⁹

Raising questions about the dimensionality of partisanship is, we believe, an important task and in our own theory of Independence we draw heavily from the work of Dennis, Weisberg and others. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight two critical failings of this dimensionality literature. The first and most obvious is a relatively thin theoretical basis for the work. Weisberg, Dennis, Greene and others provide compelling evidence that whether one identifies with the two-party system and which party one chooses to identify with are distinct elements of an individual’s party identification. Yet, none offers much in the way of a full fledged theory of Independence. Each of the proposed new dimensions to partisanship really only describes proximate causes of Independence. None offers a sense of the underlying motivations for these attitudes. Put another way, none really tells us why people have a particular set of attitudes toward the parties or independence in the first place.³⁰ Why, for example, do some Americans feel indifferently toward or even dislike the two parties? What is it about their lives or their policy views that leads them to hold these impressions of the parties or to vote in the ways they do? To really understand why people identify as Independents, we will need answers to these

²⁹ Weisberg (1980) suggests a similarly complex model in which Independence is not only a function of views of the two major parties but also of political independence itself and political parties generally.

³⁰ Admittedly, this is not their primary goal. Greene, for example, is principally interested in bringing a more recent theory of intergroup dynamics to add support to the original foundation of party identification in *The American Voter* with newer social psychological scaffolding. Dennis is principally interested in testing some unexamined speculations in Campbell *et al*’s about self-identification as an Independent (1988b, 200), and using appropriate, more recent, statistical methods to do so.

deeper questions.³¹ Developing this kind of a more general, unified account of the multiple pathways to political Independence is imperative because it is substantively and, ultimately, normatively consequential for how we think about who identifies as a political Independent, why they do so, and the import the answers to these questions hold for electoral competition under party politics in the United States.

The other problem with this literature - one that is likely a direct outgrowth of its limited theoretical grounding - is its relatively meager impact on how we think about and measure party identification. Despite the efforts of Weisberg, Dennis and others to highlight the multidimensional nature of partisanship, the linear scale anchored by a single liberal-conservative ideological dimension remains the standard employed by almost all studies of American political behavior. As Petrocik notes, “The index of party identification is so universally accepted as the variable around which to organize a discussion of political behavior in the United States that it is difficult to find a monograph or research article which does not introduce [the linear party index] as a consideration in the analysis” (1974:31). Despite decades of revision, Keith et al’s exhaustive study of partisanship concludes, “We see no problems with the traditional measure” (1992:196).

³¹ What is also missing in these studies is a more capacious account of the distinct categories of non-partisanship. Greene, for instance, focuses the analysis chiefly on comparing Independent leaners to weak and strong partisans to the first stage question, with a clear eye toward those who underscore the behavioral similarities between these two party identification categories. In doing so, Greene falls short of considering how the categories of non-partisanship- partisan leaners, pure Independents, and those who refuse to place themselves anywhere on the standard linear continuum - might differ. A person’s ambivalence (i.e., answering “not sure” to the typical question), detachment (i.e., stating that they do not think in partisan terms), or non-compliance (i.e., refusing to answer the question) might, for example, tell us a great deal about their sense of political identity and attachment of political institutions. Dennis, likewise, focuses on showing what is distinct about each of the four types of political Independents he posits, confirmed by principal components analysis, to the exclusion of any account of whether and, if so, how these dimensions of Independence are conceptually linked. However, as we have already implied, even a casual consideration suggests likely relationships between what Dennis calls anti-partyism and political autonomy and likely relationships between partisan neutrality and partisan variability from the standpoint of the Downsian view of party identification.

The bottom line is that while we know that there are certain imperfections related to the measurement of party identification within the confines of a linear scale we know little about the substantive sources of any alternate dimensions of partisan choices. The end result is that we tend to ignore these irregularities and instead fall back on more simplistic modeling choices.

The race problem

Both conventional models and the critical accounts of Independence that we have just reviewed are also notable for one other feature: their near total inattention to race, ethnicity, and immigration, both theoretically and empirically. One typical approach is to exclude groups like African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans from the analysis. Ray Wolfinger and his collaborators on *The Myth of the Independent Voter* justify this exclusion on the grounds that Independents is a chiefly white phenomenon, and that since “the increase in Independents was confined to the white population ... most of our analysis in subsequent chapters excludes blacks” (1992:26).³² These authors further argue that including African Americans would only confuse and compound the clarity of the analysis: “[b]ecause blacks are the most disaffected of any major population group, omitting them also avoids complications if one examines relationships between alienation and independence (1992, 32).”³³ Another common tactic is simply to ignore

³² Latinos and Asian Americans receive no mention in their study.

³³ It turns out that this empirical decision is largely the result of Keith, et al’s choice of years (1952-1988) and selection only of presidential election years. Figures 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 – which show time series on identification as a “pure Independent,” as a “Democratic leaner”, and as a “Republican leaner” for all NES years to date, 1952-2000 – shows a somewhat different story. While the proportion of African Americans who identify exclusively as an Independent has remained relatively stable throughout (Figure 2), the proportion of Democratic leaners has undergone a marked upsurge since the early 1960s (Figure 3) and the proportion of Republican leaners too has increased since the late 1960s (Figure 4). Again, this is more than a minor empirical quibble about whether Keith, et al are justified in excluding African Americans from their analysis. The more consequential theoretical point that W.E.B. DuBois so insightfully recognized is that far from being marginalized and therefore negligible, it is precisely because racial minorities have been marginalized that they are critical to understanding America writ large (DuBois Year).

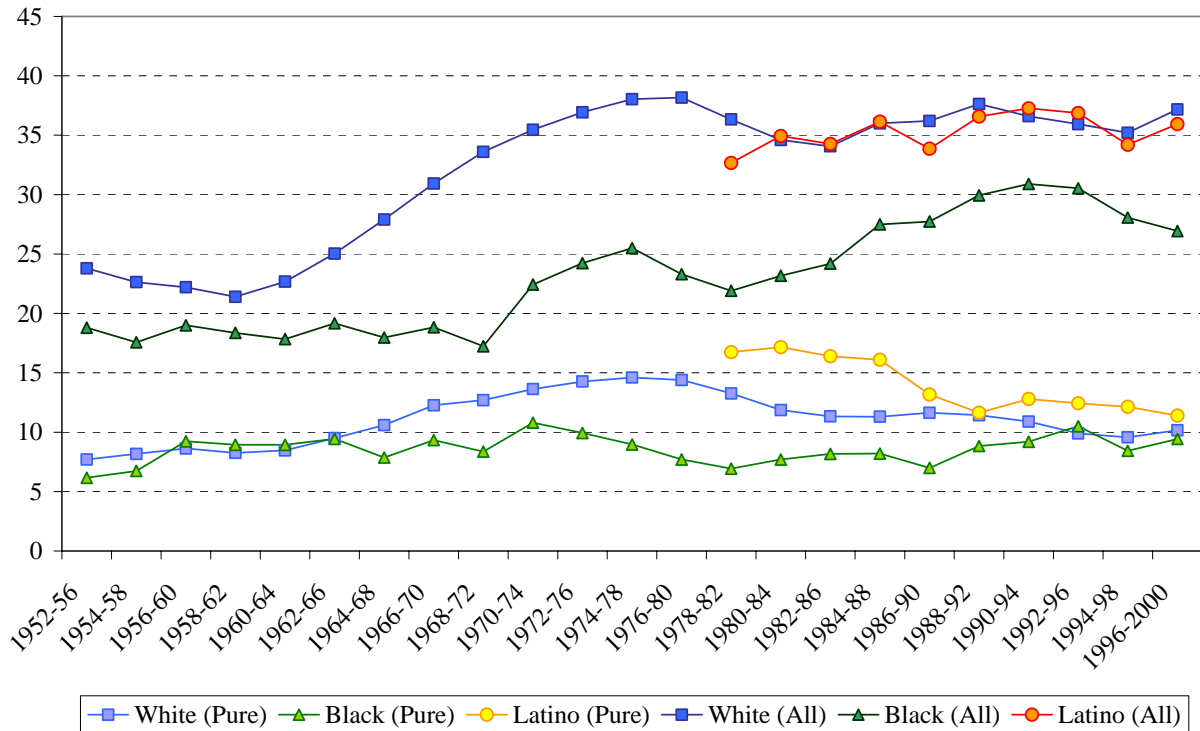
these groups altogether. In Jack Dennis' article series on political Independents, there is, for example, no mention of race/ethnicity whatsoever.

Recusing race in this manner is, unfortunately, all-too commonplace in political science research (Dawson and Wilson 1991, Lee 2002, Dawson and Cohen 2002). We argue, however, that racial and ethnic identity, as an influence on one's politics, is not too insignificant in number, too invariant in its influence on one's politics, or too readily reducible to partisan considerations. Rather than ignore race as a consideration, we expect the distinctive political characteristics of African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and white Americans to give us critical variation and insight into whether we identify with a party and, if so, which one.

As something of a face validity consideration that "race matters" to our understanding of partisanship patterns writ large and Independence in particular, Figure 2.1 shows the change over time in self-categorization as an Independent disaggregated by racial/ethnic group.³⁴

³⁴ There are too few Asian Americans in the ANES samples to include in the analysis. Given the relatively small sample sizes of African Americans and Latinos in each NES, three year moving averages are shown in Figures 7, 8, and 9.

Figure 2. Proportion of Independents by Race/Ethnicity, 1952-2000



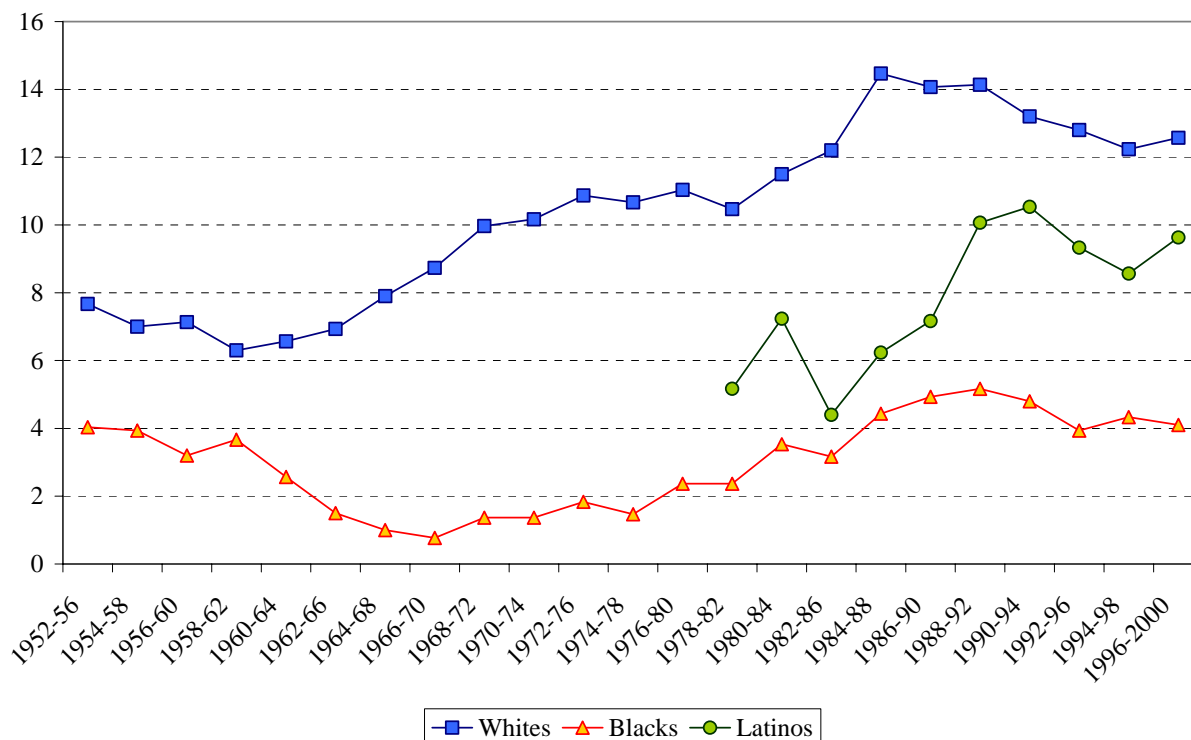
The main observation to take note of is that what we make of political Independents over the last half century depends largely on which group and which category of Independents we examine. If we focus on those who self-identify as an Independent to the root ANES question (“All”), the notable racial difference is the relatively lower proportion of African Americans who identify as Independents, with Latinos and whites seemingly tracking together over time. Based just on this analysis, one might concur with Don Green and his colleagues and draw the inference that what is distinctive about race is the partisanship patterns of African Americans, and these patterns are driven by the disproportionate allegiance to the Democratic party. If, however, we focus on those Independents who indicate no partisan leanings (“Pure”), each group differs in their allegiances over time from the other. The proportion of white pure Independents appears to roughly double from the 1950s to the mid-1970s, then creep back down in the last two

decades; the proportion of Latino pure Independents, from the time such analysis is possible (1978), appears to decline steadily and at a faster clip than for white Americans; the proportion of African American pure Independents appears to increase slowly over time. Notably, these racially/ethnically distinct trends have, more or less, converged in the last decade of the ANES to the same point, with roughly 10 percent of pure Independents in all groups. One inference to draw from this comparison might be that patterns of partisanship are racially distinct; an alternative might be a story of the gradual diminishment of racial and ethnic differences over time.

Similarly divergent inferences are accessible by examining both Republican leaners (Figure 2.2) and Democratic leaners (not shown). With Republican leaners, there are again racial and ethnic differences and commonalities over time. Whites are noticeably more likely than are African Americans to self-identity as Independents with a partial eye towards the Republican party, with a steady increase from the late 1950s to the late 1980s. African Americans, however, have not remained constant: there is a clear upsurge in black Republican leaners from the late 1960s up through the present day. And with Latinos, there is an even more dramatic increase in self-identification as a Republican leaner, the net effect of which is that Latinos look much like African Americans in their base rates of identification in the late-1970s, but much closer to white Americans by the 1990s.³⁵ These figures suggest, with compelling visual effect, that there are racial and ethnically distinct patterns of party identification.

³⁵ For racial/ethnic patterns in identification as a Democratic leaner, the most conspicuous result is the lack of any differences. Similar proportions of all three groups identify as Democratic leaners, and this proportion changes over time similarly for each group.

Figure 3. Independents Leaning Republican, by Race (3MA)



Testing Conventional Accounts

To put more empirical bite to this possibility, we offer a more direct and more compelling test of the applicability of conventional accounts of party identification to racial minority identifiers. Our test demonstrates that the two principal theories of party identification—the Michigan and Downsian accounts—fare rather poorly in explaining the self-identification of African American and Latino Independents.

The chief expectation of the Michigan school is that Independents so identify as a result of their pre-adult socialization or their political apathy and indifference. The chief expectation of the Downsian view is that Independents so identify as a result of their ideological moderation. In Table 2.1, we test these hypotheses using data from the ANES from 1978 to 2000. Pre-adult socialization is measured by the party identification of one's parents (specifically, whether two,

one, or neither of the respondent's parents 'generally identified' as Independents.). The degree of political engagement is measured by respondents' level of political knowledge, their self-reported political interest levels, their personal political efficacy, and by their self-reported political participation.³⁶ The effect of ideological self-placement is tested by comparing self-described moderates (the three middle categories of the 7 point self-perceived ideology scale) to strong and weak conservatives and liberals. To further assess indifference between the parties, we include a dummy measure indicating whether or not the respondent indicated that they saw 'any important differences in what the Republican and Democrats stand for.' Finally, to see if Dennis' principled Independents account fits different racial/ethnic groups, we incorporate in our test a measure of affect toward the two major parties – a count of how many more 'dislikes' than 'likes' each respondent could name about the parties. Details on question wording and coding for each of these variables as well as descriptive statistics for each racial group are included in the Appendix.

Table 2.1 Testing Conventional Models of Independence³⁷

	Whites	Blacks	Latinos
<u>The Downsian Ideology Model</u>			
<i>Independents as Moderates</i>			
Strong Liberal	-.00 (.20)	-.09 (.34)	.27 (.59)
Liberal	-.15 (.09)^	-.14 (.23)	-.57 (.41)
Conservative	-.48 (.07)**	.15 (.29)	-.26 (.29)

³⁶ Political knowledge is measured as a dummy variable indicating that a respondent could correctly name the majority party in the House of Representatives. Political efficacy is a reversed additive scale of agree/disagree responses to the following two statements: a) Public officials don't care much what people like me think and b) People like me don't have any say about what the government does. Responses to a question about one's level of interest in "following the political campaigns (so far) this year" are used to measure political interest. Finally, political participation was based on the number of different types of political acts a respondent had undertaken over the course of the last campaign. Possible acts included attending a meeting, working for a party or candidate, contributing money, displaying a political sign, trying to influence others, and contacting a public official.

³⁷ Based on an analysis of the ANES, 1978-2000. Logit estimates are based on 8030 whites, 850 African Americans, and 443 Latinos.

Strong Conservative	-.59 (.15)**	1.1 (.39)**	-1.9 (1.1)^
<i>Independents as Indifferent</i>			
See Party Differences	-.04 (.01)*	.01 (.05)	.03 (.05)
<u>The Michigan School</u>			
<i>Childhood Socialization</i>			
Parents Independent	.83 (.06)**	.98 (.19)**	1.0 (.32)**
<i>Apolitical</i>			
Political Knowledge	-.19 (.06)**	.11 (.17)	-.05 (.23)
Political Interest	-.18 (.04)**	-.54 (.12)**	-.18 (.16)
Political Efficacy	-.02 (.00)**	-.01 (.02)	-.00 (.02)
Political Participation	-.14 (.03)**	.04 (.09)	-.21 (.14)
<u>Anti-Party Independents</u>			
Dislike Parties	.12 (.01)**	.03 (.05)	.19 (.06)**

The basic conclusion of this test is that although conventional accounts fare reasonably well in accounting for the partisan decision making of white Americans, their ability to explain the partisan choices of racial and ethnic minorities is at best mixed.³⁸ For whites, both the Downsian and Michigan accounts seem to fit the partisan proclivities of much of the population.³⁹ Ideological moderation and indifference between the two parties strongly and significantly predict Independence among the white population.⁴⁰ So too does childhood socialization and political apathy. Having one or more parents who identified as Independent

³⁸ When we repeat the analysis focusing on pure Independents (including Independent leaners as partisans), we reach the same conclusion.

³⁹ One interesting anomaly is that many strong liberals appear to resist identification with the Democratic Party in favor of Independence. As we will see, this attenuated relationship between ideology and partisanship is neither a statistical artifact nor irrational and unexplainable behavior. Rather, we seek to show that many extreme liberals feel that they are not well represented by a Democratic Party that is near the center on the issues they care about and as a result opt for Independence.

⁴⁰ It is not just a basic liberal-conservative orientation that tends to separate out moderates. In alternate tests, we included measures of policy preferences on a variety of issues central to the partisan debate in American national elections. Those who tended to hold moderate or middle-of-the-road views across a range of basic policy questions, were significantly more likely to identify as Independents. Thus, the 'Independents as moderates' claim seems to fairly accurately depict the partisan choices of at least some white Americans. The issues we tested are the overall level of government spending, government's role in health insurance, financial aid to blacks, the merits of guaranteeing full employment, busing to achieve integration, defense spending, and strategies at dealing with urban unrest.

appreciably increases one's odds of identifying as a nonpartisan. Also, those who feel like government is too complicated and those who are less interested and less active in politics are significantly more likely to be nonpartisans or independents.⁴¹ Dennis' claims about principled Independents are also borne out for whites. Those who have more negative views of the two major parties are significantly more likely to identify as Independent.⁴² Although the entire model does not explain a lot of the variation in white partisanship, it is still fair to say that independence for many white Americans is fairly accurately portrayed by the range of theoretical accounts that already exist in the literature.⁴³

By contrast, the decision-making processes of African Americans and Latinos seem to be only minimally related to the basic dimensions portrayed in the literature. Judged simply by the number of significant variables, much less matters for either group.⁴⁴ The Downsian ideological

⁴¹ In subsequent chapters, we will differ with the authors of *The American Voter* over the precise meaning of this tie between political engagement and partisanship. Specifically, we believe that for many individuals a lack of political engagement and nonpartisanship are both the result of rational skepticism.

⁴² Dennis' political autonomy dimension also garners support. In alternate tests, we find that those with more positive views of political Independence (as measured by a feeling thermometer toward 'political independence') were significantly more likely to identify as Independents. Since this measure is available in only a few ANES years, it is not included in the final model. Its inclusion has no noticeable effect on the other relationships in Table 2.1.

⁴³ Only a small fraction of the variation in white party choice is explained by the model (pseudo R squared = .05). Moreover, the magnitude of the effects we see in Table 2.1 are not particularly large. When we calculated the probability that a given individual would identify as Independent under different scenarios, we found that variations along each of the three dimensions did not greatly increase the odds of identifying as nonpartisan. This suggests that conventional accounts represent a far from complete understanding of white Independence and white partisanship more generally. Undoubtedly, other dimensions and other factors are also at play.

⁴⁴ Although some of the reduced significance in the Latino and African American models is surely due to the smaller sample size, much is not. Not only are most of the relationships insignificant but many are signed in the wrong direction or of tiny magnitude. To help ensure that the differences between whites and non-whites are not an artifact of the larger white sample size, we undertook three additional tests. First, we analyzed repeated iterations of the regression in Table 2.1 with a reduced white sample size. Second, we repeated—as closely as possible—the analysis of blacks and Latinos in Table 2.1 using larger samples from single year studies of those two communities (the 1996 National Black Election Survey and the 1990 Latino National Politics Survey). Finally, we added interactions between race and each of the conventional accounts. In each, there was clear evidence that some factors mattered less for minorities. In particular, liberal-conservative ideology was the factor that consistently mattered less for blacks and Latinos.

model, in particular, fails to help us place blacks and Latinos on the partisan scale.⁴⁵ For Latinos, strong conservatism is the only ideological self-placement that predicts a lesser likelihood of identifying as an Independent. For African Americans, the one category of ideological self-placement that is significant is signed in the wrong direction - strong conservatives are more apt than moderates to choose to identify as Independent. Within the African American community, Independents are less likely to come from the center of the ideological spectrum than from the conservative extreme. In short, there is little support for an ‘independents as moderates’ view of minority party choice.

The other two conventional perspectives do, however, get some support from our analysis. Parental socialization appears to work for all three racial groups. Although it is worth noting that many first and second generation immigrants – a majority of both the Latino and Asian American populations – will likely not have much of a parental partisan cue to follow. A lack of political engagement appears to be relevant for one of the two minority groups.⁴⁶ For African Americans, there is some sign of a link between political apathy and independence. Similarly, principled Independence or the generally negative views of political parties model applies to one minority group. Among Latinos, those with more critical views of the parties are more likely to identify as nonpartisans.

Towards a Theory: Information, Identity, and Ideology

⁴⁵ We tend to reach the same conclusion when we replace the self-perceived liberal-conservative ideology scale with each respondents’ policy preferences on a variety of issues central to the partisan debate in American national elections.

⁴⁶ Even the effects for blacks are however, much less clear than the effects for whites. For African Americans, only one of the measures of politicization significantly predicts political Independence while for whites, all five of our measures reach a statistically significant relationship.

All of this is perhaps not surprising given that these models were designed to help us understand mainstream American politics. In their formation, the choices and experiences of racial and ethnic minorities and immigrants were largely ignored. These findings do, however, raise important questions about how and why minorities and immigrants are different and what these differences can tell us about the process of choosing to identify or not identify with a particular party.

The answers are, we contend, not that difficult to find. By focusing on basic characteristics of the immigrant and minority communities, we can quickly expose a series of problematic assumptions that undergird conventional models of partisanship. Then, building on each of these unique characteristics, we can identify distinct, new dimensions of partisan choice. Finally, by considering how these factors work together to affect all segments of the population, we can develop a more encompassing theory of partisanship.

So what is it that is different about racial and ethnic minorities and immigrants groups? In Chapter One we noted three defining characteristics of the immigrant and minority communities - information uncertainty, ideological ambivalence, and identity formation. In this chapter, we show that by ignoring these characteristics, conventional accounts of partisanship make problematic assumptions about partisan choice. Further, we delineate how each of these three factors should influence the partisan choices of different groups and explain how, for a range of Americans, they should lead to Independence or nonpartisanship.

A vital but largely unexamined assumption undergirding conventional accounts of party identification is that individuals have enough information to make decisions about partisanship. Conventional models, in fact, assume a fairly intimate, lifelong relationship with party politics. Take the example of identification as an Independent. Individuals who end up identifying as

Independents because they are ideological moderates have surveyed the partisan debate and found that they are indifferent between the parties and fit most accurately in the middle. Similarly, for the offspring of Independents who follow the partisanship of their parents, partisanship is acquired only after a lengthy socialization process that depends on generations of knowledge of the American party system. Finally, Americans who end up as Independent because they are apolitical have at least had the opportunity to be involved in partisan politics and have ultimately discarded that world as uninteresting or unimportant.

However, none of these accounts fits well with immigrant ethnic groups who often have only limited familiarity with politics and the partisan choices that they face here. That is, Asians and Latinos are not likely, either as immigrants or second or third generation tenderfoots treading on *terra incognita*, to be fully “assimilated” into the strong sense of personal political efficacy or trust in political institutions, or deep understanding of left-right ideological expected of more seasoned democratic citizens in America (cf. de la Garza, Falcon, and Garcia 1996; Parker 2003).⁴⁷ In particular, the foreign born and their offspring – a group that constitutes a majority of the Latino and Asian American population – simply have less chance to learn basic facts about American politics and less chance to understand the core concepts that flow through America’s partisan discourse. Socialization vis a vis some other political system, less time in the United States, and a host of other barriers suggest that many members of these communities will not know enough or be comfortable enough with the partisan options in America to make straightforward decisions about partisanship.

⁴⁷ We share Brubaker’s view that it is possible today to distinguish between assimilation as a normative goal and assimilation as social process that merits empirical study. Too, we share Brubaker’s dictum to move beyond the question of “how much assimilation” to the questions, “assimilation in what respect, over what period of time, and to what reference population (2001, 544)?”

This insight can also be applied more broadly. Although African Americans and white Americans generally do not suffer from the kinds of informational barriers that immigrants do, there are members of both communities who stand apart from mainstream America and its politics. For some whites and even more so for many African Americans life transpires in extremely poor, socially isolated communities where the ability to interact with and learn about mainstream political institutions is severely curtailed (Wilson 1987). For this group as well as for the larger immigrant community, the act of identifying with a party may involve considerable uncertainty.

Our first proposed modification to the Michigan and Downsian accounts of party identification, then, is to suggest that uncertainty represents a distinctive pathway to self-identification as an Independent – notably different from one’s ideological moderation or non-partisan socialization. Ultimately, rather than support a system that they do not yet fully trust and make a choice between parties that they know little about, they are likely to end up with the default choice – Independence. For many then, the choice of Independent is an affirmation of the rational skeptic.

A second important assumption behind the conventional models of partisanship is pluralism – namely that the policy agenda resulting from the two party system faithfully represents the needs and interests of the polity – and by corollary, that individuals can place their own political needs and interests comfortably within the liberal-conservative continuum that divides the two parties.

This one dimensional view of partisanship is, however, likely to run afoul of the range of political views and issue concerns that animate the politics of America’s increasingly diverse

population.⁴⁸ Judged by even a brief overview of the politics of minority and immigrant communities and - once our interest in alternate dimensions has been sparked – by a more in-depth accounting of the ideological structure of the white population, it is apparent that the Democratic-Republican divide does not dependably incorporate the views of all individuals and groups. For Latinos and Asian Americans, for example, concerns about the role of immigrants in American society and attention to core issues related to home country politics will often prove difficult to place on a left-right partisan scale. Likewise for African Americans, debates between those who support black autonomy and those who favor racial integration may not map easily onto a liberal-conservative ideological dimension. And this may not solely be a minority or immigrant phenomenon. Whites, too, are diverse and for those members of the white population whose views are mixed in a way that does not fit neatly along the liberal-conservative partisan divide or who care deeply about an issue that both parties have only minimally addressed, their interests may not be well represented by the positions of either party. More broadly, across America's diverse population there are likely to be a range of core concerns and ideological debates that do not comport well with a partisan scale that is measured along a single dimension

For those with core political beliefs and issue concerns that are inadequately reflected in the choice between Democrat and Republican, there is little motivation to choose either party. Instead, a reasonable, and we would argue rational alternative is to choose neither and to remain Independent. Independence in this view is not merely the midpoint on a continuum but rather the default result for those motivated by a range of distinct orthogonal ideological dimensions and issue concerns that do not mesh well with a left-right partisan divide.

⁴⁸ As we will see later in this chapter, critics of this uni-dimensional view of American politics do exist. See for example Stokes (1963), Duverger (1954), McKelvey and Ordeshook (1976).

A third problem with both the Michigan school and the Downsian “running tally” view of partisanship is inattention to the complex ways in which social identities might influence partisanship. If race matters in these models, it is largely because of an attachment to a party that presents a policy platform that favors the liberal or conservative positions of members of a particular racial group. Thus, the Democratic Party’s clear association with what is widely perceived to be a racially liberal policy agenda attracts blacks (and some whites) who favor that agenda (Carmines and Stimson 1989).

We contend, however, that beyond this policy dimension are a range of social identities that can be salient enough to influence partisan patterns in a variety of complex ways. For African Americans, in particular, racially group identity is so encompassing, that any shift in one’s political calculus is likely to be the consequence of a prior shift in one’s sense of racially “linked fate” (Dawson 1994). Exit from the Democratic Party may, thus, signify less a change in policy positions and more a lessening of racial group identity or an unhinging of the linkage between partisan and racial group identities.

For immigrant-based groups like Latinos and Asian Americans we expect racially and ethnically defined “groupness” to be a shifting entity—more of a formation than a result. Thus, partisanship choice is likely to at least in part reflect learning about how race and ethnicity are lived in the US. For those whose experiences with discrimination are more limited and whose identities as minorities more tenuous – an outlook held by many Latinos and Asian Americans – an identity characterized by uncertainty is unlikely to offer much assistance in choosing parties. Uncertainty surrounding one’s own identity may in turn lead to a similar uncertainty surrounding partisan choices - a situation that is, more than anything else, likely to lead to nonpartisanship.

For individuals from any group, we also expect that racial identities and other political predispositions will clash in ways that occasionally lead to Independence. For example, for individuals who hold a set of issue concerns and ideological positions that consistently push them toward the Republican Party - Cuban Americans come to mind - a strengthening minority identity should serve to muddy the waters and encourage abstention in the form of nonpartisanship. In all of these cases, party choice will be related to group loyalty and Independence will represent more than ideological moderation.

These three dimensions, information, ideology, and identity form the core of our theoretical account of partisanship. In the following sections, we show how these dimensions help to delineate the distinct pathways to party identification or non-identification for blacks, immigrants-based groups like Latinos and Asian Americans, and ultimately for whites as well.

African Americans: Exit from the Democratic Party

In the case of African American partisanship, Dawson (1993), Tate (1993), and others have shown that for African Americans, personal identity and group identity are mutually constitutive in the notion of a “black utility heuristic”- what benefits my group benefits me. Yet this linkage implies neither stasis nor isomorphism. While Dawson notes that “the relative homogeneity of black public opinion has been generally considered one of the few certainties of modern American politics (2001, 44),” it is important to remember that African Americans have not always so univocally identified with the Democratic party; prior to the Great Depression and the New Deal era, it was more commonplace to think of the African Americans as identifying with the party of Lincoln (Weiss 1983; Marable 1990; Frymer 1999). Similarly, the linkage of racial group identity to political party identification alone would not explain the two-fold increase in African Americans who self-identify as political Independents shown in Figure 2.1.

Equally important, race is not such a totalizing force in African American politics that black political thought is homogeneous (Dawson 2001) or exclusive of other salient primary social identities. Some of the most important recent work on racial politics and race relations engage the intersections of race with class (Gilliam 1986, Welch and Foster 1987, Wilson 1987), gender (Morrison 1992, Gay and Tate 1998), sexuality (Cohen 1999), and national identity (Parker 2003; Citrin and Sears 2005; Sawyer 2005).

The upshot of our discussion in the last section is that race is a sufficiently pervasive and far-reaching organizing influence on American social, economic, and political life that we expect it to have an important and independent influence on our party identification for many Americans. We do not, however, expect race to vanquish, or be vanquished by, other salient group identities. Dawson claim that “belief in the importance of black interests translates into preference for the Democratic Party” (Dawson 1994, 113) is we think too blunt and too deterministic.

Our contention is that a sense of linked fate may not automatically translate into support for the Democratic Party. Before linking blacks interests with the Democratic Party, individuals must navigate two key steps. First, African Americans must believe that black interests are best served through mainstream political institutions such as parties. This is an especially critical step because of the strong sense of mistrust of mainstream white institutions within the African American community and strong sentiment in favor of autonomous and counterpublic black institutions.⁴⁹ To the extent that African Americans think of the Democratic Party as a mainstream white institution, support for black autonomy could severely undercut the link

⁴⁹Dawson notes substantial increases over time in support for a black political party, with almost forty percent of African Americans currently championing a black nationalist agenda (Dawson 2001:83).

between black group interests and the Democratic Party. In light of the fact that our analysis will show that upwards of 40 percent of the black population now professes to support core aspects of a black separatist agenda, this could be a primary factor in any black exit from the Democratic Party and in particular in the recent movement of many African Americans to status as nonpartisans. Importantly, this dimension – autonomy vs integration – has been largely ignored in previous accounts of black partisanship.

Second, even if individual African Americans conclude that black interests are best served through mainstream political institutions, they still must decide which institution best serves black interests. While this choice may seem too obvious to many (perhaps most) African Americans, it may not be so obvious or consensual to everyone. Specifically, the group calculus must be linked to the social act of coordinating on which party to throw one's support behind. Indeed, given the increasing prominence of black Republicans and conservatives like Clarence Thomas, Alan Keyes, Condoleezza Rice, and Colin Powell, the expanding support for black nationalism (Dawson 2001, Brown and Shaw 2002, Davis and Brown 2002), and what many perceive to be efforts by the Democratic Party to downplay race and ignore a racially progressive agenda (Frymer 1999), genuine skepticism about the Democratic Party is conceivable.

To put a sharper point on how this matters to explaining political Independence, if race were simply reducible to partisan considerations, as Green and his colleagues (2002) suggest, we would have no explanation for the substantial (and growing) proportion of African Americans who identify as political Independents. Similarly, if partisan considerations were simply reducible to a linked fate heuristic, as implied in Dawson and Tate's accounts of African American party identification, we would have no explanation for the calculus of black political Independents.

One implication of our argument is that while race is likely to remain a central factor in black partisan decision making, racial identity can cut both ways and occasionally a black identity will lead to distance from both the Democratic and Republican Parties. The other implication is that African Americans may differ from other groups not simply in terms of which factors determine party identification but also in the structure of choice. For African Americans a multi-dimensional, unordered model is likely to more accurately depict their partisan decision making process than is a simple, linear scale.

In Chapter Three we juxtapose these arguments about the distinct steps that are required to translate linked fate into Democratic partisanship and the importance of black separatism in determining black partisan choices against three popular but as of yet untested, alternate explanations for the movement of African Americans away from the Democratic Party. Specifically, we assess the impact of the declining significance of race (Wilson 1978), the growing black middle class (Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997, Hutchinson 1999), and increased black conservatism (Sowell 1981, Hamilton 1982) on the partisan locations of individual African Americans.

As we shall see in Chapter Three, it is not the case that the racial foundation of black party identification has been trumped by the declining significance of race, a right-ward shift in ideology, or changing economic considerations. Against these reductionist explanations, we shall show that black political Independence is best explained by the factors that contribute to the decoupling of racial group identity from partisan political identity.

Immigrants: Uncertainty, Ambivalence, Identity and Nonpartisanship

An important corollary to our claim that race matters to our understanding of party identification is the further point that race as a consideration is not exclusive to African

Americans. Even in texts on party identification that do give some consideration to race (e.g., Campbell *et al*, 1960; Nie, Verba, and Petrocik 1976; Kaminiecki 1985; Miller and Shanks 1996), the not-too-subtle implication is that race is consequential only to the extent that African Americans are different from white Americans. Absent from these comparisons is a consideration of any other racial/ethnic group—most conspicuously, the distinctive political characteristics of Asian Americans and Latino Americans. This absence is especially notable given the profound transformation in the demographic landscape of the United States since the Hart-Cellar amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act in 1965.

Certainly there has been a wealth of research examining the connection between parties and immigration. In particular, there is much careful theory and analysis on how today's political parties compare with those of yesteryear (e.g., Jones-Correa 1998, Rogers 2000, Wong 2000, Gerstle and Mollenkopf 2001, Jones-Correa 2001, Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001, Ramírez 2002, Wong 2002, Lien et al 2004).⁵⁰ For the most part, this body of scholarship has concluded that today's parties lack the organizational capacity, the political incentives, the cultural literacy, and perhaps even the democratic resolve to shepherd new immigrants into the political process and secure their loyalties to a particular political party.⁵¹ These studies tell us a great deal about the openness of our political institutions to the interests and involvement of new immigrants, but substantially less about what these new immigrants think about our party system.

⁵⁰ There are also several yet unpublished new works on the role of partisan mobilization in Asian and Latino participation, with a focus on voter registration and voter turnout (Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2001, Ramirez 2002, Wong 2002, Barreto et al 2003).

⁵¹ These works also confirm that over the turn of the century during the nation's previous immigration wave the willingness of parties to incorporate new citizens was not equal across all immigrant groups (Ignatiev 1995, Jacobson 1998), or all historical contexts (Mayhew 1986) or all electoral circumstances (Erie 1988), and that other organizations like neighborhood associations, unions, churches, and ethnic voluntary associations were vital to the incorporating of new immigrant groups (Sterne 2001).

So how do immigrants and their offspring make decisions about the American party system? As we have already noted, despite the enormous attention given by political scientists to the question of party identification in America, little of it has turned to racial and ethnic minorities or to new immigrants to the United States. Moreover, the handful of studies that exist (e.g., Finifter and Finifter 1989, Cain et al 1991, Pachon and DeSipio 1994, Uhlaner et al 2000, Wong 2001, Alvarez and Garcia-Bedolla 2003), by and large, face several limitations. First, their principal concern, operationally, is in explaining the variation in how these emerging groups fix their loyalties given the pair-wise choice between the Democratic and Republican parties. Second, with few exceptions the research into the partisanship of these groups has simply adopted a conventional understanding of party identification. The predominant assumption is that Latinos, Asian Americans, and others distinguish parties along the same single linear liberal-conservative dimension. Third, much of this work is incomplete and insufficiently discriminating. Take for instance the finding that immigrants' partisanship is defined by time spent in the U.S. (Cain et al 1991, Wong 2000). While valid, lived years is too rough a cut to distinguish between the different facets that might vary with tenure (experiences in one's workplace and neighborhood, citizenship status, civic engagement, familiarization with political parties and left-right ideology, and the like) nor does it specify the underlying mechanisms by which time matters (e.g., information uncertainty, ideological ambivalence, identity formation). Finally, their principal substantive focus is on explaining the partisanship patterns of particular groups *per se*, rather than endeavoring to draw from these patterns some new insights into the nature and dynamics of party identification writ large.

To be fair, this focus on explaining the party identification of Latinos and Asians is admittedly important in its own right. For all the reasons we have just described, it is of great

political consequence whether Latinos and Asians choose to coordinate their political attachments around one particular party, as African Americans have done over many decades, or whether race/ethnicity recedes to relative insignificance in choosing between parties.

Important or not, this focus on predicting whether Latinos and Asians will line up as Democrats or Republicans misses what is perhaps most distinctive about the party identification of immigrant-based groups, namely, the relative absence of any relationship to parties. A disproportionate (relative to whites and African Americans) number of Latinos and Asian Americans reject the pair-wise choice between the Democrats and the Republicans, or even the tripartite choice between Democrats, Republicans, and Independents.

Table 2.2. Asian Americans, Latinos, and Non-partisanship

	Democrat/ Republican	Independent	Not sure/ DK/ Refused	Something else/No pref.
Asian Americans				
1993-94 MCSUI (LA)	28	11	6	55
2001 PNAAPS (5 cities)	50	13	18	20
Hispanics/Latinos				
1993-94 MCSUI (4 cities)	39	14	4	43
2002 Pew	51	28	11	10
2004 Pew	49	26	14	12

Table 2.2 shows the responses of Asian Americans and Latinos to the standard party identification question in several recent surveys: the 1993-94 Multi-city Survey of Urban Inequality (in this survey Latinos are surveyed in four cities; Asian are surveyed only in Los Angeles), the 2001 Pilot National Asian American Politics Survey, and the 2002 and 2004 Kaiser Family Foundation/Pew Hispanic Center National Survey of Latinos. These surveys are not all

representative of the national population of these groups but to the extent that they diverge from the national population, they focus on the groups we are most interested in – immigrants and their offspring.⁵²

Fully 61 percent of Asian American and 47 percent of Latino respondents in the MCSUI either note no partisan preferences, refuse to answer, indicate their uncertainty, or answer that they “Don’t Know.” Among Asian Americans in the MCSUI, only 28 percent identify either as a Democrat or a Republican; among Latinos, only 39 percent locate themselves on this continuum. This pervasive reluctance to ally with a major political party stands in marked contrast to the emphatic conclusion of the authors of *The American Voter* that “all but the few” who eschew any involvement in politics can be located on a continuum of partisanship extending from strong Republican to strongly Democratic (Campbell *et al* 1960, 122).

The upshot of the non-partisanship of Asian Americans and Latinos is a strong affirmation of our earlier expectation that party identification is not likely to be well-described by a standard, linear, unidimensional continuum. As we shall further argue, neither is it likely to be well-explained by the Michigan school nor the Downsian view of party identification. Asian Americans and Latinos are more of a moving target vis-à-vis their party identification than Campbell *et al*’s “unmoved mover.” Similarly, unlike Downsian voters who consume information short-cuts in the duopolistic competition between the Republican and Democratic parties, most Asians and Latinos simply have no preferences over these goods and are unable to locate themselves on a Downsian ideological continuum.

⁵² The two PEW surveys are designed to be representative of the national Hispanic population. Importantly, this includes non-citizens, a group that is omitted in studies like the ANES. The MCSUI survey over samples minorities in major urban centers and seeks to obtain stratification that includes poor, immigrant neighborhoods. The PNAAPS

The reason for this poor theoretical fit, we assert, is that the partisanship patterns of immigrant-based groups are characterized by the processes of immigrant acculturation and political incorporation – the degree to which new entrants come to understand the rules of social, political, and economic engagement in the United States. To be more specific, we maintain that the unique context of immigration implicates three distinct factors that govern the party identification of Latinos and Asian Americans: information uncertainty, ideological ambivalence, and identity formation.

First, uncertainty shapes the partisan choices of immigrants and their children because these relative newcomers often do not know enough about American politics and American parties to know where they fit in. In contrast to the Michigan and Downsian accounts which presume fully assimilated and well-socialized citizens, with immigration-based groups there is neither familiarity with the US-centric left-right ideological continuum, knowledge of issue differences between Democrats and Republicans, nor sufficiently habituated loyalties with the American two-party system. None of the preconditions for these conventional pathways to partisanship applies. The result is that rather than make a choice between parties that they know little about or support a party or political system that they do not yet trust, we believe that many Latinos and Asian Americans identify as Independents or choose some other non-partisan option as a rationally skeptical response to this uncertain and unfamiliar political environment. To put a finer point on it, there are two distinct and sequential choices that undergird the relationship of Latinos and Asian Americans to political parties. As newcomers to the United States, Asians and Latinos first have to decide whether they possess a sufficient feel for the game and adequate knowledge of its rules of engagement to play. If not, they are likely (as many do) do to indicate no preference or give one of the non-compliant responses (refusal, “not sure,” or “don’t know”).

If the choice to play is affirmative, then they must decide which team—Democrats, Republicans, or Independent—to join up with.

Second, we argue that for immigrant-based racial/ethnic groups, prior political predispositions, the anchors that typically steady us through uncertain and unfamiliar environments, too have shaky moorings in the American party system. Both in terms of the underlying ideological structure of their views and in terms of the primary issues that animate their political motivations, immigrants and their off-spring may not be easily incorporated into the political divide that separates Democrats and Republicans in America. Thus, we posit that the partisan choices of Asian Americans and Latinos are shaped by ambivalence. We expect ideological ambivalence because it is likely that immigrants or their offspring will at least initially try to adapt the cultural values, religious mores, terms of ideological discourse from their homeland context to the United States. The problem is that homeland context will often not fit neatly into the partisan discourse that separates the two parties along a well defined liberal-conservative ideological dimension.

To explicate this point further - many immigrant groups are what Philip Converse called “issue publics.” That is, their politics is in large measure defined by very specific issue concerns – such as the concerns of Cubans, Vietnamese and Koreans with US post-Cold War foreign policy, or the concern of Puerto Ricans and Pacific Islanders with statehood and sovereignty, or the concerns of Arab and Muslims with civil liberties in a post-911 era, and the like. While the major parties can stake well-defined positions on these issues, the issues are seldom central to either party’s platform. Thus establishing durable party allegiances on the basis of such issues may leave these groups vulnerable either to shifting political tides or to discord with *de novo* issues that arise from their immigrant experiences in the United States (e.g., Vietnamese-

Americans may like the Republican party's more hawkish foreign policy but like the Democratic party's more liberal social welfare and civil rights policies).

Finally, we expect that for Asian Americans and Latinos a second central predisposition, racially and ethnically defined "groupness" will be a shifting entity—more of a formation than a result. That is, this process of identity formation is also likely to be characterized by uncertainty and ambivalence. Much of the debate over Latinos and Asian Americans as social group identities is whether there is any there there. While many scholars have ably demonstrated that the political orientation of Asian Americans and Latinos can be shaped by their ethnic and pan-ethnic identity, this influence is often quite contingent (Padilla 1984, Espiritu 1990, Pachon and DeSipio 1995, Jones-Correa and Leal 1996, Jones-Correa 1998, Bobo and Johnson 2000, Lee 2004). As Lee (2004) shows, when Asian Americans strongly believe that their individual lot in life is adjoined to the fate of other Asian Americans, this has a significant effect on their likelihood of having a party that they identify with and having that party being the Democratic party, but only a small fraction of all Asian Americans hold this belief. Thus we expect the political and social group identities of Asians and Latinos to interact in often complex ways to influence how different immigrants and their children think about the major parties, the American political process, and the utility of civic and political engagement.⁵³

Extremism, Ambivalence, and White Independents

In this penultimate section of this chapter, we turn to our third and final case: the self-identification of white Americans as political Independents. As we noted earlier, the lion's share

⁵³ For example, a stronger belief in the importance of race and a clearer recognition of one's status as a racial minority should affect party choice in different ways for different national origin groups. For Mexicans who already lean toward the Democratic Party, racial consciousness should reinforce existing partisanship cues and lead to strong Democratic Party preferences. For Cubans, the opposite should happen. Racial consciousness should cut against the community's traditional allegiance to the Republican party and potentially result in greater Independence.

of political science scholarship on party identification (and more pointedly, political Independents) ignores or brackets the consideration of non-white racial and ethnic groups, focusing principally on the enduring attachments of white Americans. One key objective of our book is to articulate a theoretical framework that is able to explain the unique features of party identification among African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans. The greater ambition, however, is to exploit some enduring methodological tensions and theoretical debates on party identification to develop a more general framework for party identification writ large. A crucial test of this aspiration, however, is whether our account adds to our existing explanations of the party identification of all groups. Specifically, we do not argue against the applicability of existing accounts of political Independents to whites, since they are developed to explain the partisan choices of whites. But our framework should tell us something these conventional accounts do not about white Independents.

Recall that we started this chapter by taking aim at the unidimensional view of party identification, where Independents are assumed to be in the middle of a linear continuum and, in the Downsian view, where this linear continuum is anchored by a unidimensional continuum of liberal-to-conservative ideological beliefs. We argue that even among whites, many individuals do not fit so neatly into conventional partisan or ideological spaces. In contrast, we posit two distinct pathways to Independence among white Americans, avenues that are hitherto missing from existing explanations of political Independents. The first among these builds on a neglected (yet central) claim in Downs' *An Economic Theory of Democracy*; the second borrows from critiques of Downs.

First, much of the focus on Anthony Downs' work on has been on the expectation of ideological convergence at the preferred policies of the median voter. Often neglected from

Downs' initial formulation, however, is his companion expectation that parties would avoid controversial issues or take deliberately ambiguous positions on them. The premise behind Downs' expectation is that some issues are so salient for particular constituencies that it behooves strategic parties to avoid being placed on them. The corresponding premise, from the standpoint of mass publics, is that there are clusters of individuals analogous to Converse's "issue publics." We posit that these individuals are unified by such intense and extreme positions on an issue that they are especially prone to agree with George C. Wallace's infamous dictum that "there's not a dime's worth of difference" between the Democrats and Republicans.⁵⁴ The relevant difference here, however, is that these voters fail to see a difference between the two parties *not* because they are so similar *to one another* vis-à-vis convergence to the median voter, but because they are both so far removed from the voter's preferences. Gerald Garvey (1966) notes that political parties may have strategic incentives to diverge from the median voter to ensure that their extreme liberal and conservative wings do not flee the party altogether and abstain from the political process. John Petrocik (1996) further notes that political parties sometimes "capture" such constituencies by credibly claiming "ownership" of their issues. In cases where both parties fail to do this, however, we argue that individuals should self-identify as Independents rather than choose between Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee.⁵⁵ Thus, directly contrary to conventional accounts, we posit that it is sometimes ideological *extremism* (i.e., ideological distance from *both* parties) and not ideological moderation or a lack of differentiation between convergent parties that predicts political Independents.

⁵⁴ This notion of issue publics might also be thought of in terms of Austen-Smith's (1984) consideration of "multiple constituencies," where the central dilemma facing both parties is the difficulty finding a resultant median voter vector across the multiple constituencies.

⁵⁵ Although Downs ((1957) spends little time on this notion, he does briefly mention that extremists might choose to abstain or support a third party with the goal of getting a major party to move closer to their extreme positions in future elections.

The second yet unexamined pathway to independence for whites comes from the criticism that there is little empirical support for Downs' condition that ideological beliefs can be mapped onto a single, unidimensional continuum. As Donald Stokes first put the case, "when our respondents are asked directly to describe the parties in terms of the liberal-conservative distinction, nearly half confess that the terms are unfamiliar. And the bizarre meanings given the terms by many of those who do attempt to use them suggest that we are eliciting artificial answers that have little to do with the public's everyday perceptions of the parties (1963, 370)." The multidimensionality of ideological beliefs is a point also echoed by some of Stokes' contemporaries commenting on the bases of multiparty systems in Europe (Duverger 1954, Sartori 1976) and serves as the stimulus for much formal work on whether the centripetal median voter result would hold under multidimensional issue spaces (McKelvey 1976; McKelvey and Ordeshook 1976; Enelow and Hinich 1984; cf. Ferejohn 1993).

For our purposes, the fact of multiple ideological issue dimensions harks back to our earlier discussion of multiple identities. Ideologies, like identities, need not be reducible to one another or subsumed by one another. Sometimes, what is distinctive about a person's political profile is that there is conflict and dissonance between ideological dimensions.⁵⁶ A person who is generally liberal, for example, may hold anti-black or anti-immigrant views which make simple party identification by ideological placement difficult. Similarly, there may be a breach between a person's fiscal liberalism (or conservatism) and their moral conservatism (or liberalism). As these two examples suggest, we think that this kind of "ideological ambivalence"

⁵⁶ Although it may be fair to state that "for most of the twentieth-century researchers in both social psychology and political science generally conceptualized attitudes as being uni-dimensional" (Martinez et al 2005:1), it is also important to note that a number of recent studies have attempted to highlight the importance of ambivalence in shaping views. Recent work by Feldman and Zaller (1992), Alvarez and Brehm (1995), and Lavine (2001) has, for example, demonstrated that ambivalent views are both prevalent and consequential. None has, however, attempted to tie ambivalence to party identification or Independence.

is especially likely when one of the ideological strands evokes a salient social identity (e.g., race or religion, in the two examples above). Here too, Independence is not the result of ideological moderation. Rather, for individuals who hold strongly liberal views on some issues and strongly conservative views on other, their Independence is largely a function of ambivalence.

Some Implications

This multi-dimensional view of party choice and Independence raises important implications for scholars and practitioners of American politics alike. For political practitioners there are important lessons about who Independents are and what role they could play in shaping the balance of power in future electoral contests. In particular, our account of Independents leads, we think, to a different normative view of Independents. Independents should not simply be dismissed as non-ideologues prone to apathy and inactivity. Rather, as we indicate, they are multiple routes to Independence - many of which suggest that Independents are anything but apolitical. On certain issues, Independents are the most engaged and most interested members of the American public. In turn, this more positive view of Independents leads to a very different conclusion about the possibility that Independents will be important political actors. If Independents are seen as apolitical non-ideologues, there is little reason to try to mobilize them. Everything we know about political participation suggests that such efforts will be futile. However, if we see Independents as simply lacking experience with American politics or as caring about issues that are not yet on the party agendas, then there is every reason to believe that they can be integrated and mobilized. Indeed, Proposition 187, the initiative designed to cut public services to illegal immigrants in California, has already demonstrated the possibilities. In response to Prop 187, an initiative that was pushed by a Republican governor and that clearly

impacted Latino interests, Latinos in California substantially increased naturalization rates, voter turnout, and identification with the Democratic Party (Pantoja and Segura 2000). Thus, it seems clear that unaligned, uninvolved minorities can and will get actively involved in party politics if the right issues come along and enter the arena of party politics. Given the growing number of unaligned immigrants and minorities, the party that can more successfully navigate these issues could have a critical electoral edge.

For scholars of American politics, there are also important lessons. The alternative dimensions of Independence that we highlight in this chapter inform us not only about the partisan choices of individual members of these groups, they also help us to understand the broader workings of party identification in America. The first key lesson exposed here is that America's two party duopoly is unlikely to be able to effectively incorporate the views of an increasingly diverse public. Put succinctly, there are going to be a lot of misfits who, for a range of different reasons, end as nonpartisans. In highlighting the diverse set of knowledge levels, ideological concerns, and identities that members of different groups have, we are essentially highlighting all of the reasons why two parties who locate themselves near the midpoint of a liberal-conservative ideological continuum are not going to be able to attract broad swaths of the American public. There is, to put it mildly, a disjuncture between the nature of the American public in the 21st Century and the nature of the American party system.

The other vital lesson for scholars who wish to examine partisanship in an empirical fashion is that a simple, linear scale of partisanship is no longer adequate to explain the range of distinct dimensions to partisan choice that exist across the American population. The multiple pathways to partisanship that we put forward in this book have implications not only for *which* party individual Americans ultimately choose to align with but also for *how* they go about

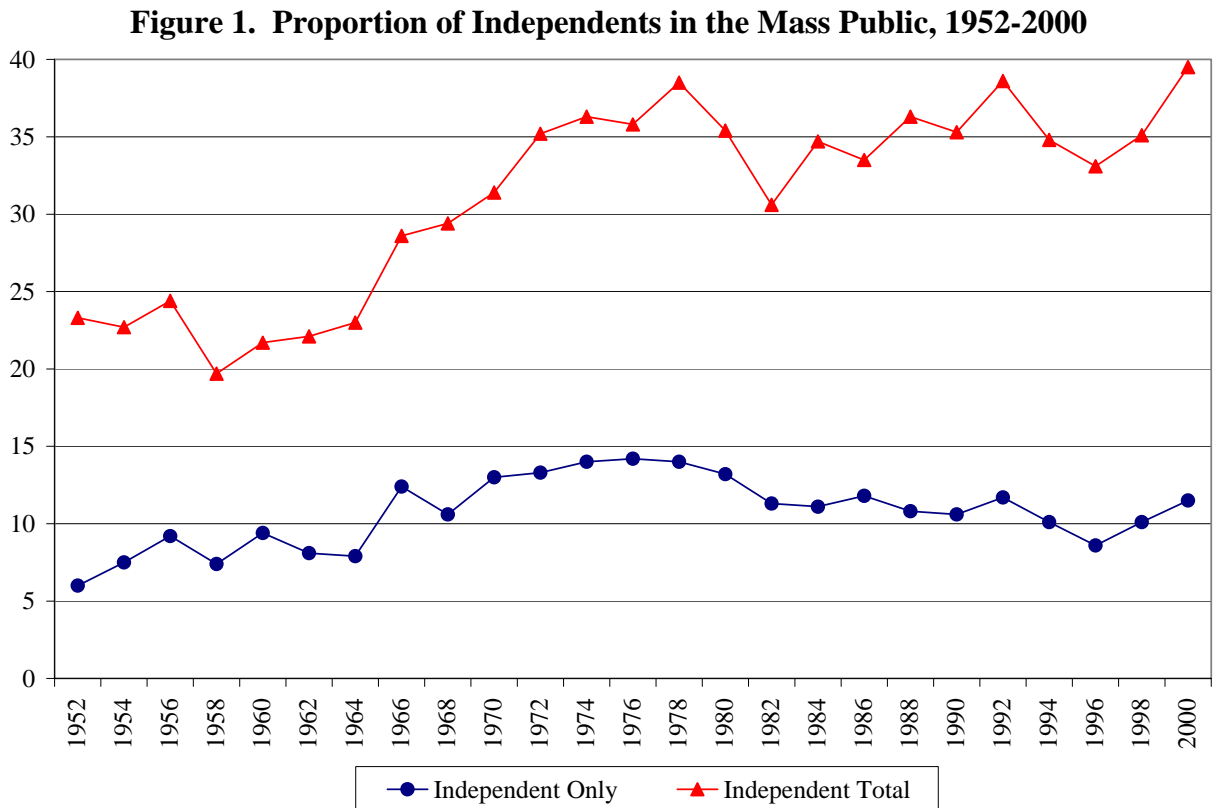
choosing between the three options of Democrat, Independent, and Republican. For many Americans, the choice, as conventional accounts maintain, should be one of simply deciding where to place oneself along a linear continuum ranging from strongly Democratic on the left to Independent in the middle and finally to strongly Republican on the right. But for others, the structure of party choice is more complex than this simple linear continuum suggests. Indeed the three choices may not be ordered at all but different dimensions will come into play at different points in the decision process. This means that we should expect that the factors that divide Democrats from Independents will differ from the factors that divide Democrats from Republicans and for anyone interested in empirically modeling partisan choices, this means that we will have to use a different set of statistical tools.

Some Concerns

There are at least two important concerns related to our focus on Independents. One issue is whether most Independents are, in fact, independent at all. It turns out that for at least certain types of electoral contests and certain types of Independents, the majority of Independents behave like closet partisans – consistently supporting the party they lean towards. The question then becomes, does it matter that people identify as independent if they vote like dyed-in-wool partisans on election day?

The suspicion that independence is not behaviorally consequential is motivated by the remarkable rise in the proportion of Americans who choose to identify as Independents over the second half of the Twentieth Century (e.g., Keith *et al* 1992; Wattenberg, 1990; Bartels, 2000). Figure 1 above shows data from the 1952 through 2000 American National Election Studies Cumulative File. We present both the proportion of individuals who self-identify as an

Independent to the root question in the ANES (“Independent Total”) and the proportion of pure Independents who do so without also indicating an inclination for either the Democratic or Republican party in the follow-up question (“Independent Only”).



The most striking change over time is the upsurge from the 1958 ANES, where just under 20 percent of respondents identified as an Independent to the 1978 ANES, where this proportion nearly doubles to just below 40 percent.⁵⁷ By the 1980s, this increase results in more Americans self-identifying as an Independent than do so with either party and leads some scholars to claim

⁵⁷ As Green, Gerber, and de Boef (1999) note, with such trend analysis it is often critical to distinguish random sampling error from real trends in public opinion. Doing so with the Kalman filter algorithm (Green’s “Samplemeiser” software at <http://pantheon.yale.edu/~gogreen>) does not appreciably change our substantive interpretation about changes in self-identification as an Independent over time. It does, however, somewhat shrink the “doubling” effect from the late 1950s to the late 1970s and flatten the year to year variance from 1980 on.

extravagantly that “For over four decades the American public has been drifting away from the two major political parties (Wattenberg 1996, ix).”

Note, however, that the increase in the proportion of all Independent identifiers is driven principally by the steady increase in Americans who identify as an Independent but who reveal a preference for one of the two major parties when asked. If these partisan leaners are really closet partisans as many have suggested, then concerns about a mass exodus from political partisanship are much ado about nothing since the proportion of pure Independents has remained at a relatively flat and relatively small ten percent of the electorate or so (Keith et al, others).⁵⁸

Judged by the behavior of the roughly 60 to 70 percent of Independents who are leaners in Presidential and Congressional contests, the evidence in favor of this view is impressive.

Table 2.3 replicates the basic analysis found in the *Myth of the Independent Voter* (Keith et al 1992).

Table 2..3 Vote for Democratic Candidates Among White Americans, 1948-2000			
	<i>President</i>	<i>House</i>	<i>Senate</i>
Strong Democrats	87%	90%	89%
Weak Democrats	64	77	76
Democratic Leaners	69	73	71
Pure Independents	31	52	50
Republican Leaners	11	30	27
Weak Republicans	13	25	25
Strong Republicans	3	11	9

Adapted and updated from Keith et al 1992, Source NES Cumulative File, 1948-2000

The table shows quite clearly that in terms of their voting in partisan contests, white Independent leaners are only marginally less partisan – and sometimes even more partisan – than weak partisans. In each type of election, a clear majority of all Independent leaners voted with

⁵⁸From this perspective, the rise in Independence and the decline in partisanship that occurred in the later part of the 20th Century can be viewed as an artifact of question wording and the incorrect placement of Independent leaners with pure Independents.

their partisan leaning. Based on similar results Raymond Wolfinger and his colleagues unequivocally concluded that most Independents “*are largely closet Democrats and Republicans* (Keith *et al*, 1992, 4 [italics in original]).”

These findings are, however, limited in a number of important respects. First, and most obviously, they only apply to white Americans. The patterns we see for Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans could be very different. By isolating white respondents and excluding all others, much of the story may be missing. If we are right, and the factors that drive party identification do differ across groups, this is a glaring omission.

Second, the analysis presented in the *Myth of the Independent Voter* and other accounts of Independents generally fails to incorporate third party voting and abstention - two options that Independent leaners are especially likely to elect. If, as we have suggested, neither party represents the interests of the multitude of Americans whose views do not fit neatly along the partisan divide, then logically we might expect many Independent voters to be searching for a third party that does come closer to representing their views. As we will see, Independent leaners are especially apt to choose this option. In presidential contests, for example, white Independent leaners are more than twice as likely as weak partisans to choose to vote for a third party. Similarly, if, as we have suggested, many Americans who are ambivalent and uncertain about partisan options end up as Independents, then Independents will, as a group, have much less reason to go to the polls in the first place. As we will see, leaners are quite likely to abstain from voting altogether.

Third, these findings ignore the possibility that the reason independent leaners appear to vote consistently as partisans is that they lean to the party that they just voted for in the current election. Keith *et al*'s own data shows that from just one presidential contest to the next a

surprisingly large portion of leaners – 30 percent – switch their votes and vote for the other party. Moreover, of these vote switchers a third altered their partisan leaning to match their vote change.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, all of this ignores context. Wolfinger and his colleagues and others who examine the partisan proclivities of Independents focus exclusively on cases where partisan defections are highly unlikely - elections where the two parties are dominant and where there is little incentive or opportunity to choose an alternate candidate or party. Thus, partisan voting among leaners may be less the result of affinity for a particular party and more the result of a lack of a viable alternative. The importance of context is evident even in Presidential elections – as we will see in Chapter Six. In most Presidential elections, no third party candidate is even listed on the ballot across most states. In these elections, it is not surprising to find that few leaners defect to a third party. It is also not surprising to find that defections among leaners jump in Presidential elections which have third party candidates who are on the ballot across most states. Even though these third party candidates do not have a real chance of winning, roughly a quarter of all Independent leaners vote for the third party candidate in recent decades. In elections involving viable candidates who do not represent the two parties, one would expect markedly higher partisan defections among Independents.

None of these criticisms refute the fact that most Independent leaners in most elections will likely vote for the party they lean towards but they do raise important questions about just what Independence means across different groups and different contexts. They also suggest that it may be too early to categorize all Independent leaners as partisans and thus too problematic to simply lump leaners in with other partisans when analyzing party identification.

In order to address suspicions about the partisanship of Independents, in subsequent chapters, we undertake two important tests. First, we examine the voting behavior of pure independents, leaners, and partisans across a range of different electoral contexts. This analysis is primarily presented in Chapter Six but some discussion of the results is located in earlier chapters. Second, we repeat our analysis using different categories of Independents. Although our primary analysis will focus on an inclusive category of Independents that includes leaners, we repeat all of the tests that are presented in the chapters that follow with pure Independents singled out and Independent leaners grouped with partisans. To preview, when we repeat our analysis dropping Independent leaners from the Independent category and focusing on pure Independents only, we find few striking differences in our account of party identification. Any substantial differences are noted.

A second distinct concern is that we may be ignoring an important segment of the population that is particularly likely to be confused about partisanship and particularly unlikely to follow conventional models of partisan decision making. Typically, individuals who offer somewhat unclear responses like “not sure” or “none of the above” or who refuse to answer the question altogether are viewed as apolitical and dropped from the analysis (Campbell et al 1960). Empirically speaking, these kinds of responses are essentially inconsequential when we consider the white population. Only about two percent of whites fit into these categories. But when we move on to the Latino and Asian American communities, the consequences of ignoring this population are much more severe. As we have seen earlier in this chapter, large segments of these communities choose not to place themselves into any of the three traditional categories of Democrat, Independent, or Republican. Among immigrants, these different kinds of ‘non-codeable’ response can, in fact, make up the majority of responses.

In our view, categorizing this population as apolitical or ignoring them altogether is inappropriate. Rather than dismiss these problematic responses, we believe that a more fruitful approach is to begin to think about why many Americans choose to offer these ambiguous responses. A person's ambivalence (i.e., answering "no preference" to the typical question), detachment (i.e., stating that they do not think in partisan terms), or non-compliance (i.e., refusing to answer the question) may tell us a great deal about their sense of political identity and attachment of political institutions.

Thus, in the analysis that follows we will often make the distinction between Independents who willingly and clearly place themselves under the category Independent and nonpartisans who offer responses other than Democrat, Independent, or Republican. Our view is that more conventional accounts of Independents – including holding middle of the road political views, being socialized as Independent by one's parents, or feeling principally attached to the ideal of independence - will help to explain those who explicitly agree to label themselves as Independent. By contrast, we believe that these conventional models will fare less well with nonpartisans. By offering responses that do not clearly fit one of the three main categories we suspect that nonpartisans are, in fact, often indicating a lack of fit with the partisan scale itself. Further, we claim that many of the underlying factors that affect partisanship that we highlight in our model - including information uncertainty, ideological ambivalence, and doubts about social identity - are especially likely to lead to these kinds of ambiguous responses. Americans who have little information about the American party system, individuals whose core ideological concerns are orthogonal to the partisan divide, and people whose identities push them in different partisan directions will all have reason to try to opt out of the partisan scale by giving these unclear responses.

To see if these patterns are true, we repeat many of our empirical tests two ways. In most of the analysis we present, we incorporate nonpartisans within our larger category of Independents. However, when there are large numbers of non-conformist responses, we will also attempt to analyze this group separately and in particular will try to determine what kinds of factors lead individuals to offer less clear responses to the party identification question.

Conclusion

In these first two chapters, we have taken a long and deliberate journey into our empirical analysis of the distinct pathways to political Independence for blacks, Latinos, Asian Americans, and whites. There are two motivations for this journey. First, conventional studies of partisanship have largely ignored minorities and immigrants and not surprisingly conventional models of partisanship tend to poorly account for the partisan choices of these groups. In the language of social scientists, there is a lot of unexplained variance here. In the language of those who care about politics, we are missing much of the dynamics of why the Democratic and Republican Parties are losing and gaining adherents. The second motivation is that the problem is getting worse. There is an increasing incongruity between the growing diversity of the American public on one hand and coordination around a fixed conceptualization and operationalization of party identification on the other.

The conventional vehicle of choice for political scientists, as we saw in Chapter One, is somewhat of a jalopy. It has suffered many nicks and dents over the years, but none so damaging that we are tempted to disembark and venture off on our own. Moreover, we have seen that there are two kinds of passengers using this vehicle, one who thinks that party identification is the expression of our habits and history; the other who thinks that party

identification is an instrument with which to match our interests with the information necessary to act upon them. These passengers, by and by, get to their desired destinations in this vehicle. In this chapter, to abuse the vehicular metaphor a final time, we remind our readers that party identification, like all jalopies, has a middle seat that nobody wants to sit on. Both the Michigan and Downsian accounts give us an incomplete story of party identification, especially when held up against the distinctly bumpy, itchy characteristics of political Independents in the middle. What is more, racially and ethnically-defined electorates are often excluded from even this seat on the jalopy. Our overarching argument in this chapter is that we can upgrade this vehicle to study the party in the electorate (and dress up its passengers) by taking this middle seat out – that is, by focusing on political Independents in their own right – and rebuilding it to comfortably fit the attributes of racially and ethnically-defined electorates.

We close, then, by summarizing the main elements of this reconstruction vis-à-vis existing theories of party identification. The Michigan school and the Downsian “running tally” view of partisanship are incomplete in large part because they rely on three flawed assumptions. First, party identification is not always best represented on a unidimensional scale as both accounts imply. In many cases, issues and ideological beliefs do not fit comfortably under the left-right continuum. Second, not all individuals and groups are equally familiar with the two-party system in the United States. Immigrant-based groups like Latinos and Asian Americans are especially apt to find shaky moorings as they strive to get a better fix on what parties and partisan choices mean in America. Third, party identification may not be exclusive of other salient social identities that matter to our political orientation. In the case of African Americans, racial group identity is often inextricable from partisan political identity, and what is distinctive is the unhinging of this linkage. In the case of whites, these other salient social identities

(especially race and religion) may square poorly with one's general ideological orientation. For Latinos and Asian Americans, shifting and sometimes contrasting identities will play even more complex roles. The end result is that for many Americans who find themselves lumped together in the catch-all category of Independents, 'Independence' is not merely the absence of a social identification or the midpoint on a continuum.

Against these limitations, we build an alternate account out of the following propositions. First, whether we identify with a political party and, if so, which party we identify with is a function of our prior political predispositions—specifically, our primary social group identities and ideological orientations. Second, these political predispositions may be multiple and interacting. Contra the Michigan school, party identification is not always the sole identity that defines our relationship to political parties. Contra the Downsian view, a unidimensional ideological continuum misses several ideologically-based pathways to identification as Independents the ideological beliefs that define our (non)partisanship too may be multiple and interacting. Third, these predispositions may be not be equally constant and durable across groups and circumstances. For many, they are prefigured in one's pre-adult socialization a la the Michigan school, but for others, party identification is a process of decision-making under information uncertainty and where one's prior socialization outside the US is balanced against one's acculturation into political life in America. Our fourth and final proposition is that the distinctive features of three cases—African American, Asian American and Latino, and white American party identification—give us critical variation and analytic leverage over which predispositions matter, how they interact, and whether they wield their influence with certainty.

APPENDIX

Table 2.A.1 Testing Conventional Models of Independence - Pure Independents

	Whites	Blacks	Latinos
<u>The Downsian Ideology Model</u>			
<i>Independents as Moderates</i>			
Strong Liberal	-.45 (.36)	.26 (.54)	.04 (.83)
Liberal	-.72 (.17)**	.01 (.40)	.19 (.60)
Conservative	-.83 (.13)**	-.89 (.75)	.36 (.43)
Strong Conservative	-.38 (.24)	.51 (.66)	---
<i>Independents as Indifferent</i>			
See Party Differences	-.04 (.03)	.10 (.06)^	.02 (.08)
<u>The Michigan School</u>			
<i>Childhood Socialization</i>			
Parents Independent	.54 (.06)**	1.1 (.21)**	.81 (.32)*
<i>Apolitical</i>			
Political Knowledge	-.32 (.08)**	.07 (.31)	.52 (.36)
Political Interest	-.19 (.06)**	-.22 (.21)	.21 (.27)
Political Efficacy	-.00 (.00)	.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)
Political Participation	-.21 (.05)**	-.02 (.17)	-.54 (.29)^
<u>Principled Independents</u>			
Dislike Parties	.11 (.02)**	.12 (.08)	.34 (.09)**

Table 2.A.2 Descriptive Statistics by Race

<u>Dependent Variable</u>	Min	Max	Mean (Standard Deviation)		
			Whites	Blacks	Latinos
<u>Independent</u>	0	1	.33 (.47)	.24(.43)	.35 (.48)
<u>The Downsian Ideology Model</u>					
<i>Independents as Moderates</i>					
Strong Liberal	0	1	.02 (.13)	.06(.24)	.03 (.17)
Liberal	0	1	.09 (.29)	.18(.38)	.10 (.30)
Conservative	0	1	.18 (.39)	.09(.29)	.15 (.35)
Strong Conservative	0	1	.03 (.17)	.04(.19)	.04 (.19)
<i>Independents as Indifferent</i>					
See Party Differences	1	9	2.0 (1.8)	2.2(2.1)	2.2 (2.1)
<u>The Michigan School</u>					
<i>Childhood Socialization</i>					
Parents Independent	0	2	.07 (.33)	.05(.27)	.05 (.30)
<i>Apolitical</i>					
Political Knowledge	0	1	.62 (.49)	.39(.49)	.42 (.49)
Political Interest	1	3	2.0 (.75)	2.0(.77)	1.9 (.72)
Political Efficacy	0	100	55 (42)	41(41)	43 (39)
Political Participation	1	6	1.6 (.99)	1.5(.89)	1.4 (.81)
<u>Anti-Party Independents</u>					
Dislike Parties	-10	9	.05 (1.7)	.33(1.5)	.23 (1.7)

QUESTION WORDING, CODING, AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

American National Election Survey

PARTY IDENTIFICATION - Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, an Independent, or what? (IF REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT) Would you call yourself a strong (REP/DEM) or a not very strong (REP/DEM)? (IF INDEPENDENT, OTHER, OR NOPREFERENCE]:) Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party?

0-strong Dem 1-weak Dem 2-Dem leaner 3-pure Independent 4-Rep leaner 5-weak Rep 6-strong Rep

INDEPENDENT - Party identification = 2,3, or 4

PURE INDEPENDENT - Party identification =3

LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE IDEOLOGY - In general, when it comes to politics, do you usually think of yourself as a liberal, a conservative, a moderate, or what? Do you think of yourself as a strong liberal/conservative or a not very strong liberal/conservative? 0-strong liberal to 6-strong conservative

SEE PARTY DIFFERENCES – Do you think there are any important differences in what the Republican and Democrats stand for? 1-Yes 0-No

PARENTS INDEPENDENT - When you were growing up did your father (your mother) think of himself mostly as a Democrat, as a Republican, or what? 0 – neither parent independent, 1-one parent

Independent, 2-two parents Independent

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION - Number of acts during the campaign: Attended a meeting or demonstration? Worked for a candidate? Displayed a political sign? Contacted a public official? Try to influence others?

POLITICAL INTEREST - Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you, would you say that you have been/were very much interested, somewhat interested, or not much interested in following the political campaigns (so far) this year? 1- not much, 3- very much

POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE - Do you happen to know which party elected the most members to the House of representatives in the elections this/last month? 1-correct

POLITICAL EFFICACY- A reversed 100 point scale of agree/disagree responses to the following two statements: a) Public officials don't care much what people like me think and b) People like me don't have any say about what the government does.

DISLIKE PARTIES – The net affect toward the parties calculated as the sum of Democratic Party and Republic Party ‘likes’ minus the sum of Democratic Party and Republic Party ‘dislikes’. Respondents are given up to five chances to respond to the following ‘likes’ question: Is there anything in particular that you like about the Democratic [Republican] party? What is that? Anything else? Respondents are given up to five chances to respond to the following ‘dislikes’ question: Is there anything in particular that you don’t like about the Democratic [Republican] party? What is that? Anything else?

Chapter Three

Leaving the Mule Behind: Independents and African American Partisanship

In Chapter Two, we noted that within the mainstream political science scholarship on party identification, race is often invisible. When race does come into view, moreover, we often see it through the prism of black-white relations in the United States. African-American party identification is famously distinctive (and, by implication, anomalous) for being so disproportionately Democratic. In some versions of this story, the demographic status of “black” is simply equated with the partisan identification as “Democrat,” with all the inevitability and the inflexibility of a stereotype that is resistant to counterevidence. In more sophisticated versions, demography is mediated by racial solidarity and group interests that govern the political opinions and behavior of African Americans. In terms of the linkage of racial group identity and political institutional identity, African Americans, to play on a coinage usually applied to describe Asian Americans, are the “model minority” – they demonstrate a strong and politically decisive sense of in-group solidarity. The coherence of defining a group basis to the politics of other emerging minority groups like Asian and Latino Americans is generally held up to this standard.

In this sense, if race and partisan identity should interact and intersect in illuminating and consequential ways, we should see it in bold relief with African Americans. Thus in this opening empirical chapter, we reconsider the contemporary relationship of African Americans to political parties. We first sketch the history of party identification among African Americans, a history which underscores two important points. First, African Americans have not always been so overwhelmingly Democratic in their party identification. Second, in the last few decades, African Americans have been slowly but surely moving away from an exclusive relationship with the Democratic party. These patterns frame our consideration of how African Americans come to identify (or choose not to identify) with a political party. We articulate several popular views on upward class mobility, rightward ideological drift, and downward significance of race

as the engines of change in the contemporary African American political landscape. To these explanations, we build an alternate account out of the logical steps that link one's self-identification as an African American to one's partisan identification as a Democrat. This specification of how identity is linked to politics generates three expectations about African American party identification. Consistent with existing studies, the presence of a "linked fate heuristic" is likely to be a key factor in defining black partisanship. In addition, we argue for the influence of two additional factors: the perceived legitimacy of mainstream electoral politics as a venue for the pursuit of collective interests and the rational evaluation of the Democratic and Republican parties' efforts on behalf of these collective interests. In the main, we find that the exodus of some African Americans out of the Democratic Party is not solely the result of upward class mobility or growing ideological conservatism, but also results from breaking the steps in the identity-to-politics chain – that is, decoupling individual well-being from collective welfare, adhering to black separatist beliefs and assessing the relative influence of the Democratic Party and the Republican Party as advocates for blacks' political interests.

Historical Trends in Partisanship

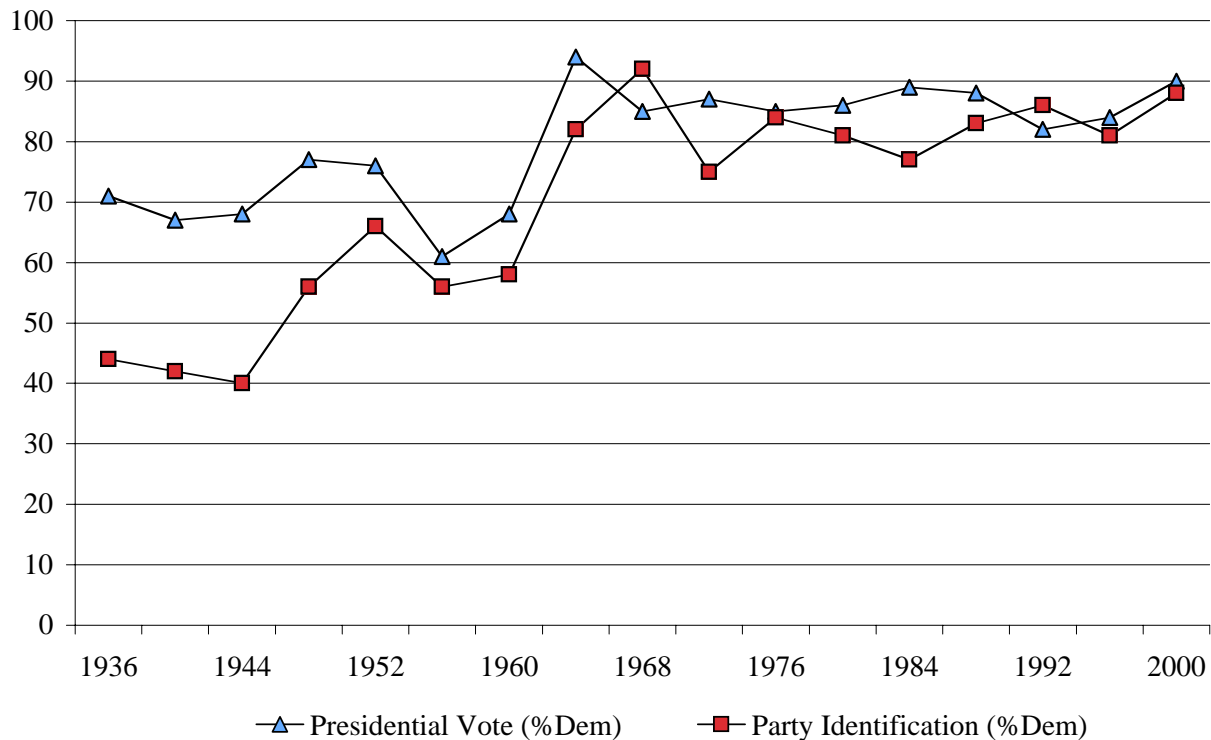
The history of African American partisanship is well known and by most accounts well explained. The narrative usually begins with the Civil War, the manumission of black slaves, and Reconstruction. The secession of southern states from the Union in 1861 created a political space for Abraham Lincoln's Republican Party to abolish existing racist laws, enlist African American troops to fight, and pass the Thirteenth Amendment, which ultimately brought slavery to an end throughout the land. The partisan cues for the newly enfranchised African Americans could not have been clearer in the subsequent struggle between Southern Democrats, led by Andrew Johnson, and the Northern Republicans over the legitimacy of Southern "Black Codes"

(that stripped the newly emancipated African Americans from *de jure* political rights and *de facto* economic and social rights), the mandate of the Freedman's Bureau (to help with the social, legal, and economic transition of blacks out of slavery), and, ultimately, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. While the Republican Party was never able to make good on General William T. Sherman's Field Order for "40 acres and a mule" and while the radical rebuilding of the South ultimately gave way to the Compromise of 1877, in the interim some 20 black Republicans served in the U.S. House of Representatives and 2 in the Senate during Reconstruction, and African Americans came to overwhelmingly champion the Republican Party (van Woodward 1974, Foner 1988, Jaynes 1989). In fact, the allegiance of African Americans to the Republican Party was so dominant that, as Elsa Barkley Brown notes, black Democrats during early Reconstruction "were subject to the severest exclusion: disciplined within or quite often expelled from their churches, kicked out of mutual benefit societies; not allowed to work alongside others in the fields nor accepted in leadership positions at work or in the community (1989, from Dawson, 1994, 99)."

Over the next century, disaffection with the Republican Party grew but few blacks went so far as to support the Democratic Party (Walton 1972). It was not until the Great Depression that the black community's almost unanimous support for the Republican began to wane. Dire economic circumstances and the governmentally activist, economically redistributive, and politically egalitarian New Deal policies of Franklin D. Roosevelt created the pivotal conditions for a reconsideration of party allegiances into the Democratic Party (Sitkoff 1978, Weiss 1983). As Figure One shows, this shift begins with a change in the partisan voting behavior of African Americans, and is then followed by a change in their party identification. During Roosevelt's

presidency, African Americans who identified with the Democratic Party were still in the minority, yet almost 70 percent of the black vote went to Roosevelt.⁵⁹

Figure One. African-American Voting and Party Identification, 1936-2000



In the ensuing decades, the discernible split continues between how African Americans vote and which party they identify with (Jaynes and Williams 1989, Walter 1988). But, as Figure One shows, there is a convergence of both dimensions of partisanship as large majorities of the black electorate begin to support the Democratic Party and its candidates. In 1948, Harry Truman became the first person to win the U.S. presidency with only a minority of the white vote, a result that is largely attributed to Truman's various initiatives on behalf of African Americans, such as the issuance of Executive Order 9981 (effectively desegregating the armed

⁵⁹ Data for Figure One are from Bositis (2004). The figure includes Independents who lean Democratic as Democrats.

forces) and establishment of a Civil Rights Commission (against the vociferous objections of the Southern “Dixiecrats,” who bolted from party ranks to form the States’ Rights Democratic party). These events are paralleled over time by a vast migration of blacks out of the rural South into Democratically-controlled urban areas in the Northeast and Midwest. The 1954 congressional elections represented a milestone for many African Americans, with the successful candidacy of Augustus Hawkins (D-CA), Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. (D-NY), and William Dawson (D-IL) to the House of Representatives.

By the mid-1960s, there is an unmistakable equilibrium shift in black party support from the Republican to the Democratic Party, following a long decade of organized black insurgency in the South and the subsequent divergence of both parties on the politics of desegregation and equal rights for African Americans (Carmines and Stimson 1989, Lee 2002). According to some historical accounts, the pivotal moment in this upsurge of Democratic partisanship among black Americans occurs in the 1960 presidential campaign between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon, with Kennedy making a strategically-timed and well-publicized phone call to Coretta Scott King (and his brother working behind the scenes) after her husband, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., was jailed in Georgia (Garrow 1986, Marable 1991, Stern 1992). By 1964, the partisan signposts on racial equality and civil rights were unmistakable. With Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater – who infamously declared in his acceptance speech that “extremism in defense of liberty is no vice” – and Alabama Governor George Wallace – who equally infamously declared in his gubernatorial inauguration speech that, “I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny and I say, segregation today, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever!” – it took little to convince most African Americans that the Democratic Party, under whose aegis the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act were

successfully passed through legislation, would better serve their political interests. With over 90 percent of black voters supporting Johnson in the 1964 presidential election, the shift to black Democratic partisanship was nearly complete. The subsequent defection of large numbers of white Americans to the Republican Party only served to further solidify African American support for the Democratic Party and by the early 1970s, blacks, by all accounts, had become “steadfast in their preference for the Democratic Party” (Tate 1994:62).

Importantly, quite unlike the Downsian models of party identification described in Chapter Two, most scholars of black politics do not explain this shifting group calculus in terms of the parallel liberal-to-conservative ideological alignment of African Americans. Instead, changes in black partisanship are explained by pointing to racial group interests. Scholars of black politics claim that movement into and out of the Republican Party was based almost exclusively on an assessment of which party would better serve black interests (Jones 1987, Walton 1972).⁶⁰ According to Pinderhughes: “loyalty occurs among black voters because they consistently, almost uniformly, commit themselves to the party, faction or individual candidate that is most supportive of racial reform... studies have shown that this pattern repeats itself in the north and the south, in urban and rural areas, before and after the transition to the Democratic Party” (1987, 113).

The logic underlying this group based voting is what Michael Dawson (1994) calls the “black utility heuristic” or the “linked fate heuristic” (see also Gurin, Hatchett, and Jackson 1989, Tate 1993). Each African American’s *individual* utility function over a particular political choice is defined by a *group* calculus – racially-defined group interests, benefits, and costs –

⁶⁰ Weiss (1983) is one of the few to claim that economic and class interests played a more prominent role in black political choices over this period.

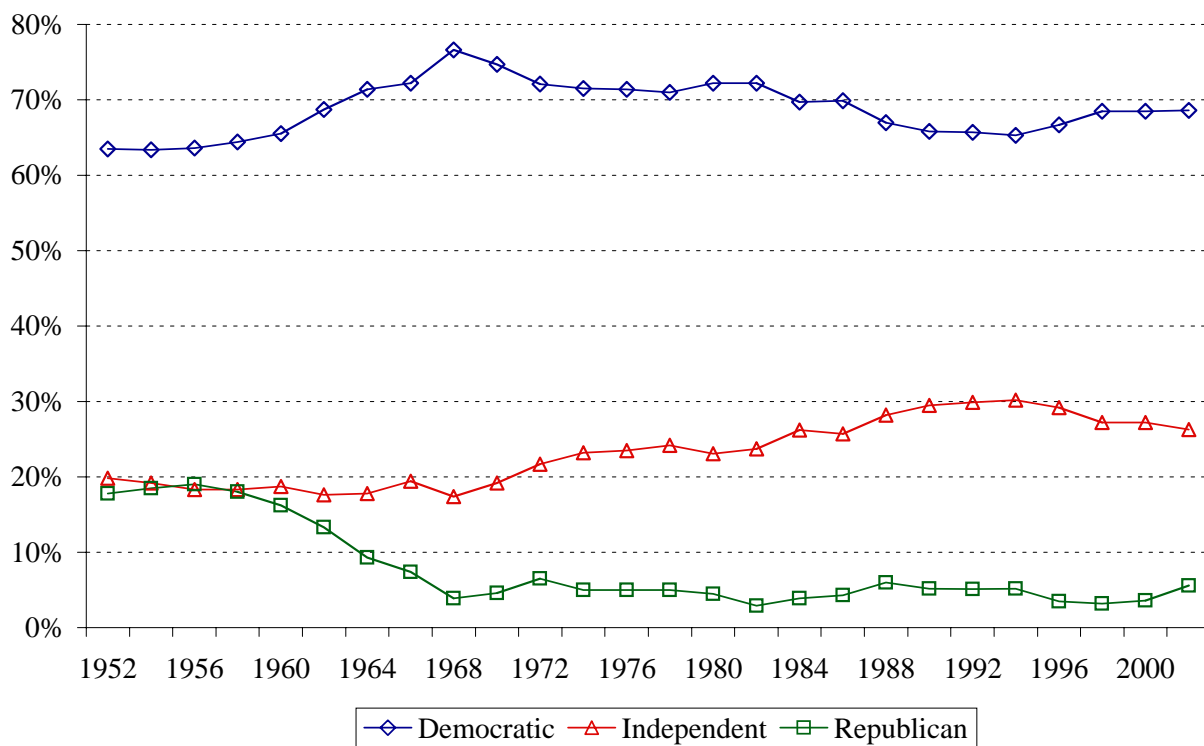
because race has been “the decisive factor in determining the opportunities and life chances available to virtually all African Americans” (1994, 10). The effect of believing that one’s individual fate is defined by the collective fate of all others in one’s group, racially-defined, is an efficient and effective heuristic for navigating the hurly-burly of politics – African Americans need only to decide if party platforms, presidential administrations, and governmental policies differ in their consequences for African Americans, and choose accordingly. The upshot for African Americans since the mid-Twentieth Century has been that the “belief in the importance of black interests translates into preference for the Democratic Party” (Dawson 1994, 113). For most African Americans, one’s primary social group identity (as black) determines one’s primary political identity (as Democrat).

Recent Developments in Black Partisanship

This overwhelmingly Democratic alignment of African American partisanship has come at a cost, however. In Paul Frymer’s (1999) turn of the phrase, African American political interests have become subject to “electoral capture” – by which a group’s political interests ally so closely with one party that the party can essentially take the vote “for granted” and the opposing party has no strategic incentives to appeal to that group’s interests. Kevin Phillips is often credited with making the case for the Republican Party’s “Southern strategy” – to forge an electorally competitive coalition of traditional Northern Republicans and racially conservative Southern whites who would “desert their party in droves” if the Democratic Party could be portrayed as a “black party” (Frymer 1999, 101). For its part, the countermove of “Third Way” Democrats – often attributed with playing a prominent role in William Jefferson Clinton’s 1992

presidential campaign – has been to leave race off its center stage, if not engage in a two-pronged machination that Michael Dawson terms “demonization and silence” (1993).⁶¹

Figure Two. African American Party Identification, 1952-2002



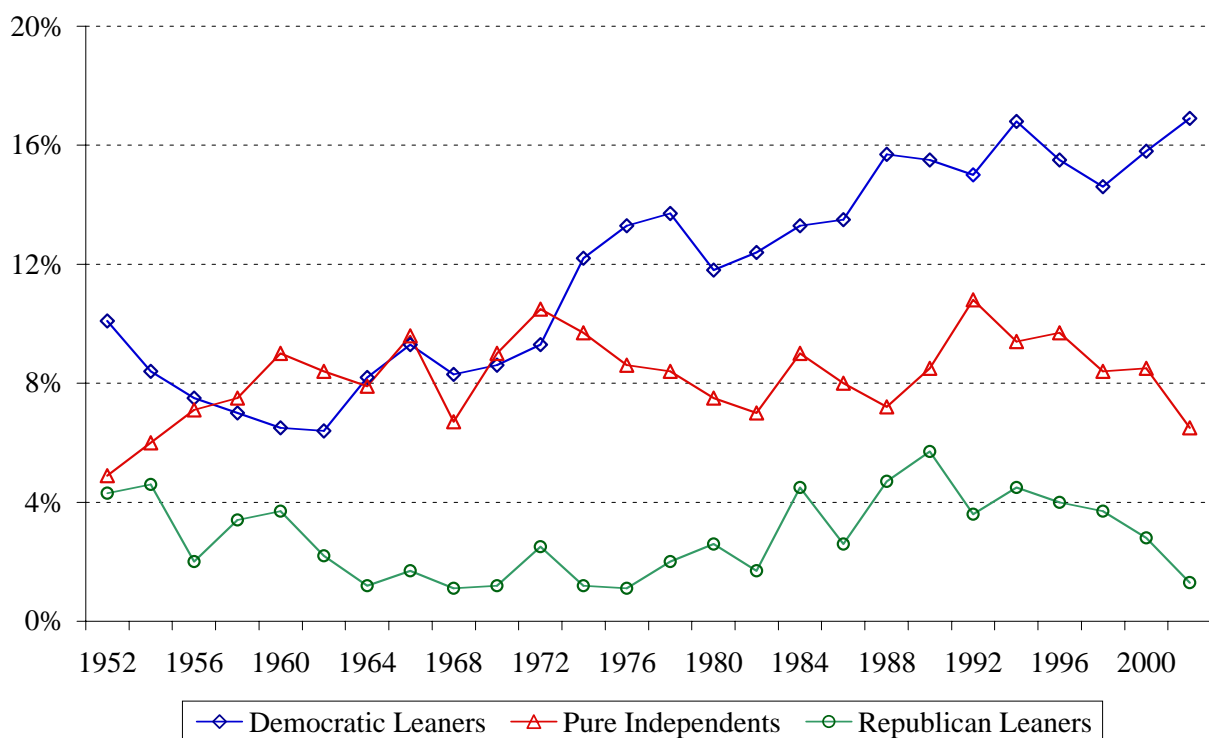
Whether they are responding to this electoral Catch-22 or not, more recent trends in African American party identification indicate that African Americans are with increasing frequency choosing not to identify as a Democrat. Figure Two shows the distribution of party identification for African Americans to the root American National Election Studies question from 1952 to 2002.⁶² Since 1970 there has been a gradual but significant shift away from the

⁶¹ Frymer, of course, is neither the first nor the only person to note this electorally compromised position in which African Americans appear to find themselves and the explicit strategy of both parties that has put African Americans in such a position (see also Edsall and Edsall 1992, Huckfeldt and Kohfeld 1989, Walters 1988).

⁶² The trends are smoothed using the Kalman filter algorithm (see Green, Gerber, and de Boef, 1999 and Don Green’s “Samplemeiser” software at <http://pantheon.yale.edu/~gogreen>).

Democratic Party. Although, a large majority of African Americans still choose to identify with the Democratic Party, the proportion of African Americans allied with Democratic Party has declined by over 10 percentage points during this period.⁶³ Among those who opt out of the Democratic Party, by far the vast majority leaves to become Independents. According to the ANES, some 27 percent of all blacks in 2000 identify as Independents.⁶⁴

Figure Three. African American Non-Partisanship, 1952-2002



Moreover, as Figure Three shows, there is a distinct pattern to who is identifying as an Independent. In the figure, Independents are disaggregated by the follow-up question in the ANES, where some Independents indicate a preference for the Democratic Party, others indicate

⁶³ This trend is mirrored in a range of different surveys (see Luks and Elms 2003).

⁶⁴ These results are consistent with the three other surveys we examine. Republicans in the NES and other surveys represent about five percent of the black population.

a preference for the Republican Party, and yet others indicate no preference at all. As the figure shows, the proportion of Republican leaners and pure Independents changes very little over time, while the proportion of Democratic leaners almost triples from a low of about 6 percent in 1960 to roughly 17 percent by 2002. In short, the proportion of African American pure Independents and Republican leaners has remained relative stable over time, and the most significant source of the rise of Independents comes from those African Americans who “exit” from identification with the Democratic Party but retain their partisan habits as Democratic leaners. Black Americans may still vote overwhelmingly for the Democratic candidate in these elections but it is clear from Figure Two that a substantial proportion of African Americans no longer identify with the party.⁶⁵

Understanding Exit from the Democratic Party: Existing Accounts

These trends and puzzles set the backdrop of our foray into explaining African American party identification. The remainder of the chapter is pitched at two levels. First, what explains this recent shift in black partisanship? Second, what general account of party identification explains African American political Independents? We offer a more speculative, exploratory discussion on the first question as a means of generating several more discriminating, testable hypotheses on the second question. We start with two commonly discussed trends in African American socioeconomic and political life – the rise of a black middle class and the upsurge of black conservatism – and consider how they might explain the rise of black Independents. In the ensuing section, we present our own framework of African American political choice – an account that explicitly links the steps from identifying demographically as an African American to identifying politically with a party – and consider the explanations for the decline in

⁶⁵ Later, we detail what all of this means for the voting behavior of African Americans.

Democratic partisanship that result from this framework. This consideration leads us to three other factors that are likely to move African Americans away from identifying with the Democratic Party – a decline in racial solidarity, an increase in racial separatism, and a shift in the pairwise evaluation of political parties. We then put this range of explanations to an empirical test.

Growing Economic Diversity

One of the most controversial and commonly examined changes in the status of African Americans since the civil rights era has been the alleged class bifurcation of the black community (Wilson 1978, Landry 1987). Over the last half century, a substantial economic gulf has emerged within the African American community. On one end, the proportion of blacks in the middle class has grown dramatically. In terms of educational outcomes, occupational status, income, and wealth there has been marked growth in the population of African Americans who have attained middle class status (Smelser et al 2001). In fact, the proportion of African Americans calling themselves middle-class grew from only 12 percent in 1949 to 41 percent in the mid 1990s (Farley 1996).

On the other end of the spectrum, poor blacks have experienced economic stagnation and declining incomes. Almost a third of the African American population is still poor (Blank 2001). The number of blacks who are not only poor but who are also living in extremely poor inner-city neighborhoods has also doubled (Jargowsky 1997).⁶⁶ As a consequence, blacks are in many ways more divided than are whites. The disparity between the top and bottom fifth of the black population in terms of income, education, victimization by violence, and job status is now

⁶⁶ This trend halted in the late 1990s but appears to have resumed in the last few years (Jargowsky 2003, Wilson 2002, Pearlstein 2002)

greater than the disparity between the top and bottom fifth of the white population (Hochschild and Rodgers 1999).

This economic disparity and diversity, according to several scholars, is a potential source of political division as the interests of the black middle class diverge from the interests of less well-advantaged members of the community (Wilson 1978, 1987, Sowell 1981, Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997, Hutchinson 1999). Dawson concludes that “[v]irtually all social science theories of race and class... predict that black political diversity will follow black economic diversity” (1994, 45). The logic of why political diversity might follow from economic diversity is fairly straightforward. As one moves up the economic ladder, one’s material interests change, one becomes more interested in maintaining the status quo, and less interested in the redistribution of resources. Especially in the case of African Americans, the new ideological trappings of a middle class status should clash with the traditionally liberal core of the black political agenda and political unity should decline (Hamilton 1982). Extended debates have been waged over whether this class effect really applies to blacks but to the extent it does, the following hypothesis should be true:⁶⁷

Hypothesis 1: The higher a person’s socioeconomic status, the greater the likelihood of not identifying with the Democratic Party.

Growing Conservatism

A variant on this argument about the material basis of changes in black political solidarity is that it is mediated by one’s liberal-conservative ideology. As we noted in Chapter One, one of the two principal accounts of party identification is that it is rooted in a person’s liberal-to-conservative ideological orientation (Green et al 2002, Green 1988, Campbell et al 1960,

⁶⁷ For accounts of the decline of class politics see Clark et al (1993). Evans (1999) and Manza and Brooks (1999) argue that class remains central. Dawson (1994) argues that class alone is incomplete. Many of these scholars make a sharp distinction between economic conservatism vis-à-vis increasing class status and social conservatism vis-à-vis lower class status (Lipset 1981[1960]).

Franklin 1992, Franklin and Jackson 1983). To the extent that one's political ideology does anchor one's allegiance to political parties, then defection from the Democratic Party is likely to result from one change: increasing conservatism among blacks.⁶⁸

This claim about the declining liberal politics of African Americans is admittedly controversial. Many scholars argue that African Americans remain resolutely liberal (Gilliam 1986, Hamilton 1982, Welch and Foster 1987). Some further suggest that, if anything, many blacks are too liberal for the Democratic Party and would prefer to have an option to the left of the mainstream Democratic Party (Pinderhughes 1986, Walters 1988, Reed 1995, Dawson 2001), although in these cases, ideology is conceived of in more multidimensional and racially embedded ways than the unidimensional ANES self-placement scale. In any case, the increasing prominence of conservative black elites such as Clarence Thomas and Condoleezza Rice, the symbolic efforts of the Republican Party to woo black voters, and increased frustration with affirmative action and other elements of a traditional civil rights agenda all lead to a second hypothesis that we consider:

Hypothesis 2: The more conservative a person's ideological views, the greater the likelihood of not identifying with the Democratic Party.

Declining Significance of Race?

A central claim of our book is that conventional accounts of party identification – that it is principally rooted in an individual's socioeconomic interests or ideological predispositions – are insufficient, especially as an explanation of the party choices of non-whites. Given the

⁶⁸ Obviously this ideological based account could be closely linked to a class based model since the most commonly hypothesized pathway to the growing conservatism of African Americans is the economic gains made by middle class blacks - with the presumption that concomitant with rising socioeconomic status comes more conservative principles of limited government and economic individualism (Wilson 1987, Sowell 1981, Hamilton 1982). These two theories could be linked to a racial account as well. The declining significance of race could lead to class bifurcation and then middle class black conservatism.

strong communitarian, group-basis of African American political thought, the effect of a person's newfound status among the middle class is unlikely to be filtered through the meritocratic lens of economic individualism alone. Nor, for that matter, are ideological shifts likely to be linearly related to partisan shifts. Rather, as we earlier noted, much of black politics is more fully explained by theorizing the role of racial group identity as a mediating and independent factor. If black politics does, in fact, derive from group identity and a general characteristic of black politics is shifting (i.e., the decline in African American identification with the Democratic Party), a plausible third conclusion to draw is that this change must be occurring as a result of a "declining significance of race."

This controversial thesis (see, e.g., Wilson 1978), related to speculations about the upward economic mobility and the rightward ideological shift of African Americans, is worth examining at some length. Declines in overt acts of discrimination, the entrenchment of much of the civil rights agenda into law, and a softening of white views toward blacks all suggest that race may be less of a unifying force for African Americans (Schuman et al 1997, Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997). Similarly, declines in neighborhood residential segregation, increased inter-racial contact in the workforce, and increased social interaction and inter-marriage rates could also mean that racial barriers are falling and that the interests of individual blacks are less linked to race (Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997, Sigelman et al 1996).

The thesis of declining significance, much like the arguments about the rise of a black middle class and the growth of black conservatism, is, however, hotly contested. There is a wealth of compelling research arguing for the persistence of racism and unequal life chances rooted in race. African Americans still lag far behind whites on most measures of socioeconomic well-being (Blank 2001). Most importantly, there are clear signs that prejudice is

persistent (Kinder and Sanders 1996, Bobo 2001, Bonilla-Silva 2003), that racial discrimination in labor and housing markets is intractable to legislative remedies (Kirschenman and Neckarman 1991, Massey and Denton 1993, Pager 2002, Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004), and that race remains an obdurate organizing principle in American social, economic, and political life (Brown *et al* 2003). Put bluntly by Charles Willie: “race is not irrelevant and has not declined in significance” (1978, 15).

From Identity to Politics

Ignoring for the moment the merits of the claim that race is declining in significance, it is instructive to consider how it is that structural changes in the life opportunities facing African Americans (if such changes indeed have taken place) might affect the political calculus of African Americans vis-à-vis party identification. A typical view, as we described in Chapter Two, is to simply equate the demographic classification of “African American” with the political identification as “Democrats.” This view is both totalizing – ignoring the substantial proportion of African Americans who currently do not identify as a Democrat – and inadequate as an explanatory account of historical trends in African American partisanship. Conceptually, there are at least five distinct logical steps linking a demographic classification to a collective political choice, such as which party to identify with.

The rationale for trying to treat the nexus from “identity” to “politics” in an almost surgically precise manner is that there has been a literal outbreak of intellectual production that claims a central role of “identity” as a key explanatory variable that explains a remarkable range of political phenomena. This upsurge of research has not been altogether well-received. One review of this literature declares that studies of identity face “a crisis of overproduction and consequent devaluation of meaning (Brubaker and Cooper, 1998, 3).” Another review finds that

“there is not much consensus on how to define identity; nor is there consistency in the procedures used for determining the content and scope of identity; nor is there agreement on where to look for evidence that identity indeed affects knowledge, interpretations, beliefs, preferences, and strategies; nor is there agreement on how identity affects these components of action (Abdelal, et al, 2001, 1).” A clear implication from these reviews is that discussions of identity as an explanation for politics is undisciplined and indiscriminating. Our effort to impose greater discipline and discrimination into the identity-to-politics link focuses on the following steps: categorization, identification, consciousness, politicization, and coordination (see also Lee 2004).

First is the act of **categorization** itself. As numerous scholars have observed, the categories that have been used to define a given group have been quite variable across the history of ethno-racial classification in the decennial census (see, e.g., Anderson 1988, Anderson and Feinberg 1999, Nobles 2000, Rodriguez 2000, Snipp 2003). Across past census enumerations, individuals of African descent have been counted in fractions (as “three-fifths” of a person) and by gradations of bloodline (as “mulatto,” “quadroon” and “octaroon”); individuals of South Asian descent have been, at different times, classified as Caucasian, Native American, “Hindoo,” and Asian; Mexicans in the U.S. have been, at different times, classified as white, Mexican, “Spanish-surname,” other race, and Hispanic; there are countless other examples. While the insight that we often take our racial and ethnic categories as given may be trivially true in the context of contemporary African American party identification, it is a potentially more consequential consideration in the broader historical sweep of racial and ethnic politics.

A second important step is that of **identification**. That is, does a given menu of ethno-racial categories in fact correspond with how individuals see themselves? This too may seem

like a trifling point, but numerous studies have shown that the set of individuals who might conceivably identify with a given category does not correspond perfectly or sometimes even reliably with the subset of individuals who actually identify with that category (Waters 1990, Lieberman and Waters 1993, Golstein and Morning 2000, Lee 2005). The potential divergence between categorization and identification is especially meaningful with the inclusion of a multi-racial identifier in the 2000 census (Perlmann and Waters 2003, Lee 2005). For the purposes of our current study, which analyzes data in which racial boundaries are self-defined in social surveys, we simply take the prior steps of identification and categorization as given. But it is important to note that they are not always automatic.

A third important step is **consciousness**. Self-identification with a group and sharing a sense of group solidarity and common interests with that group are potentially distinct steps. As Chong and Rogers argue, “There is no theoretical reason to expect that group identification by itself – without the mobilizing ideology of group consciousness – would increase an individual’s propensity to participate in politics (2003, 12).” In explaining racial differences in political participation, for instance, a simple comparison of voting behavior showed whites on average to be more active than African Americans. Since white Americans had disproportionately greater socioeconomic resources than their black counterparts, this result raised few eyebrows. Once the levels of group consciousness among African Americans was controlled for, however, blacks actually appear to be *more* active than their white counterparts, suggesting that a strong sense of racial solidarity could effectively counterbalance a person’s socioeconomic status (Olsen 1970; Verba and Nie 1972; Shingles 1981).⁶⁹

⁶⁹ More recent studies – e.g., Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1993), Leighley and Vedlitz (1999) – suggest that group consciousness may not be as forceful a counterweight to socioeconomic status. As Chong and Rogers (2003) point out, however, this is attributable in part to differences in how consciousness is operationalized across studies

The notion of a linked fate heuristic is an especially powerful elaboration of how persons who share a group identity also share a collective worldview. This theoretical articulation of racial group consciousness as a cognitive heuristic is especially likely to be a significant determinant in African Americans' political choices, like which party to identify with. That is, if African Americans increasingly view their individual well-being as decoupled from the welfare of the entire black community, we should expect to see divergent interests and a general attenuation of the collective rationale for unity in the political arena. Irrespective of whether race has in fact diminished as a defining factor in the life chances of African Americans, the *perception* that the collective fates of persons of African descent are no longer hinged as tightly would likely attenuate the collective, coordinated attachment of party loyalties to the Democratic Party. Thus a third hypothesis about political Independents is that:

Hypothesis 3: The weaker a person's sense of racially linked fate, the greater the likelihood of not identifying with the Democratic Party.

A sense of group consciousness or even the more precisely defined notion of a linked fate heuristic, however, does not automatically translate into political identification as a Democrat, especially not in the overwhelming proportions that African Americans sometimes demonstrate. Specifically, we contend that the link between group interests and party identification is contingent on two additional logical steps. The fourth important step in the chain of reasoning from demographic categorization to Democratic identification is **politicization**. By politicization we mean the recognition of legitimacy of mainstream electoral politics as a venue for the pursuit of group-based interests. That is, an often unstated and unexamined step in

as well as shifts in the venue for group mobilization – from the electoral arena of voting behavior in the civil rights era to the other modes of political participation.

linking group status to collective mobilization is in assuming the legitimacy of a political regime, the viability of pluralist politics, and the efficacy of political participation. This liberal democratic conception of citizenship may seem so obvious to a political scientist as to be unworthy of elaboration, but consider the long-standing debate between W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington about how best to advance the cause African Americans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, or the prominence of separatist groups like Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association or the Nation of Islam.

This is a critical step because, as we will see, there is a strong sense of mistrust of mainstream white institutions within the African American community and strong sentiment in favor of autonomous black organizations. If a large segment of the black community is suspicious of alliances with those outside the black community, there is every reason to believe that support for black autonomy could promote Independence and severely undercut the link between black group interests and the majority white Democratic Party. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: The stronger a person's support for black separatism, the greater the likelihood of not identifying with the Democratic Party.

The final step is **coordination**. That is, after African Americans identify with a given racial category, share a common worldview through that identification, and believe in the legitimacy of electoral politics as site for pursuing commonly-defined interests, they must still choose sides, and do so *collectively*. With this last step, we mean to distinguish between acting as individuals in the best interests of one's in-group and acting collectively in the best interests of one's in-group. The key to this coordination is comparing the relative work of each party toward achieving the political interests of African Americans. While it may be obvious to many that the

Democratic Party, as the ‘minority’ party, works harder for African American interests, it may be less obvious to others. Indeed, given the increasing prominence of conservative black elites, publicized (if symbolic) efforts by the Republican Party to target minority voters, and the growing chorus of critics who view the Democratic Party as reluctant to actively cater to its African American base, there may be some real ambivalence about which partisan options best serves the black community. Our final pair of hypotheses thus concerns the evaluation of party differences.

Hypothesis 5.1: The less a person views the Democrats as working for the interests of black Americans, the greater the likelihood of not identifying with the Democratic Party.

Hypothesis 5.2: The more a person views the Republicans as working for the interests of black Americans, the greater the likelihood of not identifying with the Democratic Party.

To sum up this rather lengthy discussion, we focus on three key factors that we think – beyond socioeconomic status and ideological self-placement – are likely to influence the non-Democratic identification of African Americans: the attenuation of group consciousness, the intensification of black separatism, and the evaluations of how the Democratic and Republican parties are serving the interests of African Americans.⁷⁰

Trends over Time: Class, Conservatism, Solidarity, Separatism, and Party Differences

Can any of these accounts plausibly explain the movement of large numbers of African Americans from the Democratic Party to Independence? In the current section, we review the secondary evidence on the roles that class, conservatism, linked fate, black separatism, and party

⁷⁰ By focusing on a linear chain linking ethno-racial classification to racially-based collective action, our primary aim is to be deliberate about logical steps that are often assumed. In reality, of course, these steps are highly unlikely to constitute a universal, uniform, necessary-and-sufficient developmental sequence. As numerous studies of social movements show, the causal web of relationships is likely to be inextricably endogenous: it is quite often the act of doing politics, collectively, that motivates the fact of perceiving a group identity, individually (Melucci 1987, Snow and Benford 1992, McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2002).

evaluations play in defining the politics of the black community. In each case, we assess whether or not substantial segments of the black community fit each account and, where possible, whether the number of blacks who fit has increased markedly in recent decades. Where survey data are used, we rely principally on three in-depth national surveys of African American political attitudes and behaviors: the 1984 National Black Election Study, the 1993-4 National Black Politics Study, and the 1996 National Black Election Study.⁷¹ These data are also used in our multivariate statistical analysis in the ensuing sections. Details of each survey and the questionnaire items examined are contained in the appendix.

Class Divisions

Might class divisions provide a plausible explanation for growing black partisan diversity? Historically, class divisions in the black community have been evident and have often played at least somewhat of a role in black politics. As Welch and Foster note, “Every study that has looked closely at the black community has found a gulf between the black middle classes and the mass of impoverished black citizens” (1987, 447). This divide was evident in the antebellum period when slaves and free blacks pursued different agendas (Johnson and Roark 1984). It was evident in the early 20th Century in southern cities such as Birmingham where poor blacks shunned mainstream black organizations in favor of more radical organizations like the Communist Party (Kelley 1993). It was evident in northern cities later in the 20th Century when middle class blacks were often accused of serving their own interests over those of residents of poor, urban ghettos (Drake and Cayton 1962, Frazier 1957).

⁷¹ Since the ANES does not include an adequate set of questions on racial identity, has no questions related to black autonomy, and each year includes an inadequate number of African American respondents to allow for more in depth analysis, we are unable to repeat most of the analysis on the ANES.

But scholars hold divergent views over the extent to which class divisions translate into distinct political views among African Americans today. Some suggest that class does matter in important ways for the black community (Tate 1994, Dawson 2001). Dawson (2001) finds fairly sharp class divisions across core black ideologies and Cohen and Dawson (1993) find distinct political views among blacks living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty.⁷² Some claim that even larger differences are evident, “There are no longer two Americas in conflict, one black and one white. There's also the conflict between a prospering and expanding black middle class and an increasingly desperate and destitute black poor ... [The] political rift between them is as deep and wide as the Grand Canyon” (Hutchinson 1999, B5).

Others disagree. A range of other studies has found few real class divisions in black public opinion (Gilliam 1986, Gurin, Hatchet and Jackson 1989, Welch and Foster 1987, Parent and Steckler 1985, Hwang et al 1998). Many studies of the black vote have also uncovered little divergence between the preferences of middle and lower class blacks (e.g., Gurin, Hatchet and Jackson 1989). As Welch and Combs conclude “the much debated political schism along class lines in the black community has not materialized in any general way” (1985, 96). If anything this latter group of scholars is likely to argue that higher status blacks are more rather than less racially conscious. The claim is that for many middle class blacks, economic gains mean living in a primarily white world where racial discrimination and racial differences are more pronounced and more incessant (Hochschild 1995, Feagin 1991, Cose 1995). Thus, while economic divisions are clearly growing, it is not at all clear how much impact this growing class divide is having on black partisanship.

⁷² See also Wilson (1987) and Anderson (1991) on the divide in today's inner city black neighborhoods between 'street' and 'decent' sub-cultures.

Conservatism

A variant of the upward class mobility thesis, as we noted, is the possibility that growing conservatism within the black population is the engine behind the growing partisan diversity among African Americans. African Americans have traditionally been viewed as one of the most politically cohesive and liberal groups in the nation (Gilliam 1986, Welch and Foster 1987, Dawson 1994, Kinder and Sanders 1996, Schuman et al 1989, Tate 2003). Certainly, when compared to whites, African Americans appear to be firmly entrenched to the left of the mass of white Americans (Dawson 1994, Kinder and Sanders 1996, Schuman et al 1989, Hochschild and Rogers 1999, Kinder and Winters 2001). In the NES, for instance, African Americans as a group stake out positions that are substantially more liberal than whites on government assistance to blacks, urban unrest, spending on social services, providing guaranteed jobs, health services, and overall government spending. On each of these questions, the proportion of blacks who express liberal policy views was over twenty points higher than the proportion of whites who express similar views (Kinder and Winters 2001). Thus, it would still be fair to characterize blacks as a largely liberal community.

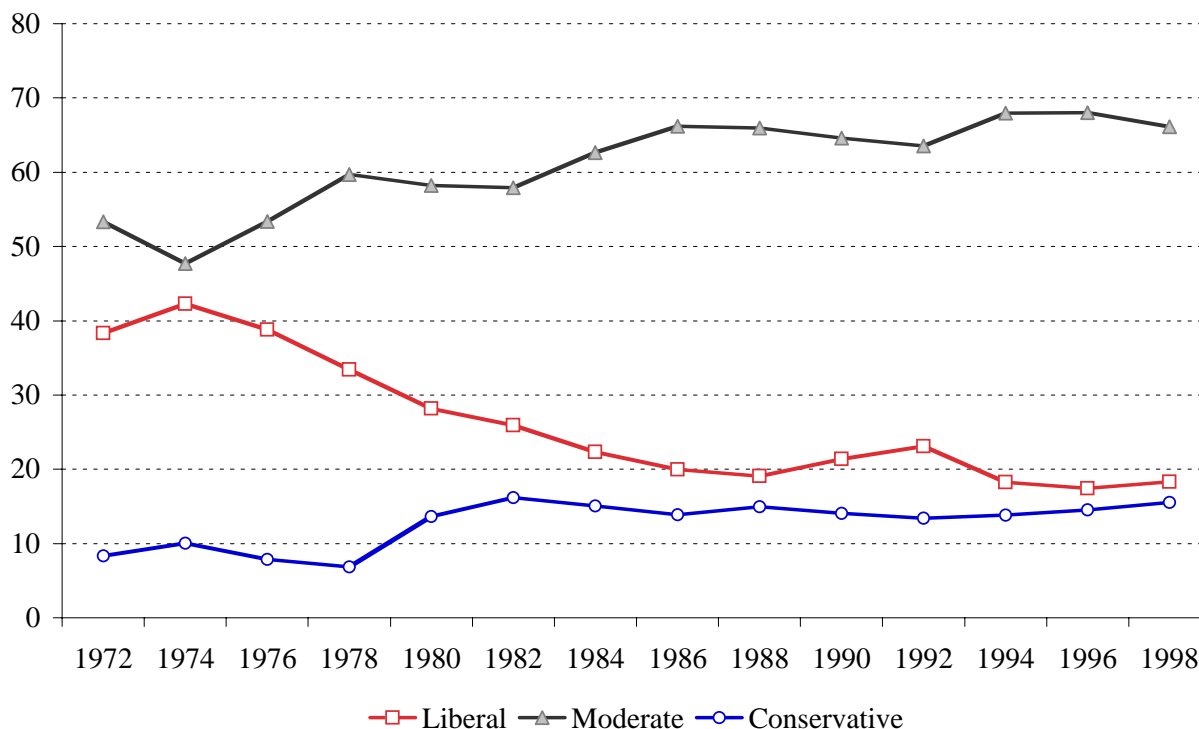
But this liberal orientation is, in many ways limited. First, outside of implicit and explicit racial issues and questions related to redistribution, there is much less unity. On moral issues, in particular, blacks respondents hold views that are as conservative or even more conservative than whites (Hamilton 1982, Bositis 2000, Tate 1994). This appears to be true in the NES for abortion rights and women's equality. Other data find that a majority of blacks favor school prayer (Bositis 2000), oppose certain aspects of gay rights (Cohen 1999), favor restrictions on immigration (Hajnal and Baldassare 2001), and support tougher sentencing laws (Bositis 2000). Moreover, even on core social welfare questions, cracks in black liberalism can be found (Hajnal

and Baldassare 2001). For example, in our surveys, one third of blacks feel that “black people depend too much on government programs.”⁷³

Furthermore, there are signs that black liberalism is waning. In Figure Four, which shows the distribution of ideological self-placement among African Americans over time (using data from the biennial American National Election Studies), we see that there is a clear shift among African Americans away from self-identification as liberals. In the early 1970s, roughly 40 percent of African Americans identified as liberals, with roughly 50 percent identifying as moderates and less than 10 percent identifying as conservatives. The general pattern – of roughly equal proportions of liberals and moderates and a substantially lower proportion of conservatives – has changed by the late 1990s to one of roughly equal proportions of liberals and conservatives and a substantially higher proportion of moderates. By the late 1990s, only about one in six African Americans identified as liberals, while more than two out of three identified as moderates and almost one in six identified as conservatives. To put it provocatively, African Americans today are almost as disproportionately moderate, ideologically, as they are disproportionately Democratic, institutionally.

⁷³ Some even claim that outside a core set of racial policy questions, blacks are not at all distinct ideologically from whites (Canon 1999). Hajnal (n.d.) has, however, shown that across the range of issues addressed in direct democracy, blacks are significantly more likely to end up on the liberal side of the vote than whites are.

Figure Four. Ideological Self-Placement of Blacks (1972-1998)



Some have questioned what these labels mean for blacks and whether these changes represent a real shift in policy views (Hamilton 1982, Tate 1994, Dawson 2001).⁷⁴ However, analysis of individual policy positions reveals a similar shift to the right. Both the NES and the three political surveys of African Americans we examine in this chapter indicate that blacks are also becoming more conservative on a range of specific policy issues including overall government spending, aid to blacks, ensuring full employment, and health services.⁷⁵ The proportion of blacks, for example, who think “the government should provide fewer services, even in areas such as health and education, in order to reduce spending” has tripled from only 7

⁷⁴ Dawson (2001), for example, argues that even today only one percent of blacks can be considered true believers of black conservatism. However, this figure ignores the fact that large segments of the black community support at least some elements of a conservative agenda.

⁷⁵ On only one issue in the NES, women’s rights, were blacks markedly more liberal over time.

percent in 1972 to 21 percent in 1998. Similarly, the numbers who oppose special government assistance to the black community has grown dramatically from 12 percent in the 1970s to 29 percent in the 1990s. There is little denying that blacks are still more cohesive and more liberal than other groups on most issues, but there is also little denying that elements of a conservative agenda have crept into substantial segments of the black community.⁷⁶ In this regard, African Americans are perhaps no different from the rest of the nation, which has taken a similarly rightward turn in recent decades. Thus, there is reason to believe that growing black conservatism could be a central force driving blacks away from the Democratic Party.

Racial Solidarity

What of our own account of exit from the Democratic Party? Can group interests actually push blacks away from the Democratic Party? Is black autonomy sufficiently popular to sway significant elements within the black community toward Independence? And are many blacks ambivalent enough about how well the Democratic Party serves black interests to choose another option? We suggest that racial solidarity and group-defined interests remain powerful in the African American community today, but that there are growing signs of racial separatism and diminishing marginal perceived differences between the parties that may play a role in the increasing number black Independents in America today.

First, there is little doubt that racial identity plays a central role in black politics today. Not only do blacks believe that racial inequality is a near permanent feature of American society, they also tend to see whites and racial discrimination as key factors behind the plight of blacks. The numbers across the three surveys are in many cases almost overwhelming. Almost all blacks (95 percent) recognize that the black community has not achieved racial equality. There

⁷⁶ Analysis of the General Social Survey data reveals an almost identical trend in black public opinion over time.

is also near consensus about the root of the problem. Almost 80 percent agreed that “American society is unfair to black people” and another 86 percent believe that “discrimination against blacks is still a problem.” About a third even questioned whether there had been any racial progress at all in the last twenty years. Furthermore, there is not a lot of optimism about the future. Some 38 percent of blacks believed that “blacks will never achieve equality.”

Underlying this pessimism, were strong suspicions about the interests and intent of the white community. Only 23 percent of blacks felt that most whites want to “see blacks get a better break” while 35 percent thought that “most white people want to keep blacks down.”

There is also little doubt that blacks tend to express group consciousness and feel closely to the well-being of the large black community. Almost all blacks (94 percent) indicated they felt very close or somewhat close “in ideas and feelings about things to Blacks.”⁷⁷ As Table 3.1 shows, across the three surveys that we focus on in this chapter, a large majority of blacks, 68 percent, agreed that “what happens to black people in this country has [something] to do with what happens to me.” This sense of racial identity is also consequential for black politics. Racial identity has been linked to liberal-conservative ideology, views on racial policy, and preferences across a host of non-racial policy dimensions (Tate 1994, Dawson 2001). Identity has also been tied to presidential vote choice and support for a range of core black ideologies from black separatism to economic conservatism (Dawson 1994, 2001, Gurin et al 1989).

Table 3.1. Distribution of Linked Fate among African Americans.

1984 NBES	1993 NBPS	1996 NBES	Total
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⁷⁷ Comparative analysis indicates that black racial identity is stronger and more pronounced than the identities of other groups (Gurin 1995).

A lot	31.3	36.3	36.1	34.6
Some	31.0	31.6	36.5	33.0
Not very much	11.1	9.9	10.0	10.3
Not at all	26.7	22.3	17.4	22.1

Data: 1984 National Black Election Studies, 1993 National Black Politics Study, 1996 National Black Election Studies.

The fact that group consciousness and linked fate remain high among the black community today suggests that neither factor can account for the recent exit of large numbers of African Americans from the Democratic Party. This conclusion is reaffirmed by an analysis of trends over time. There is no sign of declining black linked fate. Table 3.1 shows the distribution of blacks' linked fate orientation in the separate political surveys of African Americans conducted in 1984, 1993, and 1996. The proportion of black Americans who believe in such a heuristic is quite consistent across time and surveys: a little above a third of African Americans strongly believe that "what happens generally to black people in this country will have something to do with what happens in [their] life," with another third believing the statement somewhat, and more than one fifth rejecting any coupling between individual and collective destinies.

In fact, if the focus is on African Americans who think that blacks' interests are linked "some" or "a lot," there is a clear increase over the last two decades toward more blacks seeing race as a defining influence in their lives – exactly the opposite of what we would expect given changes in party identification. The proportion of blacks believing that "what happens generally to black people" has at least "some" effect on their own life chances increases from 62 percent in

1984 to 68 percent in 1996 and 73 percent in 1996. Similarly, the number of African Americans who are hopeful that blacks will eventually achieve racial equality fell from 53 percent in 1984 to 39 percent in 1996. Over time, more blacks also believed that “most whites want to keep blacks down” (from 40 percent in 1984 to 47 percent in 1996). Thus, while we expect black identity to figure prominently in black partisanship, at first glance it seems unlikely that group interests could provide a clear explanation of black Democratic defection.

Racial Separatism

As we noted earlier, a separatist ideology has been and continues to be an important driving force in black politics. The long history of black nationalism as a popular and powerful ideology spans early evocations like Martin Delaney’s efforts to re-establish a colony of freed slaves in Africa, Booker T. Washington’s late-19th century ideology of black self-help, Marcus Garvey’s efforts to build an African nation state in the 1920s and 1930s to later instantiations like Malcolm X, Elijah Muhammad, and the rise of the Nation of Islam and Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, and the Black Panther Party’s campaign to empower inner city black communities and, most recently, to echoes of black nationalism in the rap and hip-hop music of KRS-One, Sister Souljah, Ice Cube, and others (Kelley 1994, Rose 1994, Henderson 1996, Dawson 1999). The belief that black politics must be understood from the standpoint of an existing system of racial domination and that racial progress must be achieved in the form of economic, political, and cultural autonomy is according to Michael Dawson, “the second oldest ideological tendency found within black political thought (2001, 85).”

Black nationalism, in short, is much closer to the political philosophy of Charles Mills (1997) than it is to the political philosophy of John Stuart Mill (Thompson 1976). And it has widespread support among African Americans today. In the three black politics surveys we

examine, a large minority of African Americans supported key elements of a black nationalist ideology. Well over half of all blacks felt that blacks “should shop in black owned stores” and that “black children should study an African language.” Almost half of all African Americans agreed that “Black people form a nation within a nation,” 40 percent called for blacks to “participate in black-only organizations whenever possible” and 38 percent expressed support for a black political party. As Dawson provocatively claims, “black nationalism, not the various black liberal ideologies, is the most important ideological determinant of black public opinion (2000, 349).”

There are, however, limits to how far some black Americans will go in support of nationalist beliefs. Few African Americans (3 percent) agreed that blacks “should not have anything to do with whites”; only 14 percent agree or strongly agree that “black should have their own separate nation”; and only 27 percent agree or strongly agree that “blacks should *always* vote for black candidates.”

More importantly, as recent work by Robert Brown and Todd Shaw (2002) suggests, black nationalism may not be a single overarching ideology. Specifically, Brown and Shaw demonstrate a multi-dimensional structure to black nationalism that distinguishes “community nationalism” (local economic, social, political self-determination in predominantly African American communities) from “separatist nationalism” (race-based sovereignty and a literal or figurative separation from the economy, politics, and culture of white-dominated America).⁷⁸ These two dimensions of black nationalism are especially germane to our study because the effects of community nationalism and separatist nationalism on one’s party identification are

⁷⁸ Brown and Shaw also posit the possibility of a third dimension of what might be called cultural nationalism, formed around attitudes towards Africa as a “homeland” and the value of learning African languages and cultures.

likely to run in opposite directions. Specifically, as Brown and Shaw put it, “community nationalism rests of a premise that is almost a truism,” given a basic level of racial group consciousness. As such, it is more of a “mainstream” ideology within the black community and finds greater support among African Americans who are more well off and more liberal – that is, there is no obvious inconsistency between adhering to community nationalism, perceiving a strongly linked fate, and identifying with the Democratic Party. By contrast, it is almost a truism that a separatist nationalism will reject the relevance of mainstream electoral politics and white dominated political parties as a venue for the advocacy of racial group interests. Concomitant with this logic, Brown and Shaw find greater support for separatist nationalism among African Americans who are younger, poorer, and male. Thus, to be more precise about our expectations from Hypothesis 4, separatist nationalists should be more likely to move away from identifying with the Democratic Party, but community nationalists may actually be more likely to identify with the Democratic Party.

What about changes in the salience of, and adherence to, black nationalism in the last few decades. Here, it is difficult to say much with the available survey data. Prior to 1980, there is no systematic public opinion data on black nationalist sentiments. Since 1980, the available polls present a mixed picture. In the 1984 National Black Elections Study, for instance, 29 percent of African Americans supported the idea of a black political party. This proportion increases to 50 percent in the 1993 National Black Politics Study, but then nosedives to 34 percent by the 1996 National Black Elections Study. Outside the realm of what public opinion data have to say, there certainly seems to be a rise in the publicity given to nationalist sentiments in the African American community. As scholars like Errol Henderson (2000) have suggested, African American political movements have cycled between periods of liberal integrationism

and black separatism. There is little debate, from this broad historical view, that at least since the Civil Rights Movement evolved into the Black Power Movement, we have been witness to a strong tide of black nationalist sentiments (Carmichael and Hamilton 1967). One could go so far as to claim that black nationalism was the primary public face of African American politics throughout the 1990s, as seen in the lingering, sometimes obsessive focus of mass media coverage on events and phenomena like the African American-led boycotts of Korean “mom-and-pop” grocers in New York City, then Los Angeles (Freer 1994, Kim 2000, Joyce 2003), Minister Louis Farrakhan’s rise to the national stage with the Million Man March (Taylor and Lincoln 1997, McCormick and Franklin 2000), the legal status of black male academies (Grant-Thomas 2000), the allegedly illiberal and intolerant strains of Afro-centrism as articulated by Leonard Jeffries and Molefi Asante, and the commodification and cultural rebirth of Malcolm X (Dyson 1996). While this discussion is admittedly non-scientific, it propels our suspicions that the central place of black separatist ideologies in the African American community might condition the willingness of African Americans to exit from party identification.

Coordination

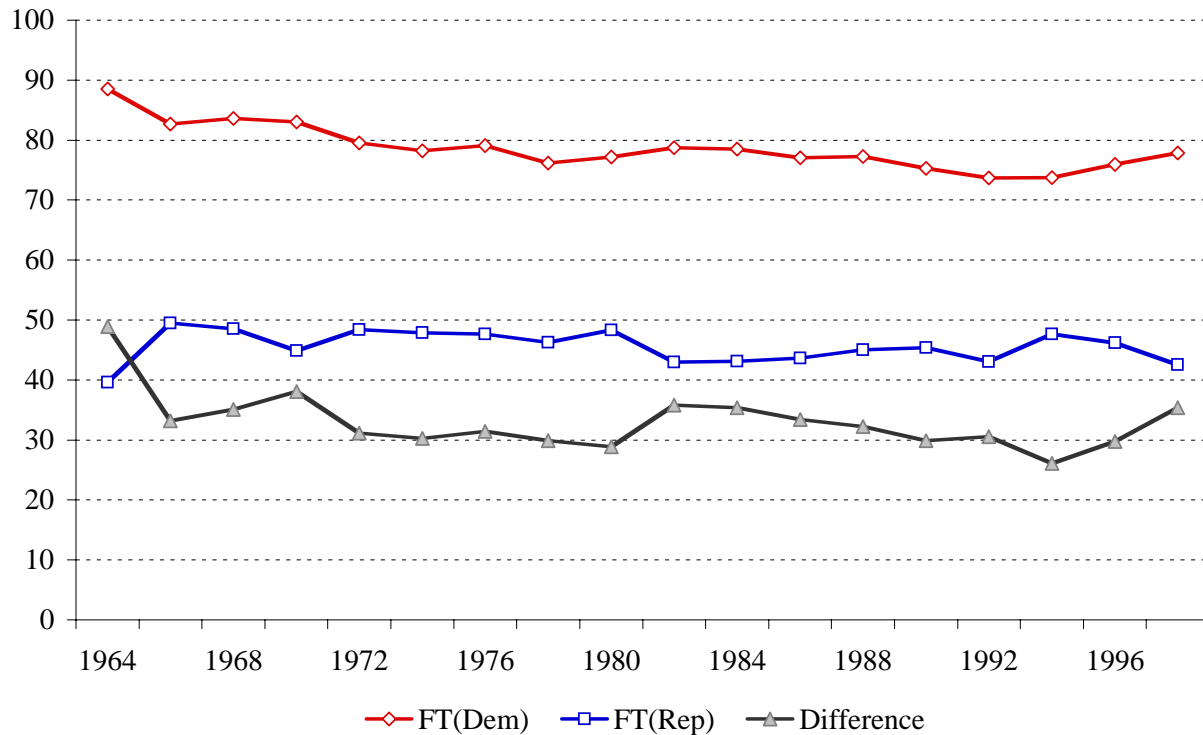
The final dimension of black party identification that we consider is the pairwise choice between the Republican and Democratic parties. As we earlier noted, the final step in the logic of a group-basis to party identification is that, once African Americans have decided to act on the basis of one’s group identification and decided to so act in the venue of mainstream, electoral politics, they must still coordinate and choose sides. This act of evaluating both the Democratic and Republican parties is, we posit, a vital intermediary between a linked fate orientation and the partisan identification of most African Americans with the Democratic Party. In the American National Election Studies, there are two common metrics used to measure how individuals gauge

the two parties – an affective measure based on how “warm” or “cold” respondents feel toward the Democratic and Republican parties (the “feeling thermometer”) and a more cognitive measure of how many positive or negative characteristics of each party a respondent can volunteer (up to five mentions). Based on these two measures, there are no obvious trends over time to guide our understanding of the growing tendency of African Americans to identify as Independents.

Figure Five below shows the over-time trends in party affect among African Americans, using the feeling thermometer items in the ANES.⁷⁹ As the Figure quite plainly shows, there is very little variation in the affect of either party. With affect toward the Democratic Party, there is, however, a discernible downward trend, from an average warmth toward the Democrats in the 80s (during the mid-1960s) to an average warmth in the 70s. Most of this decline, however occurs in the early 1970s (and thus does not correspond very tightly with the period of growing identification as Independents). On the Republican side of the partisan aisle, and in the overall difference in party affect between the Republican and Democratic parties, there is only the slightest hint of a downward “cooling” of party affect over time.

⁷⁹ Figure Five shows a moving average (3 years) of feeling thermometer ratings in each biennial ANES survey.

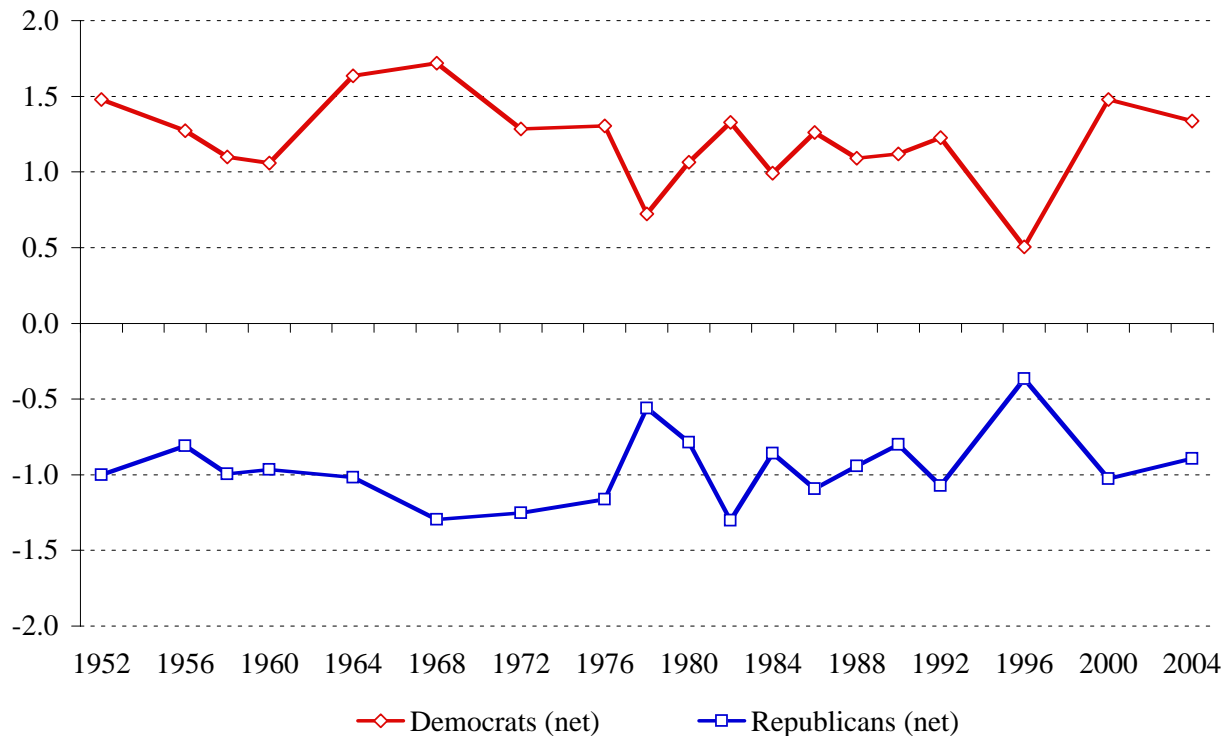
Figure Five. Party Affect: Feeling Thermometer (1964-1998)



When we turn to party cognition, as measured by the number of likes and dislikes of each party, there is somewhat more evidence of changes over time that are consistent with the trends in party identification among African Americans. Recall that in Figure Two, the level of party identification with the Democratic Party peaks in 1968, then gradually falls until it bottoms out in 1992. This is roughly (with far greater changes from biennial ANES survey to survey) the trend we find in Figure Six, which charts the net of likes and dislikes mentioned for both the Democratic and Republican parties from 1952 to 2004. The weighted average of likes and dislikes for the Democratic Party peaks in 1968 and this net statistic drops (with some fluctuation) until it hits its nadir in 1996. This trend is paralleled in the opposite for the weighted average of likes and dislikes for the Republican Party. Thus by at least one measure of the

rational, pairwise evaluation of the Democratic and Republican parties, we might expect to see the general patterns in party identification we see in Figure Two.

Figure Six. Party Cognition of Blacks: Net of Likes and Dislikes, 1952-2004



There is, however, a real problem with either of these measures of partisan affect. Neither the feeling thermometer or the mention of likes and dislikes is conditioned on a racial group calculus and thus provides a limited test of our theoretical expectations. We thus turn to a measure of party evaluation that is directly related to black group interests. Using this latter measure - available only in the black politics surveys we use in this chapter – we find some real ambiguity about which party serves black group interests. When asked how hard they think the Republican and Democratic Parties “really work on issues black people care about,” most blacks expressed a slight preference for the Democratic Party but the gap was not nearly as wide as we might expect. Almost thirty percent of blacks felt that the Democratic Party did not work hard

for black interests. Another 20 percent believed that the Republican Party does work hard for black interests. When responses to the two questions were combined, fully 31 percent of the black community believed that the Republican Party works as hard or harder than the Democratic Party for black interests. In particular, only a small proportion of African Americans see the Democratic Party as a clear-cut partisan choice for the African American community. Only seven percent felt that the Democratic Party worked “a lot harder” than the Republican Party on issues that are important to blacks.⁸⁰ Finally, a substantial number felt that neither party was working especially hard on issues blacks care about. Over a quarter felt that both parties were working ‘not too hard’ on black issues. And six percent felt that both parties were basically ignoring issues that were important to the black community. In short, there is ample room for a race based evaluation of the two major parties to account for the exit of more and more blacks from the Democratic Party.

In this section, we have considered a welter of evidence – most of it in the form of a review of secondary analysis – on background factors that may help us to understand the growing black flight from the Democratic Party. None of our discussion here gives a conclusive account of changes in African American party identification over time. That sort of discriminating analysis would require careful time-series analysis, an especially high hurdle to overcome given the relative lack of time-series data on African American politics. Specifically, data on three key factors – racial solidarity, racial separatism, and the pairwise evaluation of each party’s advocacy of African American political interests – are available at only three points in time, 1984, 1993, and 1996. These data, however, do allow us to assess the relative input of each

⁸⁰ There is no clear trend over time across our three surveys in how well each party is viewed as an advocate of black issues.

of the five factors we have considered to the microfoundations of black party identification. It is to this task that we now turn.

Explaining Black Partisan Choice

We begin by looking at a simple model of partisan choice that tests only conventional accounts of black politics and ignores our more complex, multi-dimensional account of black partisanship. Thus, in the first half of Table 3.2, we present the results of an ordered logit regression that uses the standard seven point linear scale of partisanship as the dependent variable with Democrats on the left, Independents in the middle, and Republicans on the right to measure partisanship. A higher value thus indicates movement away from the Democrats toward identifying as Independent or Republican. Later in the paper, we will examine whether this assumption about the linearity of the choice is warranted.

Based on our earlier discussion, we explain African American partisan choice as a function of five different sets of factors.⁸¹ First, to determine the extent to which party identification is based on a traditional liberal-conservative ideological dimension, we include responses to a question asking respondents how they would self-identify in ideological terms. Since one of our central contentions is that the relationship between ideology and party

⁸¹ We cannot consider in Tables 3.2 or 3.3 two other factors that make up much of the Michigan school account of partisanship: childhood socialization and the effects of being apolitical. Unfortunately, none of the three surveys of black Americans includes data on parental partisanship or other measures of childhood socialization and the three surveys do not contain consistent measures of political involvement. We can, however, make some remarks about the relevance of both factors to black partisan choices. Based on the earlier results from the NES that we presented in Chapter Two, we believe that parental cues are an important influence on black partisanship. There also appears to be a link between political engagement and black partisanship. In alternate tests, using individual surveys, we found a weak relationship between political participation and political interest and black partisanship. Namely, nonvoters, those who do not trust government, and those not interested in national campaigns are more apt to be Independents. It is, however, not clear how to interpret this last set of results. We contend that for many African Americans limited engagement in national politics and nonpartisanship are both the result of rational skepticism about what the two parties are doing for one's own interests or the broader interests of the black community. In this case it is not being apolitical that leads to nonpartisanship. Rather having no clear partisan option to choose leads to political disengagement and nonpartisanship.

identification is not linear, we examined the effects of ideology through a series of “dummy” variables that allow us to estimate, separately, the effects of self-identifying as a strong liberal, a weak liberal, a weak conservative, and a strong conservative on one’s party identification (compared to the effect of being an ideological moderate). Second, to examine the effect of socioeconomic background on partisan choice, we test for the independent effects of four dimensions of class status: family income, educational attainment, home ownership, and employment status.

In addition to class and conservatism, we test for the three factors that we believe are key mediators between a demographic group definition and one’s political organizational identification: racial group consciousness, black autonomy, and the racially-based evaluation of the Republican and Democratic Parties. Racial group consciousness is measured by the standard linked fate question that asks respondents how much their personal well-being is defined by the well-being of the larger black community. Following Brown and Shaw (2002), we test two separate dimensions of black nationalism.⁸² First, we constructed an index of nationalism as support for community control, measured by four items – “blacks should shop in black-owned stores whenever possible,” “blacks should have control over the government in mostly black communities,” “blacks should have control over the economy in mostly black communities,” and “blacks should rely on themselves and not on others.” Second, we constructed an index of nationalism as a more explicitly political, separatist movement, measured by four items – “black people should always vote for black candidates when they run,” “blacks should form their own

⁸² The use of Brown and Shaw’s scales are admittedly somewhat controversial given the counter evidence by Davis and Brown (2004) that black nationalism is a unidimensional, not multidimensional scale. While we do not contest the findings of Davis and Brown or attempt to adjudicate the differences between the two interpretations of black nationalism in this paper, there are valid conceptual grounds for distinguishing the two dimensions of nationalism that Brown and Shaw identify vis-à-vis one’s party identification, and as Table 3.3 shows, the two dimensions can lead to quite opposite effects on one’s partisan attachments.

political party,” “black people should have a separate nation,” “black people form a nation within a nation.”⁸³ Finally, to see if perceptions about either party’s efforts on behalf of the black community affected partisan choice, respondents were asked “How hard do you think the Republican (Democratic) Party works on issues black people really care about?” Given our strong theoretical priors that party identification (and party evaluation) is not linear, we specify separate variables for African Americans’ evaluation of the Democratic and the Republican parties (rather than taking a measure of the difference in party evaluations).⁸⁴

[TABLE 3.2 about here]

Table 3.2 presents three different models of African American party identification: a baseline model (with measures of ideology, class, linked fate, and our control variables), a variant that includes our two black nationalism scales (Model Two), and our full account that also includes the evaluation of how well the two parties represent the interests of African Americans (Model Three). The results from the first column of Table 3.2 do confirm some of the conventional views of partisanship and black partisan choices. First, there is a clear link between liberal-conservative ideology and partisan choice.⁸⁵ The effect is discernible on only one end of the ideological continuum, however. That is, extreme liberals are about 16 percent

⁸³ The alpha reliability coefficients for the community nationalism scale is 0.65 and for the separatist nationalism scale is 0.54.

⁸⁴ In addition to these five factors, we also included several control variables – the age and gender of respondents, the race of the interviewer (see, e.g., Davis 1997 for the importance of controlling for the potential social interactive effects of an interviewer’s race), and the fixed effects of each survey (measured by dummy variables for the 1993 NBPS and the 1996 NBES). In alternate tests, we also tested for a range of contextual effects including region (south vs non-south), racial context (percent black in the respondent’s neighborhood), and poverty context (percent poor in the neighborhood). Blacks in the south were marginally more Democratic than blacks elsewhere. Other contextual effects are noted below.

⁸⁵ There is some concern that the relationship between liberal-conservative ideology and party identification is reciprocal and thus that liberal-conservative ideology is in part the result rather than the cause of party identification. However, existing research that tests for this reciprocity has generally found that party identification has only a very small effect on most individual policy positions and has never found an effect of partisanship on overall liberal-conservative ideology (Franklin 1984, Page and Jones 1979).

more likely to identify as strong Democrats than moderates and moderate liberals are somewhat more likely to do so as well.⁸⁶ But there are no differences between moderates and conservatives, ideologically, in their partisan attachments. This one-sided relationship is especially meaningful given the over-time trend in African-American ideological self-placement seen in Figure Four, where there is a conspicuous rise of ideological moderates and decline of ideological liberals. The fact that there are both fewer ideological liberals and fewer partisan Democrats in the African American population today no longer seems coincidental. As one might have predicted, alternate tests indicate that fiscal and social liberalism – as opposed to moral or religious liberalism – is the main reason for the link between liberal-conservative ideology and party identification among African Americans. Specifically, views on the government’s role in creating jobs, assistance to blacks, and spending on crime all affected partisanship while views on gay rights and hand guns had no significant effect (analysis not shown).

Class effects are more complex. Specifically, in Model One, we find no support for the upward mobility thesis, except in its obverse. That is, the first column of Table 3.2 shows that unemployed African Americans are significantly more likely to identify with the Republican Party than the Democratic Party. This effect, moreover, is rather substantial: unemployed blacks are about 16 percent less likely to identify as a strong Democrat than working African Americans. Once we control for our three racial factors in Model Three, however, family income and home ownership become significant determinants of party choice. Consistent with the expectation of the upward mobility thesis, African Americans who garner higher wages are

⁸⁶ For this and all other predicted probabilities detailed in the paper, we utilize a simulation procedure developed by King, Tomz, and Wittenburg (2001). In each case, we vary values on the dimension of interest (ie moving from strongly liberal to strongly conservative views) while holding constant all other factors at their mean (or modal value for categorical variables).

more likely to seek alternatives to Democratic party identification. The effect here, however, is modest: African Americans in the highest income bracket in our surveys are 8 percent less likely to identify as a strong Democrat than their counterparts in the lowest income bracket. The effect of home ownership, like unemployment, again runs counter to the logic of the upward class mobility thesis: black home owners are actually about 4 percent *more* likely to identify as a Democrat than African Americans who do not own the homes they live in. The contrarian results on employment and home ownership suggest a potentially counter-narrative to the usual story that is told about class and politics. It may be the case that with the attainment of building blocks of economic security, like owning a home and being gainfully employed, black Americans may actually be more inclined to reward their party of choice (much like retrospective voters) than to set up new partisan roots.

Table 3.2 also confirms the importance of a group-based political calculus. Consistent with prior work by Dawson (1994) and Tate (1993), a sense of racial linked fate influences party identification.⁸⁷ The effect, however, is relatively small: African Americans who believe that their own well-being is strongly linked to that of other African Americans are between 7 percent (Model One) and 4.5 percent (Model Three) more likely to identify as strong Democrats than African Americans who believe that fates are unlinked. With black nationalism, only our community nationalism scale appears to be a significant factor. Specifically, African Americans who strongly advocate local control and autonomy in predominantly black communities are between 10 percent (Model Two) and 8 percent (Model Three) more likely to identify as strong

⁸⁷ As one might expect, we found that the dominant factor explaining linked fate are assessments of the racial fairness of American society. The more that blacks believe that discrimination is prevalent and that the American system will never be fair, the stronger their sense of linked. African Americans who are more actively involved in social institutions and who presumably more regularly interact with other members of the black community also tend to hold a stronger sense of linked fate (analysis not shown).

Democrats than are blacks who reject all aspects of community nationalism.⁸⁸ The strongest influence on black partisanship, by far, however, is the evaluation of how hard the Democratic and Republican parties work for African Americans. Table 3.2 shows that African Americans who strongly think that the Democratic party works harder for blacks' interests are 34 percent more likely to identify as a strong Democrat than those who disagree; African Americans who strongly think that the Republican party works harder for blacks' interests 28 percent less likely to identify as a strong Democrat than those who disagree.⁸⁹

These results, taken together, give moderate support for our main storyline. Class and ideology do influence the partisan choices of African Americans, but not as forcefully, consistently, or coherently as we might think. The evidence for a racially-based political calculus is somewhat stronger. The rational and racially conditioned evaluation of both parties – that is, pairwise comparison of the Democratic and Republican parties conditioned on each party's advocacy of African American *group* interests, not the interests of an individual *per se* – this racial calculus is easily the most potent influence on one's party identification. However, racial solidarity itself – as measured by the belief in a linked fate – is only modestly predictive. Moreover, black nationalism is an influence on party identification, but only in its community control dimension. Racial separatism, at least in this linear, ordered probit specification, appears

⁸⁸ Black separatism is itself a function of at least two different kinds of factors. Concerns about widespread racial discrimination and a strong sense of black linked fate both, as expected, led to increase support for black separatism. Younger and lower class blacks were also more apt to express separatist views (analysis not shown).

⁸⁹ Race is also the dominant factor in trying to explain why some African Americans are skeptical about how well the Democratic Party serves black interests. Those who did not see discrimination as a real problem were less likely to see Democrats as working harder for blacks. By contrast, younger African Americans and those more involved in politics were much more apt to see the Democrats as strong advocates of black interests.

to have no influence on one's party identification.⁹⁰ Perhaps the most conspicuous evidence of the mixed success of the results in Table Two is that very little of the variation in black party choice is explained: even our full model explains only 5.5 percent of the variation in our dependent variable.

The Structure of Black Party Choice

In this next section, we show that this limited explanatory power and the sometimes varied success of our theoretical expectations is the result of estimating our parameters on a linear, ordered dependent variable. The multiple pathways to partisanship that we put forward in this paper have implications not only for *which* partisan option African Americans ultimately choose to align with but also for *how* African Americans go about choosing between the three options of Democrat, Independent, and Republican. African American choices should not only differ from conventional accounts of white party identification in terms of the dimensions that predict partisanship but more fundamentally, we believe they should differ in terms of how they structure the choice. The relevance of multiple, orthogonal dimensions means that most blacks do not perceive of the parties the way many whites might. For many whites, the choice may be one of simply deciding where to place oneself along a linear continuum ranging from strongly Democratic on the left to Independent in the middle and finally to strongly Republican on the right. For blacks, the three options are not likely to be neatly ordered along this linear continuum. Indeed the three choices may not be ordered at all but different dimensions may

⁹⁰ Among our control variables, age and gender are both significantly related to one's party identification. Younger African Americans and black men are more inclined to move away from the Democratic Party. The age effect in particular suggests that black political unity may be fading over time and that African American political choices may be responsive to changes in the nature of American race relations. For a more detailed explanation of how and why age affects black partisanship see Luks and Elms (2003).

come into play at different points in the decision process. For many blacks, Independent will not fall in the middle.

In order to more closely examine the structure of black partisan choices and to better test the role of black autonomy we drop the assumption that party identification is linear and instead test a multidimensional model of partisanship. The estimator we use to test the non-linearity of party identification is multinomial logit, which allows us to capture the effect of each independent variable on each pairwise combination among possible party identification categories (see Aldrich and Nelson 1984, Greene 2000). That is, rather than modeling party identification as a continuum from Democrat to Independent to Republican, multinomial logit allows us to estimate the relative probability of identifying between each pair of choices. The categories of party identification that are examined here are “Democrat,” “Republican,” and “Independent,” so the pairwise choices that we model are Independent or Democrat, Republican or Independent, Democrat or Republican.⁹¹ Unlike many other studies of party identification, we have chosen not to separate out partisan leaners among the Independents because we view the choice to identify firstly as an Independent as meaningful in its own right and also because the results do not differ markedly by reserving the category only for “pure Independents.”⁹²

A few other points on the interpretation of Table 3.3 bear note. First, because multinomial logit is an explicit non-linear statistical estimator, the parameter estimates can be somewhat of a challenge to interpret. To make the result clearer, we transform these parameter estimates into odds ratios (“relative risk ratios”) that allow for assessments of relative magnitude

⁹¹ The results in Table Three also exclude the interviewer race and survey year fixed effects as controls. In specifications that include these variables, they are not significant factors, so we allow the greater parsimony of the model specified in Table Three to prevail.

⁹² When we repeated the analysis in Table 3.3 with Independent leaners included as partisans, we reach essentially the same set of conclusions regarding black partisan choices. The results of this alternate specification are included in Table 3.A.1 in the Appendix.

– the relative odds of, say, identifying as a Republican or an Independent, given a one-unit change to an independent variable of interest, say, of being employed or unemployed.⁹³ Also, Table Three, unlike most presentations of multinomial logit regressions, presents estimates for every pairwise combination of the three categories.⁹⁴

[TABLE 3.3 about here]

There are two claims we wish to make based on the results in Table 3.3. The first is that black nationalism represents a new and important dimensions to black partisan choice that works orthogonally to conventional linear models of party identification. That is, support for black nationalism in its various forms can lead both to support and opposition to the Democratic Party. The second claim is that an unordered model of partisan choice better fits black party identification. In other words, black partisan choices are not neatly ordered along a single dimension.⁹⁵

As Table 3.3 demonstrates, once the assumption of an ordered dependent variable is discarded, the importance and orthogonality of black nationalism are evident.⁹⁶ Specifically, we

⁹³ For each pairwise comparison, say between identifying as a Democrat or Independent, Table Three shows three statistics – the parameter estimate and its corresponding standard error and relative risk ratio.

⁹⁴ Technically, a “baseline” category against which other alternatives are compared must be chosen for the model to be statistically “identified,” and in many cases, there are strong theoretical grounds for choosing that optimal base category. In our case, the theory argues that each pairwise choice is significant. Hence Tables One and Two show the results from two separate estimates – first, with “Independent” and then with “Democrat” as the base category.

⁹⁵ The structure of black partisan choices may be even more complicated than Table 3.3 suggests. Different segments of the black population differ not only in terms of which partisan option they prefer but also in how difficult it is to choose a party in the first place. For black nationalist separatists, in particular, we might expect an especially high level of ambivalence and uncertainty given that there is no viable black party at the national level and thus no obvious partisan choice. A heteroskedastic probit analysis of party identification supports this view and reveals that of all the sub-groups in the black community, it is most difficult to predict the partisan choices of those who believe strongly in black autonomy [analysis not shown].

⁹⁶ Further evidence of the orthogonality of black nationalism emerges out of an analysis of those who respond don’t know or no preference to the party identification question. One of the strongest predictors of not providing a clear answer to the question is holding black nationalist views [analysis not shown]. The fact that nationalist are particularly likely to answer ‘don’t know’ suggest that their views do not fit neatly along the liberal-conservative

find significant and contrasting effects for the two aspects of black nationalism. Once again, as in Table 3.2, belief in nationalism qua community control significantly increases one's likelihood of identifying as a Democrat. But here we also find that belief in nationalism qua racial separatism works in essentially the opposite direction by increasing one's likelihood of identifying as a Republican. Race, at least in the sense of support for black autonomy can work for or against the Democratic Party.

Table 3.3 also sheds significant light on the unordered nature of black partisan choices. The chief criterion for assessing the utility of estimating a given model of choice assuming an ordered or unordered dependent variable is in what one might call the "transitivity" of the coefficients across pairwise choices in the unordered condition. That is, if party identification is in fact an ordered sequence of choices from identifying as a strong Republican to identifying as a strong Democrat, then the estimated parameters for the intermediary choices – Democrat or Independent, Independent or Republican – should reflect lighter shades of the more boldly colored estimates we derive for the full spectrum of choices. There are strong and weak criteria for gauging the utility of our multinomial logit estimates. The strong criterion is that we should not see relationships that appear to switch from night to day - to reverse signs while retaining significance. The weaker criterion is that relationships that did not exist in the ordered probit estimates should not come to light in the multinomial logit estimates.⁹⁷ In both cases, Table 3.3 shows compelling evidence that partisan choices are not neatly ordered for African Americans.

dimension separating the two parties. Overall, about five percent of all blacks answer don't know or provide no answer to the party identification question.

⁹⁷ The latter is a weaker condition because the premise that a dependent variable is ordered could be consistent with the uncovering of new statistically significant relationships under multinomial logit if there strong non-linearities in the relationship of the dependent variable to a given explanatory variable.

The strongest evidence for this is found in the relationship between ideological self-identification and party identification. For the pairwise choice between identifying as an Independent or Democrat, extreme liberals and moderate liberals are more likely to identify as a Democrat than ideological moderates, as we might expect. But Table 3.3 shows that moderate *conservatives* are also more likely to identify as a Democrat than staunch moderates, and by almost the same magnitude of effect as we find among the liberal categories. In the choice between Republicans and Independents, extreme conservatives, as we might expect, are significantly likelier to choose to identify as a Republican. Quite surprisingly, however, extreme *liberals* too appear likelier to choose to identify as a *Republican* rather than an Independent (although the statistical significance of this result is much weaker).⁹⁸ The relationship between ideology and partisanship is anything but linear. This non-linear relationship coupled with the earlier non-linearities we found between partisanship and black nationalism make a convincing case for the added value of estimating African American party identification as an unordered phenomenon.⁹⁹

The analysis presented in Table 3.3 also suggests an answer to our question about the declining rates of identification with the Democratic Party over time. As we saw in Figures 3.2 and 3.3, much of the change in black partisanship since the 1960s is the exit of black Democrats who identify as Independents and, among Independents, the increasing proportion of Democratic

⁹⁸ For the pairwise choice between Republicans and Democrats, the results are straightforward: only extreme conservatives are distinctive from moderates, and they are significantly likelier to choose to identify as a Republican. This effect is strong.

⁹⁹ The structure of black partisan choices may be even more complicated than Table Two suggests. Different segments of the black population differ not only in terms of which partisan option they prefer but also in how difficult it is to choose a party in the first place. For black separatists, in particular, we might expect an especially high level of ambivalence and uncertainty given that there is no viable black party at the national level and thus no obvious partisan choice. A heteroskedastic probit analysis of party identification supports this view and reveals that of all the sub-groups in the black community, it is most difficult to predict the partisan choices of those who believe strongly in black autonomy [analysis not shown].

leaners. Thus to explain the out-migration of African Americans from Democratic party identification, the critical comparison is not between Democrats and Republicans, but between Democrat and Independents.

Here Table Three points to two principal factors: ideology and the evaluation of each party's efforts vis-à-vis African Americans. These findings must be interpreted with care, however. The quick-and-dirty conclusion to draw would be that African Americans are increasingly becoming conservative and that race is declining in its significance for African Americans. Let's take each of these in turn. The danger in reading too much into a conservative turn in black political ideology is that, as we see from Figure Four, most of the variation over time and across individuals comes from liberals who now self-identify as moderates. Similarly, from Table 3.3 we see that most of the variation across individuals in choosing between identifying as a Democrat and Independent comes from the distinctiveness of ideological moderation, not conservatism. Thus, the explanation for black exit from the Democratic Party, to the extent that it is driven by ideology, rests not on a more conservative black polity but on a growing consensus on ideological moderation within the African American community.

The story on the relevance of a racial group calculus is similarly nuanced. Our findings from Table 3.3 underscore several parts to the story. First, African American partisan choice is in substantial measure a reflection of considerations beyond a person's class status and orthogonal to one's liberal-conservative orientation. Second, it shows once again that racial considerations can and do push African Americans away from the Democratic Party. But it is a more consistent factor in pushing African Americans who identify as Republicans. This finding, coupled with the selective effect of our measures of a racial group calculus on the pairwise choice between Democrat and Independent – recall that neither linked fate nor racial separatism

are factors affecting this choice – points, rather persuasively, to the conclusion that the lion’s share of the decline in black Democratic identification, vis-à-vis racial considerations, is not the result of a declining significance of race *per se*, but from a shift in the pairwise evaluation of how hard the Democratic and Republican parties work on behalf of African Americans’ interests. This evaluation, importantly, is a perfectly reasonable response to the rise of “Third Way” new Democrats, who have rendered issues of race to the periphery of the Democratic policy agenda, if not off-stage altogether (Walters 1988, Frymer 1999).

Implications for Black Electoral Politics

What are the consequences of this diversity in black partisanship? By some obvious indicators there are almost none. Despite some reservations about the Democratic Party and some movement toward Independence, blacks remain fairly steadfast supporters of Democratic candidates in national partisan contests. In the last thirty years, data from the NES indicate that when blacks voted, they supported Democratic candidates 90 percent of the time at the Presidential level, 86 percent of the time in the Senate, and 90 percent of the time in Congressional elections. At least in some circumstances, divisions in public opinion and diversity partisanship do not flow neatly into voting patterns.¹⁰⁰

But there are strong reasons to suspect that this data is masking important underlying differences of opinion with the African American community. As Frymer (1999), Walters (1988), and others have argued, black voters may effectively be captured at the national level where there are few attractive alternatives to the Democratic Party. Unity in these contests may

¹⁰⁰ At the same time, party identification did make some difference, even in these contests. One quarter of all black Independents voted Republican in these contests and almost one half of all black Republicans (60 percent among strong Republican identifiers) supported Republican candidates. By contrast, well under 10 percent of black Democrats supported Republican candidates.

be less the result of ongoing agreement over where the country should go and more the result of a lack of viable alternatives for African Americans voters.

To begin to test this proposition, we looked at black voting in different contests where the options available to black voters were more varied than in national partisan contests.

Specifically, we collected data on the black vote in a range of big city mayoral elections and in a comprehensive set of direct democracy elections in California. For the mayoral vote, we collected data on the vote by race/ethnicity for any contested primary or general election that occurred in the nation's twenty largest cities between 1991 and 2002. The data set includes racial voting patterns in 45 elections.¹⁰¹ We assess the black vote in direct democracy by examining black preferences on every California statewide proposition that was included in any of the 17 Los Angeles Times Exit Polls between 1978 and 2000.¹⁰² The direct democracy data set includes 51 different propositions that run the gamut of policy questions with voters deciding issues as diverse as criminal sentencing, health care policy, immigration policy, affirmative action, school vouchers, Indian gaming, campaign finance reform, tax policy, and nuclear power. Neither data set should be viewed as a representative indication of how blacks across the national

¹⁰¹ Estimates of the vote by race came largely from exit polls or pre-election polls (within a week of the contest) but in some cases, we also used ecological inference or homogenous precinct analysis (see Hajnal and Trounstein 2004 for more information). Two factors limit the generalizability of the findings. First, we were only able to obtain estimates of the vote by race for about a half of all elections in these cities. Second, these twenty cities have slightly different racial demographics (fewer whites) than the nation as a whole.

¹⁰² Each survey contains a representative sample of California's voters (average N of 4145 in each poll, for a total of 195,019 proposition votes by respondents in the dataset). There are, on average, 284 African American respondents in each poll. The demographic characteristics of each racial and ethnic group in each poll closely match the demographic characteristics of the total population of each group in the state. Further, the exit poll data are very accurate, correctly reflecting the winning side in 50 of the 51 votes. The actual vote and the estimated vote based on the exit poll data differ by an average of 2.6 percentage points (standard deviation 2.3). The statewide black votes on each proposition also closely match estimates from Voter News Service/CBS Exit Polls as well as to estimates derived from ecological inference analysis of actual precinct level returns. As a final check on the data, we analyzed statewide surveys conducted by the Field Institute between 1970 and 1998. This Field Institute California Poll series asks about voter preferences on a much larger set of propositions (131) but it is limited by a significantly smaller sample size and the fact that it is a pre-election poll rather than an exit poll. Both data sets produce roughly equivalent results (see Hajnal et al 2003 for more information on the data set).

generally vote but both data sets do represent a broad enough set of cases that the division they expose should not be dismissed as anomalies.

As Table 3.4 shows, context matters very much to the unity of the black electorate. In urban elections, where the kinds of options available to black voters on the ballot are often much more diverse than they are in partisan contests for President or Congress, we see less unity in the black vote. Across a range of big city mayoral elections, we found that 26 percent of black voters opposed the candidate favored by the black majority in the typical contest.¹⁰³ That was still somewhat more cohesive than Latinos (30 percent), whites (34 percent), and Asian Americans (44 percent) but it is a far cry from the near unanimity we see in the black vote in presidential (10 percent) and Congressional elections (14 percent).

Even in these national contests there are hints that African Americans do not like the choices they are given and would want to consider other options. In the 1996 NBES twenty percent of black non-voters indicated they had no preference among the presidential candidates. Among black Independent non-voters the figure rose to 41 percent. And among those who voted, there seemed to be a distaste for all of the non-Democratic candidates. After Bill Clinton, the next most popular response was ‘other candidate’ or refuse to indicate one’s vote (9 percent vs only 2 percent for Bob Dole and 1 percent for Ross Perot). This option was especially popular among Independents – 23 percent of whom did not indicate whom they voted for. These answers, although limited to a single survey and a single election, seem to indicate that many of

¹⁰³ Black voters, as one might expect, tend to be most divided in contests with more than one black candidate. For example, Detroit’s 2001 mayoral contest which pitted Kwame Kilpatrick against Gill Hill split the black vote 55% to 45%. But the black vote can be split in a range of circumstances. Two white candidates can lead to division among the black community as was the case in San Francisco in 1991 when Art Agnos garnered 62 percent of the black vote in his contest against Frank Jordan. Even a bi-racial contest between a black candidate and a white candidate can, on rare occasions, divide the black vote. Al Sharpton, for example, is estimated to have received only 60 percent of the black vote in the 1997 Democratic primary in New York City. The rest of the black vote was split between Ruth Messinger (28%) and Sal Albanese (12%).

the available partisan candidates are not particularly appealing for a large subset of the black population.

Table 3.4 Division in the Black Vote				
	Presidency	Congress	Mayoralty	Direct Democracy
Blacks Opposing the Black Majority	10%	14%	26%	38%

When candidates are taken out of the equation altogether and African Americans vote directly on policy, there are signs of even more diverse preferences amongst black voters. Analysis of two decades of voting in direct democracy in California indicates that across all propositions, on average, 38 percent of black voters opposed the majority black position. Even on the topics that African Americans indicated were most important to them, fully 37 percent of black voters voted against the black majority. And on propositions that fell neatly along a liberal-conservative dimension, just over 40 percent of African American voters wound up on the conservative side of the vote (Hajnal n.d). Clearly, there are a range of divergent preferences within the black community that under certain circumstances are expressed in the ballot box.

Data from mayoral elections and other contexts also indicate that large numbers of African Americans are willing to go so far as to abandon the Democratic Party if the exit options are attractive enough. When we limited our analysis of mayoral elections to partisan general elections, we found that black unity remained well below what we see in Presidential or Congressional elections. In these mayoral elections, fully 31 percent of black voters opposed the Democratic Party nominee. In one important but hardly noticed case (that was not in our data set) defections were even higher. Specifically, in New York City's most recent mayoral contest, roughly half of the black electorate abandoned the Democratic Party and voted for the

Republican incumbent, Michael Bloomberg (Roberts 2005). Bloomberg's success with black voters was in no small part driven by his moderate policy positions and his status as the incumbent in a city with a robust economy.¹⁰⁴ But that by no means refutes the fact that black partisan ties can be broken. Rather, Bloomberg's success in attracting African American voters seems to suggest that where the Republican Party puts forward moderate candidates, more black voters will defect.

Furthermore, Democratic defections in the black vote are not limited to mayoral contests. The recent California recall elections also seem to indicate that when the Democrat candidate is not particularly attractive and the Republican Party offers reasonable alternatives, many blacks will defect. In that contest, 21 percent of black voters voted to recall the incumbent Democratic governor, Gray Davis, and in the subsequent election 33 percent opposed the Democratic nominee, Cruz Bustamante.¹⁰⁵ Outside of national contests, defections from the Democratic Party are hardly rare.

African Americans appear to be even more prone to abandon the Democratic Party if they are offered an independent black option. Across our three surveys, 38 percent of African Americans said they would support a black political party. Among non-voters, a group likely disillusioned by the choices being offered by the Democratic and Republican Parties, fully 48 percent indicated that they felt their interests could best be served through a black party. And it is not just what African Americans say. It is also what they do. In the few cases where African

¹⁰⁴ Although Bloomberg's black support was quite high, 2005 was not the only election in New York in which many black voters defected from the Democratic Party. In the two previous elections, large segments of the black community also abandoned the Party. In 2001 the Republican candidate won 25 percent of the black vote and in 1997 the figure was 20 percent (Roberts 2005).

¹⁰⁵ Some 26 percent of black voters favored the two Republican candidates. Arnold Schwarzenegger captured 18 percent of the black vote, and the radically conservative candidate Tom McClintock won 8 percent of the black vote. Figures are from the November 2003 Los Angeles Times Exit Poll.

American voters have been given the option of supporting a viable candidate from a black party, black voters have demonstrated a willingness to abandon the Democratic Party in large numbers. Chicago presents perhaps the starkest example of this phenomenon. In the last three partisan contests for Mayor in Chicago, an average of 85 percent of African Americans voters opposed the Democratic nominee in the general election and instead supported a third-party alternative from the Harold Washington Party or an Independent closely aligned with the black community (Lewis et al 1997). When African Americans are offered more diverse and more interesting options in the voting booth, the black community often becomes markedly less united.

It is also apparent that black Independents make up a significant part of this story. Although much of data on the black vote is not broken down along party lines, when we are able to assess the black vote by party, we find that Independents are significantly more apt than Democratic identifiers to oppose the Democratic Party. Data from the NES indicate that some 15 percent of black Independents voted against the Democratic Party in Presidential elections. A further 16 percent did so in Congressional elections. Data from Voter News Service Exit Polls between 1994 and 2002 reveal even higher levels of Democratic Party opposition in other types of electoral contests. According to these exit polls, 36 percent of black Independents abandoned the Democratic Party in gubernatorial elections. In Senate contests the figure was 37 percent. Results from the recent California recall also indicate defections were high among black Independents. According to the Los Angeles Times Exit Poll, 41 percent of all black Independents voted to oust the Democratic incumbent and a further 56 percent opposed Bustamante, the Democratic candidate, in the subsequent election. The same pattern is evident in the few partisan mayoral general elections for which we have voting preferences by race and partisanship. For example, in the New York City general election in 2001, 44 percent of black

Independents (compared to 33 percent of black Democrats) opposed Mark Green, the Democratic nominee.¹⁰⁶

None of this is to say that blacks as a community are sharply divided or even more divided than other groups. The black community remains as cohesive or more cohesive in the electoral arena than almost any other demographic group in society. Even in direct democracy where blacks showed more signs of division, they are still as cohesive as any other racial group or demographic classification (Hajnal and Louch 2001).¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, it seems that continued support for Democratic candidates is less a sign of continued black unity and is instead more a sign that those who would prefer a different kind of candidate are generally not offered one. When given a viable alternative to the Democratic Party, blacks will abandon the party in large numbers. This is something that both the Democratic Party and potential competitors will have to seriously consider.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Unfortunately, it is difficult to discern how much of the Independent opposition to the Democratic Party comes from black Independents who lean toward the Democratic Party. Given that Democratic leaners make up well over half of the black Independent population, the pattern that we see for black Independents as a whole is likely to reflect in part the voting patterns among Democratic leaners. Moreover, self-reported voting patterns across national elections tend to suggest that Democratic leaners do defect more regularly than other Democrats. Only 57 percent of black Democratic leaners in the NES indicated that they always vote for the same party. That was well below the 75 percent figure reported for weak black Democrats. This does, however, contrast with the two types of the elections for which we have data. According to the NES, Democratic leaners are very loyal to the Democratic Party. The defection rate among black Democratic leaners is only 8 percent in Congressional elections and 3 percent in Presidential elections. Since none of the voting data at either the city or state level break down Independents into pure Independents and partisan leaners, it is impossible to know how this pattern differs across different contexts.

¹⁰⁷ Hajnal (n.d.) found that on average 37 percent of Latinos, 40 percent of whites, and 40 percent of Asian Americans voted against their group's majority position.

¹⁰⁸ Both political parties should also seriously consider the history of African American third party support. Although the black community has generally been reluctant to 'waste' its vote on a candidate or party that has little chance of winning, many blacks have been willing to turn to third parties when both major parties have clearly ignored their interests. For example, in the mid 19th Century, many blacks championed the anti-slavery Liberty Party and its successor The Free Soil Party (Gurin et al 1989). In the 1890s over a million blacks joined the Colored Farmer Alliance. Later, during the Great Depression, the Communist Party won considerable support from the black community for its opposition to lynching and its advocacy efforts on behalf of the poor (Naison 1983). At the state level, blacks have also formed their own parties when denied access to the major parties. In the 1960s, blacks in Mississippi and Alabama abandoned the Democratic Party in large numbers to support their own third party alternatives - the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and the National Democratic Party of Alabama.

Summary and Discussion

What do our findings imply for our understanding of black politics and partisan identification? First, to restate our basic conclusion, black partisan choices often do not fit neatly into the ideological driven Downsian model or the socialization story found in the Michigan school. There is some evidence that conventional non-racial factors like class and conservatism do work to divide the black community. But the effects for both of these conventional factors are inconsistent and often weak. In particular, our results indicate that the relationship between liberal-conservative ideology and black party identification is anything but linear. In short, conventional, non-racial politics matters but it is far from the driving force behind black politics.

Instead, our analysis indicates that race remains the central factor in black partisan decision making. How African Americans view American society and the degree to which America they think their own well being is tied to the fate of the larger black community underlay much of black partisan politics. But as we have shown, the connection between group interests and the Democratic Party is not at all automatic. In fact, racial identity can and does cut both ways. Racial identity can lead to linked fate and support for the Democratic Party but it also seems to lead to support for black separatism and distance from both the Democratic and Republican Parties. This latter dimension – autonomy vs integration – is one that previous accounts of black partisanship have largely ignored.

This all leads to a second conclusion. African Americans may differ from other groups not only in terms of which factors determine partisan identification but also in the structure of the choice. For many whites, a unitary decision about where to place oneself on a linear scale ranging from liberal on the left to conservative on the right may still be appropriate. But for

African Americans a multi-dimensional, unordered model more accurately depicts their partisan choices. Unless we model black partisan choices in this more complex manner, we reach a series of inaccurate conclusions and we may miss important insights.

The implications of all of this for the future of black politics are not at all clear. On one hand, there is little sign that black group consciousness is waning. In fact, in our 1996 survey, some 73 percent of African Americans indicated that they felt a sense of linked fate, a substantial increase from the 62 percent who felt similarly in 1984. Black unity in the political arena is certainly not waning because large numbers of African Americans believe that race is no longer relevant. Moreover, economic heterogeneity does not appear to be driving blacks apart in any major or consistent way. At the same time, there are other signs that blacks are divided and that they could become more divided politically in the future. Declining liberalism among the black population may be beginning to push African Americans apart politically. And younger blacks are less happy with the Democratic Party and more supportive of black separatism. In short, there are reasons to expect that we will see ongoing unity and other reasons to expect greater division in the future.

Ultimately, how these factors combine to play out is likely to be dependent on the actions of the Democratic and Republican parties. How each party is perceived to serve group interests is a critical intervening variable in black partisan decision making. If individual blacks believe the Republican Party works hard for black interests, they will support the Republican Party. The critical question is thus not whether the black class structure will continue to change or whether blacks will continue to become more conservative in their views. The critical question is how well either party can make a claim that their agenda serves black interests. The Republican Party, to this date, has not been particularly successful at making this claim, but there are already

signs that it is winning some hearts and minds and there is at least the potential that it will win even more hearts and minds in the future. The Democratic Party has been very successful at making this claim in the past but by seeking to put racial issues near the periphery of Democratic Party politics it appears to be losing ground. This is something that both parties need to seriously consider if they want to attract more black votes.

Table 3.2. Determinants of Black Partisan Choice (Ordered Probit)

	<i>Model One</i>	<i>Model Two</i>	<i>Model Three</i>
IDEOLOGY			
Extreme liberal	-.425 (.065)**	-.410 (.069)**	-.354 (.071)**
Moderate liberal	-.144 (.073)*	-.147 (.078)^	-.121 (.079)
Moderate conservative	-.069 (.079)	-.085 (.084)	-.072 (.086)
Extreme conservative	0.006 (.070)	0.028 (.075)	0.022 (.077)
CLASS			
Income	0.004 (.011)	0.015 (.011)	0.026 (.012)*
Education	-.012 (.016)	-.010 (.017)	-.012 (.017)
Home ownership	-.056 (.050)	-.092 (.053)^	-.104 (.055)^
Unemployed	0.414 (.090)**	0.457 (.096)**	0.462 (.098)**
BLACK GROUP INTERESTS			
Black linked fate	-.059 (.021)**	-.046 (.022)*	-.038 (.023)^
Community control	---	-.079 (.031)**	-.066 (.032)*
Racial separatism	---	0.050 (.051)	0.036 (.052)
Democrats work for blacks	---	---	-.294 (.032)**
Republicans work for blacks	---	---	0.246 (.031)**
BACKGROUND CONTROLS			
Age	-.016 (.002)**	-.016 (.002)**	-.015 (.002)**
Male	0.221 (.048)**	0.208 (.051)**	0.164 (.053)**
Black Interviewer	0.002 (.050)	0.026 (.054)	0.061 (.056)
Year 1993	0.115 (.063)^	0.112 (.070)^	0.073 (.072)^
Year 1996	0.059 (.061)	0.064 (.066)	0.057 (.068)
Cut 1	-.783 (.117)	-.821 (.147)	-1.09 (.187)
Cut 2	-.183 (.117)	-.222 (.147)	-.461 (.186)
Cut 3	0.398 (.118)	0.343 (.147)	0.146 (.186)
Cut 4	0.725 (.119)	0.676 (.148)	0.472 (.187)
Cut 5	1.088 (.122)	1.051 (.151)	0.839 (.190)
Cut 6	1.410 (.128)	1.357 (.156)	1.116 (.195)
Pseudo R squared	0.032	0.034	0.055
Chi-squared	217.19**	204.44**	314.70**
LR-test chi-squared	---	738.03**	364.36**
N	2427	2159	2086

**p<.01 * p<.05 ^ p<.10. Data are from the 1984-1988 National Black Election Study, 1993 National Black Politics Study, and the 1996 National Black Election Study. Party identification is measured as seven categories from a minimum value for strong Democrats to a maximum value for strong Republicans. The statistical model is estimated using Intercooled Stata v8.1.

Table 3.3. Determinants of Black Party Choice (Multinomial Logit)

	<i>Pr(Ind) vs. Pr(Dem)</i>		<i>Pr(Rep) vs. Pr(Dem)</i>		<i>Pr(Rep) vs. Pr(Ind)</i>	
	<i>MNL</i>	<i>RRR</i>	<i>MNL</i>	<i>RRR</i>	<i>MNL</i>	<i>RRR</i>
Extreme liberal	-.519 (.153)	0.60**	0.116 (.357)	1.12	0.634 (.370)	1.89^
Moderate liberal	-.519 (.176)	0.60**	-.032 (.450)	0.97	0.487 (.465)	1.63
Moderate conservative	-.405 (.186)	0.67*	0.257 (.409)	1.29	0.661 (.426)	1.94
Extreme conservative	0.025 (.161)	1.02	0.982 (.320)	2.67**	0.958 (.331)	2.61**
Income	0.017 (.025)	1.02	0.092 (.058)	1.10	0.076 (.060)	1.08
Education	0.039 (.036)	1.04	-.131 (.094)	0.88	-.170 (.097)	0.84^
Home ownership	-.162 (.116)	0.85	0.285 (.263)	1.33	0.447 (.272)	1.56^
Unemployed	0.417 (.211)	1.52*	1.622 (.332)	5.06**	1.205 (.347)	3.34**
Black linked fate	-.001 (.049)	1.00	-.207 (.103)	0.81*	-.208 (.107)	0.81^
Community control	-.010 (.068)	0.99	-.454 (.154)	0.65**	-.443 (.159)	0.64**
Racial separatism	-.002 (.098)	1.00	0.550 (.225)	1.73*	0.552 (.233)	1.74*
Democrats work for blacks	-.502 (.069)	0.61**	-.558 (.150)	0.57**	-.055 (.153)	0.95
Republicans work for blacks	0.349 (.066)	1.42**	0.925 (.133)	2.52**	0.576 (.137)	1.78**
Age	-.026 (.004)	0.97**	-.017 (.009)	0.98*	0.009 (.009)	1.01
Male	0.490 (.110)	1.63**	0.174 (.257)	1.19	-.316 (.263)	0.73
Constant	0.516 (.389)		-2.26 (.866)		-2.78 (.893)	
Pseudo R squared	.099					
Chi-squared (df=24)	297.98**					
N	2147					

**p<.01 * p<.05 ^ p<.10. Data are from the 1984-1988 National Black Election Study, 1993 National Black Politics Study, and the 1996 National Black Election Study. Party identification is measured as three categories: Democrats, Independents (including partisan leaners), and Republicans. The statistical model is estimated using Intercooled Stata v8.1.

APPENDIX

QUESTION WORDING AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

(FIGURES ARE MEANS WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS IN PARANTHESES)

PARTY IDENTIFICATION Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as Republican, Democrat, an Independent, or what? [If Republican or Democrat] Would you call yourself a strong (Republican/Democrat) or not a very strong (Republican/Democrat)? [If Independent] Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party? 7 point scale (1-Strong Dem, 2-Weak Dem, 3-Ind Dem Leaner, 4-Ind, 5-Ind Rep Leaner, 6-Weak Rep, 7-Strong Rep) 2.1 (1.4)

PARTY IDENTIFICATION 3 POINT SCALE [1-Dem, 2-Ind, 3-Rep] 1.3 (0.55)

PARTY IDENTIFICATION 3 POINT SCALE WITH LEANERS AS PARTISANS [1-Dem, 2-Pure Independents, 3-Rep] 1.3 (.65)

LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE IDEOLOGY In general, when it comes to politics, do you usually think of yourself as a liberal, a conservative, a moderate, or what? Do you think of yourself as a strong liberal/conservative or a not very strong liberal/conservative? Strong liberal .19 (.39) Weak Liberal .11 (.32) Weak Conservative .10 (.30) Strong Conservative .14 (.34)

INCOME Family income coded (10 highest, 0 lowest) 4.5 (2.6)

EDUCATION Highest grade of school or of college completed – coded grade school, some high school, high school degree, some college, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, some graduate school, master's degree, doctorate 3.8 (1.7)

UNEMPLOYED .07 (.26)

HOME OWNER .54 (.50)

BLACK LINKED FATE Do you think what happens generally to black people in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life? Will it affect you a lot, some, or not very much? 2.8 (1.1)

BLACK COMMUNITY CONTROL A) Black people should shop in Black owned stores whenever possible B) Black s should have control over the government in mostly black communities C) Blacks should rely on themselves and not on others Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree? 2.8 (.86) Alpha .65

RACIAL SEPARATISM A) Blacks should always vote for Black candidates when they run. B) blacks should form their own political party C) Black people should have a separate nation D) Black people form a nation within a nation Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree? 1.2 (.71) Alpha .54

REPUBLICANS WORK/DEMOCRATS WORK How hard do you think the Republican (Democratic) Party really works on issues black people care about? Do you think they work very hard, fairly hard, not too hard, or not hard at all? Democrats 2.9 (.84) Republicans 1.8 (.89)

AGE Age in years 41.0 (16.3)

MALE Male=1, Female=0 .36 (.48)

RACE OF INTERVIEWER 1=black, 0=other .53 (.50)

YEAR 1993 .33 (.47)

YEAR 1996 .34 (.47)

Table 3.A.1. Determinants of Black Party Choice – Independent Leaners Coded as Partisans (Multinomial Logit)

	<i>Pr(Ind) vs. Pr(Dem)</i>	<i>Pr(Rep) vs. Pr(Dem)</i>	<i>Pr(Rep) vs. Pr(Ind)</i>
	<i>MNL</i>	<i>MNL</i>	<i>MNL</i>
Extreme liberal	-.908 (.338)**	-.120 (.228)	0.788 (.392)*
Moderate liberal	-.689 (.354)^	-.489 (.298)	0.199 (.447)
Moderate conservative	-.330 (.343)	0.312 (.244)	0.642 (.400)
Extreme conservative	-.441 (.341)	0.676 (.205)**	1.117 (.377)**
Income	0.065 (.068)	-.089 (.057)	-.032 (.056)
Education	-.013 (.047)	0.033 (.035)	-.071 (.085)
Home ownership	-.014 (.221)	-.089 (.164)	-.075 (.262)
Unemployed	0.703 (.345)*	.710 (.249)**	.006 (.392)
Black linked fate	0.008 (.093)	-.121 (.067)^	-.129 (.109)
Community control	0.039 (.131)	-.263 (.097)**	-.302 (.156)*
Racial separatism	0.036 (.184)	0.310 (.141)*	0.274 (.221)
Democrats work for blacks	-.791 (.127)**	-.518 (.096)**	0.272 (.149)^
Republicans work for blacks	0.381 (.126)**	0.645 (.087)**	0.263 (.144)^
Age	-.013 (.008)^	-.021 (.005)**	-.007 (.009)
Male	0.195 (.211)	0.136 (.160)	-.058 (.2523)
Constant	-1.18 (.722)	-.552 (.543)	0.636 (.852)
Pseudo R squared		.101	
Chi-squared (df=24)		222.79**	
N		2165	

**p<.01 * p<.05 ^ p<.10. Data are from the 1984-1988 National Black Election Study, 1993 National Black Politics Study, and the 1996 National Black Election Study. Party identification is measured as three categories: Democrats, Independents (including partisan leaners), and Republicans. The statistical model is estimated using Intercooled Stata v8.1.

Chapter Five

Ambivalence, Extremism, and White Independents

In the preceding chapters we have shown that conventional accounts of party identification cannot fully explain the partisan choices of racial and ethnic minorities. In this chapter, we focus on the more difficult case of white Americans. Given that conventional accounts have largely been developed to explain white partisan identification, we might expect whites to conform especially well to these traditional models. If any group fits, it should be whites. But, in this chapter, we question whether or not all or even most white partisan decisions really do conform to these traditional accounts. We contend, instead, that we can learn something about how whites choose parties by applying the lessons we have learned from studying the political decisions of racial and ethnic minorities.

In this chapter, we attempt to show that, as with other groups, the two major parties do not represent the views of all whites. Many white Americans do not fit neatly along a single liberal-conservative partisan divide and this has important consequences for their partisan choices. Specifically, we posit two alternate avenues to Independence: 1) ambivalence and 2) extremism. First, Independence is likely to be a logical alternative for individuals who hold strong but conflicting views that put them on both sides of the liberal conservative partisan divide. Second, Independence is likely to be an appealing option for those who hold extremely liberal or extremely conservative views that distance them from the ‘middle-of-the-road’ policy agendas of both parties. In both cases, individuals who hold far from moderate views end up as Independent by default.

The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows. We begin by proposing an alternate model of white partisan choice that incorporates these two new dimensions of choice. We test this account using data from the General Social Survey and the American National Election Studies. We then focus on the implications of Independence for white voting behavior. We close with a

discussion of the implications of this multi-dimensional model for our understanding of partisan choice and the balance of power between the Democratic and Republican Parties.

Why Whites Might Not Fit

Although existing accounts have largely been designed to explain white partisan decision making, there are reasons to suspect that even among the white population, there will be a range of partisan ‘misfits’ that cannot easily place themselves along the linear partisan scale. As we have already noted, we see a fairly sharp disjuncture between a partisan duopoly and a national population that is ideologically diverse.

America’s partisan duopoly provides the public with only two options. Moreover, there is a strong incentive for both parties to cluster together around the middle of the liberal-conservative ideological spectrum close to the median voter (Downs 1957, Duncan 1948, 1958, Hotelling’s 1929). The divide between parties has grown in recent years but compared to other countries, the two parties continue to be relatively similar and relatively centrist (Hetherington 2001, Layman 2002, Castles and Mair 1984). These two observations about American politics raise questions about the ability of the party system to effectively incorporate the interests of many citizens. Unless individual Americans hold consistently moderate liberal views or consistently moderate conservative views, they are unlikely to have a party that mirrors their views. With a population as large and heterogeneous as white America, it is very likely that at least some segments of the community will hold views that are not well represented by the available partisan options.

Alternate Dimensions of Independence

From these two basic facts about the American political system, we derive expectations about alternate routes to political Independence. We present what we hope is a deeper account of Independence that focuses on the ideological underpinnings of Independence. Specifically, we suggest that there are two routes outside of ideological moderation that lead to Independence among white Americans: 1) extremism, and 2) ambivalence.¹⁰⁹

First, we contend that Independence is likely to be an attractive choice for individuals who hold a range of strong but conflicting views. Certainly some Americans do hold views that are consistently liberal or consistently conservative across the range of issues debated in American politics (Achen 1975). But others do not. Existing studies, in fact, suggest that few Americans hold consistent ideological positions that allow them to be neatly placed at one point on a liberal-conservative continuum (Converse 1964, Campbell et al. 1960). Some of those who hold ‘inconsistent’ views do so because they are confused about the meaning of the questions, haven’t thought about the issue, or are simply guessing to provide survey researchers with answers to their questions (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, Zaller 1992). Others with mixed views are, however, likely to hold principled and logical positions that, at different times, put them on different ends of the liberal-conservative spectrum (Layman 2001, Layman and Carsey 2002, Lavine 2001, Alvarez and Brehm 1995). Indeed, it may be perfectly rational to hold conservative views on some policy questions and liberal views on others.

We suspect that these kinds of divergent preferences have two sources. First, a clash of views could come from reasoned ideological differentiation across issues. For

¹⁰⁹ Our work builds on the insights of Dennis (1988) and Rosenstone et al (1984) who claim that Americans choose Independence when they dislike or are indifferent to the major American parties. Unfortunately, neither study attempts to explain the sources of indifference and distaste for the parties. We suspect that ambivalence (mixed views) and extremism (strong views) may underlay indifference and dislike toward the parties.

example, one can logically feel that conservative fiscal policies are the best avenue to economic growth while simultaneously believing that more liberal stances on moral or religious questions are the best way to maximize human well-being. In addition, divergent views could also emerge as a result of a clash of identities. For example, one's primary political orientation as a liberal may clash with one's primary social group identity as white. In this case, generally liberal views would conflict with resentment and conservatism on racial policy.

In either case, these mixed views raise difficult choices when it comes to identifying with a party. Since the Democratic Party consistently places itself somewhat to the left on the range of issues being debated in American politics and the Republican Party places itself somewhat to the right on the same issues, there is no obvious choice for individuals with mixed views. For individuals who hold strongly liberal views on some issues and strongly conservative views on others, there are strong ideological reasons for supporting both parties and equally strong reasons for opposing each party. The ambivalence that results is likely to push this group of Americans toward Independence.¹¹⁰ This leads to our first hypothesis related to white partisan choices:

Hypothesis 1: Individuals who hold a mix of liberal and conservative views should be more likely to identify as Independents.

Second, we argue that individuals can identify as Independents because they fall at one ideological extreme. Americans who have deep seated concerns about a particular issue and who hold views that are strongly liberal or strongly

¹¹⁰ We are by no means the first to identify ambivalence as an important force in American politics. Kaplan (1972) was one of the first to note that responses at the midpoint of a scale might indicate ambivalence (simultaneously holding positive and negative feelings) rather than simply holding 'middle of the road' views. More recent work by Feldman and Zaller (1992) and Alvarez and Brehm (1995) and others suggests that ambivalence "is a prevalent characteristic of the public political opinions, and that ambivalence has nontrivial implications for political judgement and choice" (Lavine 2001:915). These studies have not, however, tried to understand the role of ambivalence for party identification.

conservative on that issue are unlikely to fit all that well into a two party system where both parties maintain fairly centrist policy agendas (Castles and Mair 1984, Downs 1957). For these ‘issue publics’ either on the extreme left or on the extreme right, there may be little to draw them to either party. The divide between their views and the ‘middle of the road’ approach taken by both parties is likely to be fairly sharp and they may feel that neither party serves their interests particularly well. Even if one party is marginally closer on their issue, that marginal difference may not be enough to convince such an extremist to compromise and support the closer party. Rather than support a party whose agenda conflicts in many ways with their own, these individuals may opt to remain independent.¹¹¹

Hypothesis 2: Individuals who hold extremely liberal or extremely conservative views should be more likely to identify as Independents.

For both groups, Independence is then not the result of ideological moderation but is instead the consequence of strong views that do not match well with either of the two mainstream parties. If true, these two accounts of independence imply that a linear scale of party identification with Independents in the middle is inappropriate. To really understand partisanship and Independence we need to model partisan choice in a more complex unordered fashion that takes into account several dimensions of choice.

Assessing Ambivalence and Extremism in American Politics

Although interesting and perhaps even logical, our account, to this point, is largely devoid of any mention of substantive issues or concrete, real world policies. It might make

¹¹¹ Downs (1957) hints at a similar phenomenon. In his defining work on partisan competition in democracy, he briefly argues that individuals with extreme views might choose to abstain or support a third party in the hope of encouraging an electorally viable party to move closer to their extreme positions in future elections.

sense that Americans with mixed views and Americans with extreme views would opt for Independence but it might also be that there are few Americans with these kinds of views or at least few white Americans who hold these kinds of views on issues that they not only care about but that are also relevant to partisan politics. In order to test these two alternate routes to Independence, we need to move from theory to empirical reality. Specifically, we have to find a set of plausibly important issues on which white Americans hold either mixed or extreme views.

Mixed Views and Partisan Ambivalence

We begin by searching for issue arenas where mixed views might regularly lead to partisan ambivalence. Logically, for a mix of liberal and conservative views to matter enough to deter white Americans from supporting either major party, two conditions must be met. First, the issues on which the mixed views are held have to be core elements of the main liberal-conservative divide that separates the two parties. If the two parties do not hold different positions on any given issue, then any mix of preferences may not factor into partisan choice. Second, the particular mix of liberal and conservative views has to be commonly held. If few people hold that particular mix of views, then it cannot be a central factor in white partisan choice.

We suspect that only three sets of issue areas are central enough to the partisan divide to pass the first test. Economic policy, racial policy, and social morality all help to define core elements of the partisan divide. There is ample evidence that each of these three dimensions regularly influences individual political choices in American politics (Carmines and Stimson 1989, Petrocik 1987, Abramowitz 1995, Alvarez and Nagler 1998,

Franklin and Jackson 1983).¹¹² Because these issues define the parties and help many Americans to distinguish between the two major parties, holding liberal views on one dimension and conservative views on another is likely to lead to considerable mental conflict for individual Americans trying to choose a partisan option. Liberal views on one of these issues will push them clearly toward the Democratic Party but conservative views on a second issue will push them just as clearly toward the Republican Party. With strong reasons for supporting both parties and strong reasons for opposing both parties, ambivalence and Independence may result.

Mixed views on these three issues should, however, matter only to the extent that they are held by large numbers of individual Americans. Unless large segments of the public simultaneously hold liberal and conservative views on some combination of these three issues, then we can safely ignore mixed views as a major factor in partisanship. Of all of the possible combinations of views on the three issues, accounts of American politics often highlight two. Studies of recent presidential campaigns and accounts based on public opinion surveys regularly focus on a group of white Americans that is both racially conservative and generally liberal. Sometimes referred to as Reagan Democrats, this group is comprised of individuals who profess to be liberal and who support many elements of a liberal agenda but who at the same time identify strongly as white and resent recent

¹¹² The dividing line between the Democratic and Republican Parties has traditionally been defined along economic or social policy (Franklin and Jackson 1983). How active the government should be in managing the economy and how generous the government should be in redistributing resources to the less advantaged have often been the major questions dividing the policy agendas of the two major parties. But this is clearly not the only dimension to the current liberal-conservative policy divide. Since at least the 1960s, race has provided a second or even primary issue dimension with racially liberal whites supporting the Democratic Party and racially conservative whites favoring the Republican Party (Carmines and Stimson 1989, Edsall and Edsall 1991, Huckfeldt and Kohfeldt 1989, Greenberg 1990). Finally, the two parties have also begun to divide more clearly and more sharply on issues related to social morality. With the Republicans increasingly highlighting their party's positions on issues like homosexuality and abortion, morality has become more central to partisan decisions (Abramowitz 1995 Nussbaum and Gelbart 2004).

changes to the racial status quo that have diminished white status relative to black America (Greenberg 1990, Edsall and Edsall 1991). Another group who gets some attention come election time is fiscal liberals who are conservative on religious or moral questions (Brady 2003). Although not as well publicized as the Reagan Democrats, recent accounts suggest that this group, sometimes referred to as ‘main street’ Republicans has been important in Democratic failures in recent presidential contests (Nussbaum and Gelbart 2004).¹¹³

A cursory examination of the NES and GSS confirms that substantial numbers of white Americans do hold these two particular sets of views. Depending on how we define each group, we find that somewhere between 6 and 13 percent of the public are liberals who are racially conservative¹¹⁴ and about 14 percent can be considered fiscal liberals who are morally conservative.¹¹⁵ In short, non-trivial segments of the American population individually hold views that conflict with each other on these dimensions

Hypotheses 1.1 and 1.2: Liberals who are racially conservative and fiscal liberals who are religious conservatives should be more likely to identify as Independents.

¹¹³ Brady (2003) distinguishes between main street Republicans (who are conservative on religious or cultural issues and fiscally liberal) and Wall Street Republicans (who are liberal on religious or cultural issues and fiscally conservative). It is not yet clear, however, if either of these groups stands firmly behind the Republican Party.

¹¹⁴ The range occurs because we are forced to use slightly different questions and codings to define ambivalents in the GSS and the ANES. For the ANES, this is respondents who place themselves to the left of center on the basic ideology scale and to the right of center on a seven point scale asking whether or not “government should make any special effort to help blacks.” For the GSS, this is respondents who place themselves to the left of center on the basic ideology scale and who those who were against more government spending to “improve the conditions of blacks.” Full coding details and question wording is included in the appendix.

¹¹⁵ For the ANES, this is respondents who place themselves to the left of center on a seven point question asking about the tradeoff between increasing government services and reducing government spending and who take the two more conservative views on a four point scale that asks under what conditions abortion should be legally allowed. Full coding details and question wording is included in the appendix. This measure is not available across most years of the GSS.

Extreme Views and Partisan Choice

Extreme views are also unlikely to have much of an impact and lead to Independence unless two conditions are met. In order for white Americans to reject both parties in favor of Independence, they must feel that a particular issue is critically important and they must believe that neither party has engaged or co-opted the issue. If the issue is not that important, then there is little reason to abandon the only two electorally viable partisan options. And if one (or both) of the parties has signaled that they care about the issue and have put it on their agenda then there will be a strong impetus to support that party (or both parties).

To try to identify likely issues, we consider the four major social movements that have emerged on the American scene in the last half century: 1) civil rights, 2) women's rights, 3) environmentalism, and 4) religious fundamentalism.¹¹⁶ For each movement, large subsets of the population care deeply about the issue and much of their political identity centers around the movement. In other words, there are large issue publics for each movement. The key question in each case is whether either political party has engaged the movement and tried to incorporate it into the party's agenda. We believe that for at least two of these social movements, environmentalism and women's rights, individuals who hold extreme views on the subject may not have a clear partisan advocate. An environmentalist, for example, that advocates extensive animal rights will get little comfort from the positions of either the Democratic or Republican Parties. Similarly, feminists who push for more expansive women's rights often fail to get an enthusiastic response from either party. The Democratic and Republican Parties may occasionally talk about both issues but neither

¹¹⁶ Anti-globalization is a fifth emerging social movement that we suspect is beginning to influence partisan identification. We cannot, however, systematically test how strong views on this issue affect partisanship using available surveys.

party stakes out positions that come close to the preferences of issue advocates. To the extent that neither party stakes out a position in line with the views of members of these issue publics, those who feel strongly about these issues should not be drawn to either party. For the most recent social movement, religious fundamentalism, whether or not a party has engaged or co-opted the views of extremists is less clear. The Republican Party has staked out positions that align neatly with much of the Christian right but there are certainly areas where those with sharply conservative religious and moral preferences often feel that the Republican party is unwilling to accede to their demands. Since our expectations are not clear on this latter issue, we include it in our analysis. Finally, in the case of civil rights movement, it is clear that the two parties have engaged the issue. Racial policy is now near the heart of the partisan divide with racial liberalism clearly associated with the Democratic Party and racial conservatism clearly associated with the Republican Party (Carmines and Stimson 1989; others). This leads to the following three hypotheses:

Hypotheses 2.1, 2.2, 2.3: Environmentalists and feminists should be more likely to identify as Independents. Religious conservatives may be more likely to identify as Independents

With these concrete policy issues in mind, we can now proceed to empirically test this alternate model of white partisan choice. As we have done throughout the book, we test our multidimensional model of party identification against more traditional accounts of partisan choice. Specifically, we test the Downsian ideologically based view of party identification by assessing whether those with more moderate views end up in the middle as Independents. To assess childhood socialization and the Independents as the offspring of Independents – both associated with the Michigan School account of party identification – we assess the link between Independence and both parental party identification and political apathy.

Research Design

To test these hypotheses, we begin with the standard tool of American public opinion research - a pooled sample (1948-2000) of the American National Election Study (Miller et al 2000). The principle advantage of the NES over other surveys is the fact that it in most years it incorporates questions that clearly assess conventional models of party choice. The principle disadvantage of the NES is that it only contains basic questions on policy which means that it is difficult to identify respondents with extreme views on each of the three issue publics. Thus, we supplement this primary analysis with data from a pooled sample (1972-2002) of the General Social Survey (GSS).¹¹⁷ The GSS contains a range of questions that gauge more comprehensively the policy positions of Americans on the environment, feminism, and religion. The principal disadvantage of the GSS is that it only asks these policy questions in certain years. As such, a complete model that incorporates all of the key concepts we are concerned with cannot be constructed for any single year of the GSS.

Dependent variable

Our dependent variable of interest is respondent self-identification as an Independent.¹¹⁸ As we noted in Chapter One, there is some debate about exactly who should be characterized as Independent. In this chapter we once again focus primarily on the more inclusive measure - all respondents who identify in the first instance as an Independent (including those who lean to one

¹¹⁷ The GSS is an annual survey of face-to-face interviews with a multi-stage area probability sample of the national adult population. Each survey includes roughly 2000 respondents and the response rate over this period averages close to 75 percent. For more details on the survey, sampling procedures, and survey methodology see Davis, Smith, and Marsden (2003).

¹¹⁸ We are also interested in partisan acquisition and the strength of partisan attachments. In alternate tests, we modeled and attempted to explain partisan strength. As one might expect, most of the factors we highlight in our model of Independence play a similar role in encouraging the move away from Independence toward a stronger and stronger attachment to one of the major parties (analysis not shown).

party).¹¹⁹ However, given doubts about the independence of those who lean to one party, we repeat the analysis including only those who profess no partisan leaning – so called pure Independents - as Independent.¹²⁰

The Independent Variables

We include a range of measures to test standard accounts of partisan identification. As we noted earlier, the underlying dimension of the Downsian model of party identification is ideology (Downs 1957, Key 1966, Kramer 1971, Fiorina 1981, Erikson, Mackuen, and Stimson 2002). From this Downsian perspective, one would expect Independents to be found disproportionately in the middle of a conservative-liberal ideological spectrum. To determine if the Independents-as-ideological-moderates view is accurate, we include the basic seven point scale of political ideology (from liberal to conservative). Recall that there are two empirical claims folded into this account: first, that moderates are the ideological group most likely to identify as an Independent; second, that the remaining categories of party identification have a linear statistical relationship to the remaining categories of political ideology. To test both claims, we specify our models with dummy variables for each category (from strong liberal to strong conservative).

By contrast, the Michigan school views party identification as an enduring attachment that is acquired through a socialization process in one's youth. To assess socialization and the

¹¹⁹ We do so primarily because the political behavior of pure Independents, Independent 'leaners,' and weak partisan identifiers does – under the right circumstances - differ substantially. In particular, as we will show in Chapter X, the willingness of the three groups to support third party candidates differs – especially when a viable third party option emerges. Categorizing Independent leaners as partisan is, therefore, problematic.

¹²⁰ Given questions about those who offer more non-compliant responses like 'no preference' or 'no answer,' we also attempted to single out this group. We suspect that these non-responses indicate a certain amount of ambivalence or uncertainty about partisan choice. However, it is difficult to test this with white respondents since the number of non-responses is so small. Among white Americans, this group comprises less than two percent of the population.

inter-generational transfer of partisan identification, we include a measure that indicates whether two, one, or neither of the respondent's parents 'generally identified' as Independents. Since the Michigan school also tends to view nonpartisanship as sign of political apathy, we also attempt to assess this Independents as 'apolitical' account. Specifically, we include measures of political information, political efficacy, political trust, political interest, and political participation. Political information is measured as a dummy variable indicating that a respondent could correctly name the majority party in the House of Representatives. Political efficacy is a reversed additive scale of agree/disagree responses to the following two statements: a) Public officials don't care much what people like me think and b) People like me don't have any say about what the government does. How regularly respondents felt that they could trust 'the government in Washington' to do the right thing is employed as a measure of political trust. Responses to a question about one's level of interest in "following the political campaigns (so far) this year" are used to measure political interest. Finally, political participation was based on the number of different types of political acts a respondent had undertaken over the course of the last campaign. Possible acts included attending a meeting, working for a party or candidate, contributing money, displaying a political sign, trying to influence others, and contacting a public official.¹²¹

To test our own alternate accounts of political Independence, we include two additional sets of measures. First in the ANES, to gauge the explanatory power of the Independents as extremists hypothesis, we include three measures. To gauge views on women's rights, respondents were asked whether "women should have an equal role with men in running

¹²¹ In the GSS, the only regularly available measure of political apathy is whether or not the respondent reported voting in the last presidential election.

business, industry, and government” or whether “a women’s place is in the home.” Answer ranged along a seven point scale. To assess religious conservatism we employed a question about abortion. Respondents were asked where their views fit along a four point continuum ranging from “abortion should never be permitted” to “a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion.” A basic measure asking respondents the degree to which they would support increased funding for environmental protection is used to assess attitudes on environmentalism.

Since the NES measures are limited in their depth, we repeat the analysis utilizing the greater range of policy measures included in the GSS. In the GSS, to identify advocates of women’s rights, we combine responses from five questions that ask about various aspects of women’s equality. The questions probe respondents about the importance of women staying home to take care of their families, the degree to which women should support their husband’s careers, the role of women in running the country, whether women should work if they already have a husband working, and whether they would support a female presidential candidate. To gauge support for the Christian right’s social program, we created a scale that included questions on abortion, homosexuality, premarital sex and the how fundamental respondents felt their religious values are.¹²² To see if strong environmental views are associated with Independence, we create a scale that includes questions about the use of animals for medical research, how much we should spend to protect the environment, and the relationship between the environment and progress. In each case, we test the robustness of our findings by replacing the scales with dummy variables which isolate those respondents with the most extreme views. These tests generally confirm the results that we present below.

¹²² The reliability of these three scales is reasonable with cronbach’s alpha of .71 for the feminist scale, .59 for the religious conservatism scale, and .53 for the environmentalism scale.

Finally, to see if individuals with strong but divergent views and identities are more likely than others to choose Independence, we focused on the partisan choices of two different groups: 1) racially conservative liberals and 2) religiously conservative fiscal liberals. To isolate those with generally liberal views and racially conservative attitudes in the ANES we combined the general ideological scale (self-placement as liberal-moderate-conservative) and views on a single question asking whether special assistance should be provided to improve the conditions of the black community. Specifically, we isolated all those who placed themselves to the left of center on the seven point ideological scale and who also placed themselves to the right of center on the seven point assistance to blacks scale.¹²³ For the GSS, we combined the same ideological scale and a question asking whether enough was being done to improve the conditions of the black community. Here we singled out all respondents who placed themselves to the left of center on the seven point ideology scale and who also did not agree that we should spend more money to “improve the conditions of blacks.” To identify religious conservative fiscal liberals in the ANES we combined responses to the same abortion question mentioned earlier (asking under what conditions abortion should be legally allowed) with a question that asks where respondents fit on a seven point scale ranging from “government should provide many fewer services: reduce spending a lot” to “government should provide many more services: increase spending a lot.” Here, to identify those with mixed views, we singled out respondents who place themselves to the left of center the government services/reducing government spending question and who also choose one of the two more conservative options on the four point abortion scale.¹²⁴

¹²³ Six percent of white respondents fit these criteria.

¹²⁴ Since similar measures are not available across most years of the GSS, we cannot test this particular mix of views using the GSS.

The exact question wording, coding, and cut-offs for all of these measures as well as basic descriptive statistics are included in the appendix.

Independents in the middle?

We begin to test the assumptions underlying conventional accounts of Independence and partisanship by looking at the relationship between liberal-conservative political ideology and partisanship. If basic assumptions about the linearity and ideology of partisanship hold, these two measures should move in unison. And given that we are looking only at whites, the relationship should be especially tight.

Figure 5.1, which shows the breakdown of partisanship among different ideological groups, leads to several provisional conclusions about the link between ideology and partisanship. First, the figure provides support for the conventional notion that partisanship is based at least in part upon a linear liberal-conservative ideological dimension. As the figure shows, those who identify as liberals are also much more apt than other ideological groups to identify as Democrats. Over half of all self-avowed liberals (56 percent) end up as Democrats. By contrast, only 17 percent of conservatives choose to identify as Democrats. Similarly, looking at Republicans we see that those who identify themselves as conservative are more apt to be Republican than those with different ideological leanings. Roughly half (49 percent) of those who call themselves conservative choose to be Republican versus only 7 percent of liberals. Partisanship is obviously under-girded by liberal-conservative ideology. **[Figure Two Here]**

However, it is also clear from Figure 5.1 that the relationship between ideology and partisanship is far from perfect. The correlation between the two measures is only .31 – fairly high for a public opinion survey but certainly not an indication that partisanship and ideology

and are one and the same. This leads to two slightly less obvious but nevertheless important observations about Figure 5.1 and ultimately about partisanship. First, as can be seen in the figure, Independents are an extremely ideological diverse population. Very roughly, a third of self-proclaimed liberals, a third of admitted moderates, and a quarter of self-identified strong conservatives end up as Independents. In other words, it is not accurate to view Independents as moderates who hold middle of the road views. Second, there is a hint of an ideological bias to Independence. Some 34 percent of all liberals identify themselves as Independents or non-partisans. By contrast, only 27 percent of all strong conservatives choose not to identify with a major party. And as we will see later in the chapter, when we isolate those with extreme views on either pole the difference is even more stark. Fully 44 percent of strong liberals identify as Independent, whereas only 26 of strong conservatives do so. This suggests – but certainly does not prove - that those on the far left are more apt to abandon the Democratic Party for Independence than those on the right are to abandon the Republican Party for Independence. Ultimately, what Figure 5.1 illustrates is that while a single ideological dimension does help to place many Americans along a linear scale of partisanship, many white Americans do not seem to fit where they are supposed to.

Independents beyond the middle

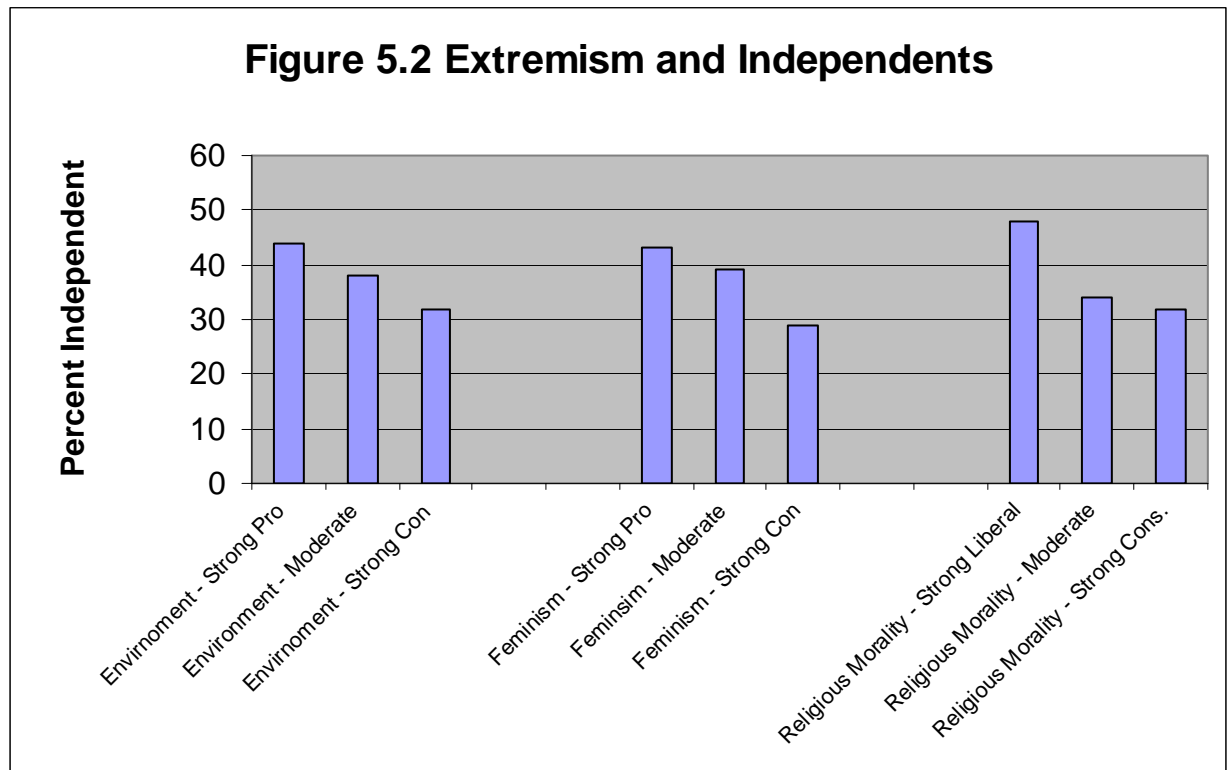
If Independents are not simply ideological moderates then who are they? In Figures 5.2 and 5.3, we begin to look at two other potential dimensions of Independence – extremism and ambiguity. In the two figures we show how likely it is that different categories of individuals end up identifying as Independent.

In the first figure, we look specifically at the relationship between extremism and Independence and compare the partisanship of those who hold strongly liberal, middle of the road, and strongly conservative views on the environment, feminism, and religious morality. To try to isolate the range of views on each of these subjects, we use the GSS and as we earlier described, we employ scales that are based on four questions about the environment, five questions on women's rights, and four questions on religious morality (on abortion, homosexuality, premarital sex and religiosity). Extremists are those who end up in top five percent or bottom five percent of each scale.

If traditional accounts of partisanship hold, we would expect those who hold middle of the road views to be the most likely to identify as Independent. Instead, what we find is that those who hold more extreme views are more apt to identify as Independent. In particular, as we expected, those who are strongly pro-environment and those who are strongly pro women's rights are significantly more likely than others to end up as Independent¹²⁵ – a pattern that suggests that issue advocates on these issues often do not feel like they have a natural partisan home. On religious morality, the pattern is not what we expected but is nevertheless interesting. Given the relatively recent rise of the religious right, we might have guessed that members of the religious right had not yet found a clear partisan home. It is, however, clear, from the figure, that those on the far right on religious views are quite partisan – only 32 end up as Independents. Presumably, the Republican Party has done enough to capture their views. By contrast, fully 48 percent of those who hold strongly liberal views on question of morality and religion choose to identify as Independent. All told, the figure suggests that a disproportionate number of those on the far left on emerging social movements do not choose to identify with a party. Extremism

¹²⁵ Significant difference in a pair-wise T-test at $p < .01$.

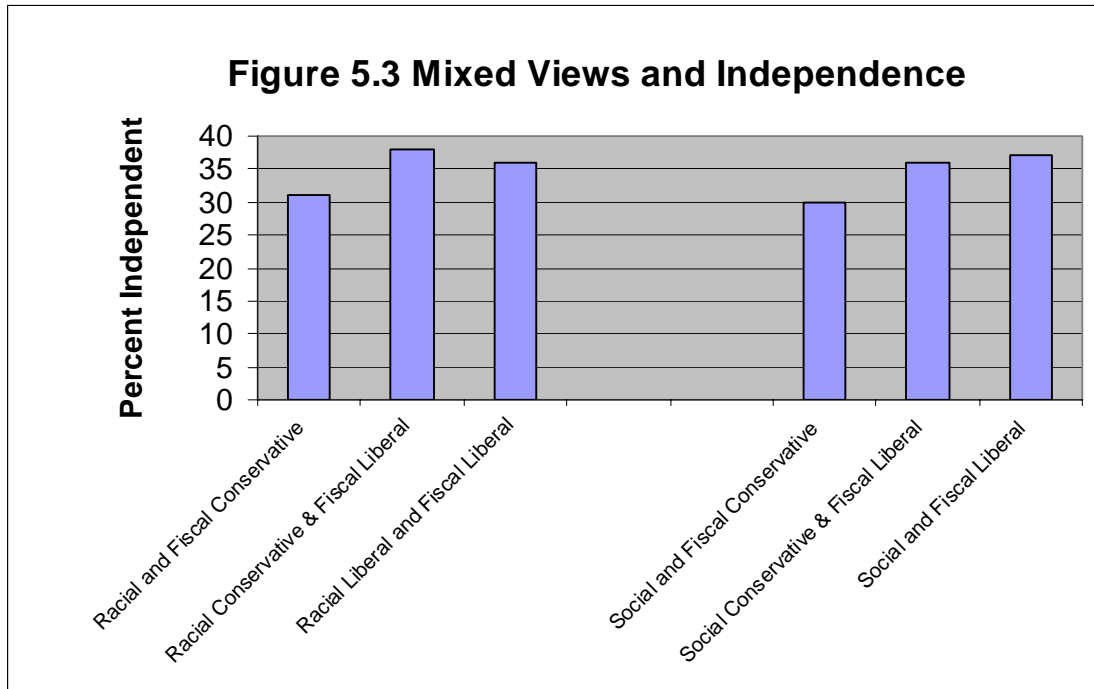
appears to matter and, at least at first glance, it appears to be hurting the Democratic Party on the left.



In Figure 5.3, we perform a similar analysis of the relationship between mixed views and Independence. Here we attempt to see whether two different categories of individuals are particularly apt to identify as Independent: 1) those who call themselves liberals but who also profess racially conservative views and 2) those who simultaneously hold fiscal liberal and socially conservative views. Racially conservative liberals are all those who place themselves to the left of center on the basic seven point liberal-conservative ideology scale and who also place themselves to the right of center on a seven point assistance to blacks scale (eg those identified as 'liberal' and who also indicated that 'too much' was being done by government to improve the conditions of African Americans). Fiscal liberal – social conservatives are respondents who

place themselves to the left of center on a seven point question asking about the tradeoff between increasing government services and reducing government spending and who take the two more conservative views on a four point scale that asks under what conditions abortion should be legally allowed.

The pattern in Figure 5.3 is more mixed. There is some sign that those who hold conflicted views on race and other policy areas are more likely to choose Independence. In this case 38 percent of those who hold mixed views identify as nonpartisan. However, the magnitude of the difference between those who hold mixed views and those who hold consistent views on the two issues is not that large. Fully, 36 percent of those who hold consistently liberal views and 32 percent of those who hold consistently conservative views also identify as Independent. The findings on divergent views on fiscal and social policy are more clear. Those who hold mixed views on these two policy areas are no more likely than those who hold consistently liberal views to be nonpartisans. Thus, while there is some indication that holding divergent views marginally increases the odds of identifying as Independent in some cases, much more work needs to be done to establish this relationship.



In Table 5.1 we attempt to offer a more complete account of Independence that pits conventional accounts against our own assertions about extremist Independents and ambiguous Independents. In the table, which focuses on white respondents to the ANES, we control for the two conventional accounts of Independents: 1) The Downsian Model - Independents as moderates, and 2) The Michigan School – Independents as the offspring of Independents or as apolitical. We also include measures of ideological extremism and ideological ambiguity. The table shows the results of a single logistic regression modeling Independence. Independence is a simple dummy variable indicating whether or not respondents first identified as an Independent or non-partisan instead of as a partisan supporter. **[Table 5.1 about here]**

The first and most obvious conclusion to be derived from Table 5.1 is that conventional accounts do work. First, the ‘Independents as moderates’ claim seems to fairly accurately depict the partisan pathways of at least some white Americans. Self proclaimed ideological moderates and those who view themselves as being only weakly liberal or weakly conservative are

significantly more likely to be Independent than those who call themselves conservatives or liberals. The childhood socialization hypothesis is also borne out for whites. Even after controlling for one's own ideological views and several other measures of an individual's political orientation, one's parent's identification strongly predicts party choice.¹²⁶ The more critical view of Independents as 'apolitical' also gets support here. Those who are less interested, less knowledgeable, less efficacious, less trusting, and less active in politics are significantly more likely to be nonpartisans or Independents.

The second and more interesting conclusion is that Independents also tend to be extremists. On two of the three issue publics we examine, the results closely match our expectations. As we predicted, the more liberal one's views on the environment and the stronger one's support of women's equality, the more likely one is to identify as Independent or nonpartisan.¹²⁷ In each case the magnitude of the effects is meaningful if not dramatic. All else equal, those who were the most supportive of environmental spending were 5 percent more likely to be Independent than those who believe we are already spending too much on the environment. Similarly, white Americans who strongly favor efforts to ensure women's rights were 5 percent more likely to identify as Independent or nonpartisan than those were least in favor of government action on women's equality. On two of the major social movements in America, those who hold strong views on the left are particularly apt to not identify with a major political party. This suggests that if neither party actively endorses an emerging issue, issue publics who care enough about that issue will reject both parties.

¹²⁶ Having two parents who had contrasting party identifications (eg one Republican and one Democrat) also seemed to marginally increase the chances of identifying as Independent. The effect was not quite significant and inclusion of this measure had no noticeable effect on any of the other relationships in Table 5.1.

¹²⁷ If one simply singles out those with extremely liberal views on the environment or extremely liberal views on women's rights (rather than using the scales in Table 5.1), the conclusion is the same. Individuals with extremely liberal views are significantly more likely than all others to be Independents.

In Table 5.1 we also looked at how views on religious or moral issues affected partisanship. Since at least some observers would claim that the Republican Party has actively taken up the cause of the Christian right by doing things like opposing gay rights, attempting to ban or limit abortions, and supporting government funding of religious organizations, there is less reason to expect a positive relationship between extremist views on this issue and Independence – and possibly some reason to expect a negative relationship between moral conservatism and Independence. The results in Table 5.1 are informative (if not fully conclusive). What is clear from Table 5.1 is that moral conservatism does not lead to greater Independence and nonpartisanship. The negative coefficient for views on abortion indicates that those on the far right on this issue are not more prone to choose Independence. What is less clear is whether liberals or those on the far left are especially apt to end up not identifying as partisans. The fact that the coefficient is negative and almost significant seems to imply that the more liberal one's views on abortion, the more likely one is to identify as Independent. But any definitive conclusion about moral liberals will have to await more in depth analysis of other measures of moral liberalism.

The third conclusion demonstrated by Table 5.1 is that holding ideologically mixed views represents yet another route to Independence. The logic here is fairly straightforward. Americans with strong liberal stances on some policy questions and strong conservative preferences on others should, because of their views, have a difficult time fitting in with either party. The results in Table 5.1 suggest that this is true for at least one particular set of views. Self-identified liberals who also hold conservative views on racial policy are especially likely to end up as Independents. Importantly, racial views by themselves have no direct effect on Independence in this model. It is only those who are generally liberal but who prefer not to enact

special policies to help blacks that are more prone to identify as Independent. In other words, a clash of liberalism and racial resentment is driving many whites away from the Democratic Party toward Independence. The effects are substantial. Holding other factors constant at their modal value, the probability of identifying as Independent or nonpartisan is 42 percent among white Americans who are both racially conservative and fiscally liberal compared to only 34 and 33 percent among those who hold either consistently liberal or consistently conservative views across these two areas.. Holding both liberal and conservative views simultaneously does lead to ambiguity and Independence in this case.

It is worth noting that these ambiguous Independents make up a sizeable proportion of the Independent population. Almost seven percent of all Independents simultaneously hold views that are generally liberal and racially conservative – defined as identifying oneself as ‘liberal’ on the basic liberal-conservative ideology scale and indicating that the government is should spend more to improve the condition of blacks.¹²⁸ The fact that a substantial number of racial conservatives who are otherwise liberal are defecting from the Democratic Party has not gone unnoticed. A number of pollsters and political analysts have noted this trend in presidential voting patterns (Greenberg 1990, Edsall and Edsall 1991, Carmines and Stimson 1989).

It is also important to note that this ambivalent effect is not simply due to a lack of political sophistication. When we re-ran the analysis including only those with above average political knowledge or above average educational outcomes, the relationships that we see in

¹²⁸ This figure is the proportion of the public that indicates that they are left of center on the ideology scale and right of midpoint on the racial conservatism scale in the ANES. Obviously, the proportion of the public that holds each set of mixed views depends greatly on exactly how the questions are asked and where we institute the cut-off between strong and moderate views on each subject. The questions and cut-offs that we employ in the GSS lead to 13.7 percent of the public holding mixed views on these issues.

Table 5.1 are slightly more pronounced. Ideology (even ambivalent ideology) seems to matter more for those with higher levels of political sophistication.

Holding mixed or conflicted views does not, however, always lead to Independence. The same type of effect is not evident when we focus on the clash between fiscal liberalism and religious conservatism. As Table 5.1 reveals, those who simultaneously oppose abortion and who seek more government spending and services are not especially apt to identify as Independents.¹²⁹ We suspect that this may be because both sets of views are not equally important and a respondent's position on one dimension may dominate. Some social conservatives, for example, may consider themselves as conservative and Republican regardless of their fiscal policy views. Other fiscal liberals might see themselves as liberal and identify with the Democratic Party regardless of their social policy views.¹³⁰

To further explore the relationship between mixed views and partisanship, we repeated the analysis with a slightly different measure of mixed views. In these alternate tests we looked at those who held views that they perceived to be to the left of the Democratic Party on one dimension and to the right of the Republican Party on a second dimension. This may, in fact, be a better test of whether or not conflicted views lead to Independence. In some ways, what should matter is not where you place yourself on an ideological scale but rather where you place yourself relative to the two parties. If you believe that you are closer to one party on one key

¹²⁹ In alternate tests, we also singled out those who are both socially liberal and fiscally conservative but again found no link to Independence.

¹³⁰ There is some concern that the relationship between ideology and party identification is reciprocal and thus that policy positions are in part the result rather than the cause of party identification. This is certainly true in some cases – although existing research that tests for this reciprocity has generally found that party identification has only a very small effect on most individual policy positions (Franklin 1984, Page and Jones 1979). It is, however, hard to imagine how Independence could lead individuals to hold extreme views on issues like the environment or could lead individuals to simultaneously hold a particular mix of views like liberalism and racial conservatism. For this reason, we believe that endogeneity is likely to be less of a problem when examining Independence as an outcome.

issue and closer to the other party on a second key issue, then you have no clear partisan choice and Independence becomes a rational alternative. The results of this alternate test closely mirror the findings in Table 5.1 (analysis not shown). Divergent views on race and other policy areas continued to matter, while mixed views on social and fiscal policy continued to have little noticeably effect. Specifically, white Americans who place themselves to the left of the Democratic Party on government spending and to the right of the Democratic Party on racial policy are significantly more likely to identify as Independent or nonpartisan than those who place themselves consistently on the same side of the Parties.¹³¹

Finally, to try to further understand both these ambiguity effects and how extremism leads to independence, we re-ran the analysis in Table 5.1 using a multinomial logistic regression. This additional analysis, which is presented in the Appendix, allows us to distinguish between Democrats and Republicans and to see how the factors that lead to choosing Independence over Republican identification differ from the factors that lead to choosing Independence over Democratic identification. Although there are some interesting differences, the bottom line of this analysis is that we continue to see strong evidence of both paths to Independence.

Alternate Specifications: The GSS

¹³¹ At this point it is also worth noting that these ambivalent Independents are distinct from both self-described ideological moderates and apoliticals. First, individuals who hold mixed views are not significantly more likely than others to consider themselves moderates. Second, individuals who hold mixed views are only marginally less likely to be interested in or informed about politics. Finally, since we control for both ideological moderation and a range of measures of political apathy (including political interest, efficacy, and knowledge), the effects that we see for mixed views are above and beyond these two other factors.

The results to this point strongly suggest that there are multiple routes to Independence. Using fairly basic measures, we have found that those with strong views on issues that neither party is actively addressing and those with divergent views on some core issues often end up identifying as Independent. However, the measures used to test each of these hypotheses in Table 5.1 were limited by the fact that the ANES only includes one policy question on each policy domain. With one question and often only three or four response categories, it is difficult to gauge the strength of each respondent's views on the subject and even more difficult to identify those with extreme views. Thus, to try to gauge each of these ideological dimensions more deeply and to test the robustness of our findings, we now turn to analysis of the General Social Survey. Our results are presented in Table 5.2 in the form of a logistic regression modeling Independence. The advantage of the GSS is that it contains an array of measures that help to get at the intensity of preferences and to identify extremists.¹³² Again, question wording, coding, and descriptive statistics for these measures are detailed in the Appendix.

The results from the GSS closely mirror our analysis of the NES. First, there is a clear link between issue publics and Independence. For all three social movements, those who hold strong views are significantly more likely than others to not identify with one of the two mainstream parties. In particular, as we just saw, those with strong feminist views are much more apt to be Independent. Those who were more supportive of women working outside of the home, less concerned about women helping the careers of their husbands, and more willing to support female politicians were 16 percent more likely to be Independent than those who held conservative views on each of these questions. Similarly, Table 5.2 reconfirms the tie between

¹³² The principal disadvantage of the GSS as is visible from the model in Table 5.2 is that many of the more mainstream measures of political involvement and parental party identification are not available in most years of the survey. Also, the few questions on fiscal liberalism that are included in the GSS are not asked in the same years as the questions on moral policy. Thus, our model is somewhat incomplete.

environmentalism and Independence. Those who were most concerned about improving and protecting the environment were more than 7 percent more likely to be Independent than those who believe we are already doing too much for the environment.¹³³

With the more refined measure of religious fundamentalism that we can create in the GSS, we also see that religious or moral views are now significantly related to partisanship. The direction of the effect is particularly interesting. Those with the most liberal views on religion are the most likely to end up as Independents. The negative and significant coefficient on the religious conservatism score indicates that the more liberal one's views on abortion, homosexuality, and teenage sexual relations, the more likely one is to end up as an Independent. All else equal the probability of identifying as an Independent is 40 percent among religious liberals compared to only 29 percent among religious conservatives.¹³⁴ This suggests that the Christian Right has been effectively co-opted by the Republican Party. It is those who are sharply liberal on moral or religious issues who seem to hold less of a mainstream partisan allegiance.

Combined these results point to a clear bias in partisan choice. For all three issue publics, those on the far right of the political spectrum are much less apt to abandon the Republican Party than those on the far left are to abandon the Democratic Party. This has important implications for the Democratic Party and its strategic interests in catering to the left. We hold off from further elaboration on this point until we more directly test this liberal bias later in the paper.

¹³³ Moreover, these effects are robust to changes in the measurement of feminism or environmentalism. For example, for each single question those who strongly favor animal rights, who oppose any genetic modification of food, who believe that humans are bad for the environment, or who volunteer to try to protect the environment are all more likely than others to identify as Independents. In terms of feminist views, those who think businesses should make special efforts to hire more women, who believe that women are underpaid, who feel that women are discriminated against in employment, and those who think the issue of women's rights is important are also all significantly more likely than others to choose to identify themselves as Independents.

¹³⁴ Alternate tests similarly indicate that Evangelicals and those who identify themselves as religious fundamentalists are especially unlikely to identify as Independents.

Table 5.2 also confirms our second proposed pathway to Independence. Americans who hold strong but conflicted views are particularly prone to being Independent. Once again, we see that those who generally think of themselves as liberal but who also hold racially conservative views are more apt to reject both parties. The key independent variable here is an interaction term which shows that those who place themselves to the left of center on basic ideology and to the right of center on racial concerns are significantly more likely than others to identify as Independent. At least in this one instance, a clash of ideologies or political orientations has a clear effect.

Importantly, the basic conclusions that Table 5.2 helps to illustrate garner additional support from a set of alternate analyses that focus on pure Independents. When we group Independent leaners with partisans and repeat the analysis in Table 5.2, we obtained similar results. The results, which are displayed in Table 5.A.2 in the Appendix, indicate that extremism and ambivalence play a role in Independence even when Independence is confined to those who profess to have no leaning to either party. The effects are, however, somewhat weaker in two cases. Those who hold strongly liberal views on the environment and those who are conservative on matters of race but also claim to be liberal are only marginally more likely to end up as pure Independents. This suggests that for these two groups of individuals, holding extreme or diverse views is enough to lead them to regularly identify as Independent but it is not enough to erase all partisan proclivities.

Variation over time and across region

One concern with the analysis so far is that it combines surveys across years and regions without considering the nature of how parties have changed over time. Since 1960 there has been an important shift in how the parties are viewed on matters of race and a resultant shift in

partisanship with many white Southern Democrats slowly moving to the Republican side and many of those who shifted likely identifying as Independent in the middle of that journey (Black and Black 1987, 1973, Valentino and Sears 2005). As well, by at least some accounts moral and religious questions have become more central to party identification in recent years (Abramowitz 1995 Nussbaum and Gelbart 2004). Given these changes, we attempted to determine how our story of Independents varied across time and region. Our basic method was either to confine the analysis to a particular time period or region or to include in our regression models a range of interactions terms for each of our ideological dimensions with both year and region dummy variables.

Our analysis indicates that there is some variation across region and time. None of the effects we found was particularly strong or particularly robust to different specifications but there is at least some evidence that the ambivalence of white liberals who hold racially conservative views had a slightly more pronounced effect outside of the South. The realignment of southern white racial conservatives undoubtedly contributed to the growth in Independents but we suspect that the move to Independence among Southern whites was not because they held a mix of liberal and conservative views on race and other matters. Instead, we believe that much of the ambiguous Independents effect can be attributed to groups like Reagan Democrats who were core liberal supporters of the Democratic Party until the issue of race came along (Greenberg 1990). Although these union workers and manufacturing employees could be found all around the country, there were certainly more concentrated in the Northeast and Midwest than in the South. The only other significant or nearly significant interactions we could find were with religious views. In both the GSS and the ANES, the religious right was even less likely to

identify as Independent in the South. Similarly, those on the religious right were somewhat less likely to identify as Independent over time.

But the bigger story, we think, is that there is less variation across region and over time than we might have suspected. Few of the interactions are significant and the few effects that we have noted are marginal in size. Part of this is likely due to data limitations. Although we use the 1948-2000 cumulative file of the ANES, our analysis is restricted to years in which the NES asked about the issue dimensions we care about. Since the NES only began asking most of these policy questions in 1980, our analysis with the NES is confined to the period between 1980 and 2000.¹³⁵ Moreover, when we start to examine the political behavior of extremists and those with mixed views in a particular region or time frame, our sample size gets pretty small.

Nevertheless, we also believe that these are telling us that neither the ambivalence story nor the extremism story is confined to a particular time or place. These two dimensions likely do operate with varying intensity but with a two party system and an ideologically diverse population, the two dimensions should be relevant in a fairly wide range of circumstances.

The results to this point tell us that party identification is often not linearly related to liberal-conservative political ideology. Ideological moderates do end up in the ‘middle’ as Independents but ideological extremists on the left are also very apt to end up as Independent. And for very different reasons, individuals with political orientations on both the left and the right also tend to identify as Independents. In both cases, individuals who hold far from moderate views end up as Independents. This tells us that Independents cannot really be placed in the middle of a linear scale of party identification with Democrats on the left and Republicans

¹³⁵ Similarly, with the GSS we can only go back to 1972.

on the right. The traditional linear model party identification used in almost every study of American political behavior should, at least for some purposes, be reconsidered.

A Liberal Bias among Independents

One important implication of our results to this point concerns a possible ideological bias in partisanship. While individual Americans on the left appear to be abandoning the Democratic Party in large numbers, Americans on the right appear to maintain their allegiances to the Republican Party. In Table 5.3, we assess this ideological and partisan bias more systematically. Specifically, we include a range of dummy variables for each category of seven point self-identified liberal-conservative ideology scale. The goal is to isolate self-identified strong liberals and strong conservatives to determine if either group is more likely to choose Independence. We present results for both the NES and the GSS.

The results are fairly clear. Strong liberals are unique. In sharp contrast to what we would expect from conventional accounts of party identification, the table demonstrates that those on the far left of the ideological spectrum are not less likely than ideological moderates to identify as Independent. In the GSS, strong liberals are in fact substantially more likely than moderates to identify as Independent. All else equal, strong liberals are 5 percent more likely than moderates to end up as Independents.

Importantly, the same pattern is not evident on the far right. In both the GSS and the NES, strong conservatives, like almost all of the other ideological groups are significantly less likely than moderates to identify as Independents. Holding other factors constant, strong conservatives in the GSS are 18 percent less likely than strong liberals to choose Independence. The contrast is equally stark if we simply compare the party identification of strong liberals and

strong conservatives without controlling for any other factors. Overall, just over 40% of strong liberals in the GSS identify as independent. By contrast, only 27% of strong conservatives opt to defect to the Independent option. It is also worth noting that the same pattern is evident if we group Independent leaners with partisans and focus on pure Independents. As Table 5.A.3 in the appendix illustrates, those with views on the far left are not simply choosing to identify themselves as Independent while retaining some sort of allegiance to the Democratic Party. Even when we single out pure Independents, strong liberals are especially apt to identify as Independent. In short, there is a stark imbalance between the degree to which those on the far right and those on the far left abandon mainstream parties to identify as Independents.

There are at least two potential explanations for this liberal bias to Independence. It could be that the Republican Party caters more to its extremist fringe. Many commentators and academics have argued that the Democratic Party has tended to ignore the interests of ‘captured’ groups like African Americans who hold particularly liberal views (Frymer 1999, Walters 1988). Recent events have also suggested that leaders in the Democratic Party are leery of advocating for full rights for gays and lesbians. By contrast, George Bush and the Republican leadership in Congress have pushed for a Constitutional Amendment to prevent same-sex marriage and have put forward fairly conservative positions on a range of moral and religious issues.¹³⁶ The lack of partisan defection on the right could also simply be because there is less ideological distance between the mainstream of the Republican Party and the far right and thus less reason to abandon

¹³⁶ Frymer (1999) argues that this is because the religious right is particularly politically active and forms one of the largest voting blocs in the Republican coalition. It is, he maintains, also easier to advocate for religious conservative issues because many mainstream Americans are supportive of these kinds of conservative stances. By contrast, when the Democratic Party pushes for expanded rights for blacks or gays and lesbians it turns away many moderate voters.

the party. Regardless of how we explain this imbalance, it is clear that liberals are more apt than conservatives and perhaps even ideological moderates to wind up with the Independent label.

One way to get further insight into this question is to look at how strong liberals and strong conservatives view the parties. When asked to place the two parties on an ideological continuum, strong liberals place the two parties significantly closer together on a range of basic policy issues than do strong conservatives.¹³⁷ Strong liberals also perceive a slightly greater distance between their own views and those of the closest party closest to them (presumably Democrats) than do strong conservatives who place the closest party (presumably Republicans) near their own views on most basic policy issues.¹³⁸ In short, strong liberals are less apt to see large partisan differences and more apt to feel ideologically divided from both parties than are strong conservatives. The ideological bias that we see to Independence is deeply rooted in perceptions of the ideological positions of the two parties.¹³⁹

In highlighting this liberal bias we are by no means claiming that the Democratic Party is forever doomed to lose a disproportionate share of its support from its extremist fringe. In fact, we suspect that the nature of any ideological bias to Independence changes over time as new issues emerge and as the two Parties choose to engage or ignore more extremist positions on those issues. Our own analysis of over time change on this bias leads to mixed results. Using

¹³⁷ Across the five issues asked most regularly in the ANES, strong liberals saw an average partisan divide of only 2.7 points on a 7 point scale. That was less than strong conservatives who perceived an average 3.2 point partisan divide on the same issues.

¹³⁸ Across the five issues asked most regularly in the ANES, the average distance between the self-perceived positions of strong liberals and their perceived placement of the Democratic Party was 1.9 points on a 7 point scale. For strong conservatives and the Republican Party the average gap was 1.7 points.

¹³⁹ All of this is ultimately reflected how strong liberals and strong conservatives feel toward the two parties. Compared to strong conservatives, strong liberals have, on average, significantly colder feelings toward the parties (49 vs 56 on a 100 point feeling thermometer), significantly more reasons to dislike both parties (2.8 vs 2.3), significantly more negative overall evaluations of the parties (-.61 vs -.34 net affect), and significantly warmer feelings toward Independents (59 vs 48 on a 100 point feeling thermometer). T tests indicate that all differences are significant at the .05 level.

the ANES we find that this liberal bias is declining over time. Specifically, when we add an interaction term for strong liberal views and the year of the survey to the model in Table 5.3, the interaction term is significant and negative indicating that strong liberals are less and less likely to identify as Independent over time. But similar analysis of the GSS finds no over time effects and instead indicates that the liberal bias persists today.¹⁴⁰ One reason for these mixed results may be that the extent of the liberal bias in recent years depends in part on the type of candidate who is running a third party presidential contest in any given year. Thus, it is probably not surprising to find that both the GSS and ANES reveal a slightly weaker link between strong liberal views and Independence in 1992 and 1996 – two years in which Ross Perot, a presidential candidate who garnered more support from the right, ran robust third party campaigns. Similarly, although the results are far from conclusive, there is at least a hint that strong liberals were particular likely to identify as Independent in 2000 – the year the Ralph Nader ran a third party campaign that was primary focused on left-leaning voters. Ultimately what is clear is that regardless of these year to year variations, the Democratic Party has in recent decades had a hard time holding onto the allegiance of individuals whose views place them on the far left of the ideological spectrum. This is something that the Democratic Party will need to think seriously about when it considers the best strategy for trying to win the Presidency or a majority of the Senate or House.

¹⁴⁰ In the GSS, when an interaction between strong liberal views and the year of the survey is added to the model in Table 5.3, it is insignificant. Moreover, analysis of each individual year of the GSS survey shows fairly consistent findings over time. In particular, in no year were strong liberal views significantly less likely than moderate views to lead to Independence and in a range of both more recent and older years, strongly liberal views were significantly more likely than moderate views to lead to Independence. By contrast, in most individual years strongly conservative views were significantly less likely than moderate views to lead to Independence and in no year were strongly conservative views associated with greater Independence.

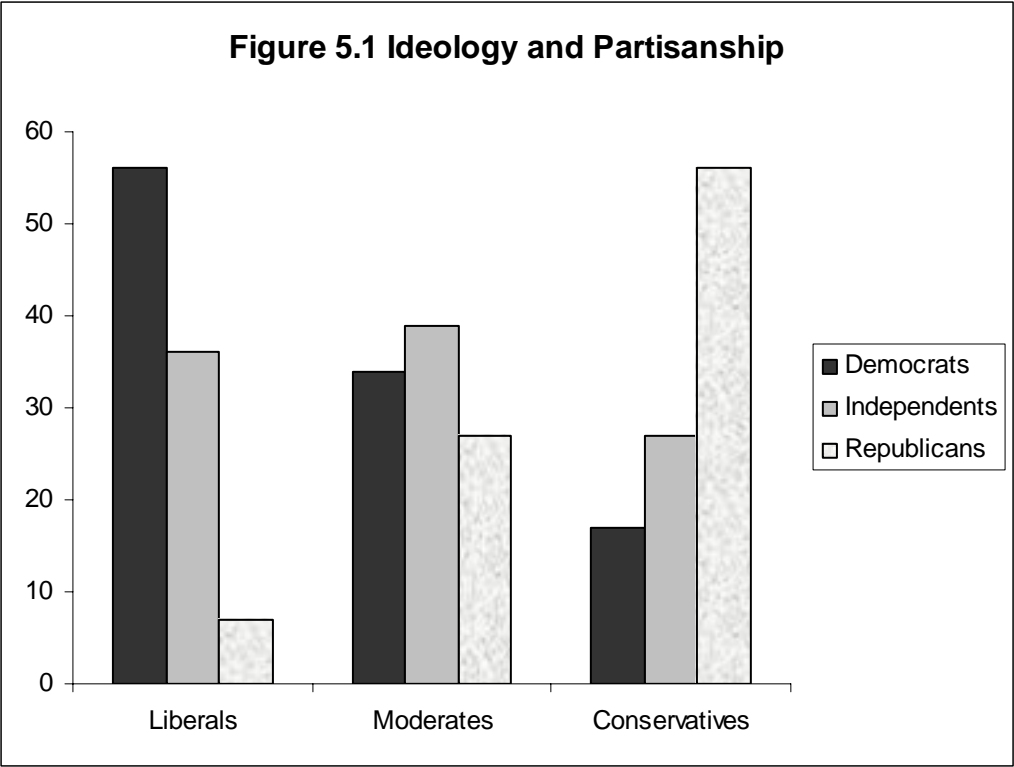
Discussion

This research has important implications for our understanding of party identification and partisan politics. First, it suggests that existing accounts of Independence are incomplete. The most common views of the Independents – as ideological moderates, as the children of Independents, and as apoliticals – fit some Independents but they by no means explain the choices of all who end up identifying as Independents. White Americans identify as Independent for a range of reasons that include ideological extremism and mixed or conflicting views.

These different dimensions to Independence strongly imply that party identification should not always be modeled with a single linear dimension ranging from Republicans on one side to Independents in the middle and Democrats on the far side. For many reasons, those who end up in the ‘middle’ as Independents often hold far from middle of the road views. Thus, to really understand partisanship and Independence we often need to modify the traditional linear model of party identification that is used in almost every study of American political behavior. The traditional linear scale may work well when predicting the choice between voting for a Democrat and voting for a Republican but when we are trying to predict or understand other dimensions of politics, we may do well to replace the traditional model with a more complex unordered model that takes into account several dimensions of choice.

Our findings should also lead to a different normative view of Independents. Independents should not simply be dismissed as non-ideologues prone to apathy and inactivity. Rather, as we indicate, there are multiple routes to Independence - many of which suggest that Independents are anything but apolitical. In turn, this more positive view of Independents leads to a different conclusion about the possibility that Independents will be important political actors. If Independents are seen as apolitical non-ideologues there is little reason to try to mobilize them.

Everything we know about political participation suggests that such efforts will be futile. However, if we see Independents as being ambivalent or uncertain about parties that they do not fit well into or that do not cater to their interests, then there is every reason to believe that Independents can be integrated and mobilized. The presence of widespread ambivalence and uncertainty also clearly suggest that many Americans are up for grabs politically. If either party is able to reach different segments of the Independent population and present a compelling reason for their support, large numbers of Independents may be swayed and the balance of power between the Democratic and Republican Parties could be substantially altered.



**Table 5.1: The Different Dimensions of Independence
(Logistic Regression)**

	Identify as Independent
<u>DOWNSIAN MODEL</u>	
Independents as Moderates	
Weak Liberal	.22 (.11)*
Moderate	.72 (.08)**
Weak Conservative	.41 (.09)**
<u>MICHIGAN MODEL</u>	
Childhood Socialization	
Parents Independent	.74 (.08)**
Independents as Apolitical	
Political Participation	-.12 (.03)**
Political Interest	-.22 (.05)**
Political Knowledge	-.24 (.08)**
Government Trust	-.01 (.00)**
Political Efficacy	-.01 (.00)**
<u>ALTERNATE DIMENSIONS</u>	
Independents as Extremists	
Environmental Spending	.10 (.05)^
Women's Equality	.05 (.02)*
Anti-Abortion Views	-.06 (.04)
Independents as Ambiguous	
<i>Racially Conservative Liberals</i>	
Racial Conservatism Scale	-.02 (.02)
Racial Conservative*Liberal	.24 (.13)^
<i>Morally Conservative Fiscal Liberals</i>	
Fiscal Liberalism Scale	.01 (.03)
Religious Conservative*Fiscal Liberal	.03 (.13)
Controls	
South	.15 (.07)*
Year	-.01 (.01)
Age	-.01 (.00)**
Education	-.00 (.04)
Income	.08 (.03)*
Constant	22.6 (16.4)
Pseudo R-squared	.07
N	5066

Source: NES Cumulative File **p<.01 * p<.05 ^p<.10

**Table 5.2: The Different Dimensions of Independence
(Logistic Regression)**

	Identify as Independent
<u>DOWSIAN MODEL</u>	
Independents as Moderates	
Weak Liberal	.14 (.07)^
Moderate	.40 (.05)**
Weak Conservative	.20 (.06)**
<u>MICHIGAN SCHOOL</u>	
Independents as Apolitical	
Voter	-.72 (.05)**
<u>ALTERNATE DIMENSIONS</u>	
Independents as Extremists	
Environmentalism score	.11 (.03)**
Feminist score	.17 (.05)**
Religious conservative score	-.18 (.03)**
Independents as Ambiguous	
Racial Conservatism Scale	.01 (.03)
Racial Conservative*Liberal	.22 (.07)**
Controls	
South	-.17 (.04)**
Year	-.00 (.01)
Age	-.01 (.00)**
Education	.01 (.01)^
Income	-.01 (.01)
Constant	6.0 (6.1)
Pseudo R-squared	.04
N	11338

Source: GSS Cumulative File **p<.01 * p<.05 ^p<.10

**Table 5.3: The Liberal Bias to Independence
(Logistic Regression)¹**

	<i>Identify as Independent</i>	
<u>DOWNSIAN MODEL</u>	GSS	NES
Independents as Moderates		
Strong Liberal	.19 (.10)^	-.06 (15)
Liberal	-.14 (.05)**	-.36 (.07)**
Weak Liberal	.01 (.05)	-.17 (.06)**
Moderate (excluded)	---	---
Weak Conservative	-.21 (.04)**	-.25 (.05)**
Conservative	-.56 (.05)**	-.63 (.06)**
Strong Conservative	-.57 (.11)**	-.81 (.13)**
<u>MICHIGAN SCHOOL</u>		
Parental Socialization		
Parents Independent	---	.82 (.05)**
Independents as Apolitical		
Voter/Participation	-.77 (.04)	-.16 (.02)**
Political Interest	---	-.17 (.03)**
Political Knowledge	---	-.26 (.05)**
Government Trust	---	-.01 (.00)**
Political Efficacy	---	-.01 (.00)**
Controls		
South	-.16 (.03)**	-.01 (.04)
Year	.01 (.00)*	-.01 (.00)^
Age	-.01 (.00)	-.01 (.00)**
Education	.02 (.01)**	.08 (.02)**
Income	-.00 (.01)	.04 (.02)*
Constant	-9.7 (4.2)*	10.9 (5.3)*
Pseudo R-squared	.04	.06
N	18810	12486

**p<.01 * p<.05 ^p<.10

APPENDIX

Table 5.A.1 The Determinants of White Partisan Choice (Multinomial Logistic Regression)		
	Democrat vs. Independent	Republican vs. Independent
<u>DOWNSIAN MODEL</u>		
Independents as Moderates		
Weak Liberal	.28 (.12)**	-.97 (.15)**
Moderate	-.35 (.10)**	-.92 (.10)**
Weak Conservative	-.45 (.11)**	-.29 (.10)*
<u>MICHIGAN MODEL</u>		
Independents as Apolitical		
Political Participation	.12 (.04)**	.10 (.04)*
Political Interest	.24 (.06)**	.18 (.06)**
Political Knowledge	.25 (.09) **	.22 (.09)*
Government Trust	.01 (.00)**	.01 (.00)**
Political Efficacy	.00 (.01)	.01 (.00)**
Childhood Socialization		
Parents Independent	-.94 (.12)**	-.63 (.09)**
<u>ALTERNATE DIMENSIONS</u>		
Independents as Extremists		
Environmentalism Spending	.11 (.07)	-.23 (.06)**
Women's Equality	.00 (.03)	-.07 (.02)**
Anti-Abortion Views	.06 (.05)	-.15 (.04)**
Independents as Ambiguous		
<i>Racially Conservative Liberals</i>		
Racial Conservatism Scale	-.15 (.03)**	.19 (.03)**
Racial Conservatism*Liberal	.22 (.15)	-.55 (.18)**
<i>Morally Conservative Fiscal Liberals</i>		
Fiscal Liberals	.21 (.03)**	-.22 (.03)**
Religious Conservative*Fiscal Liberal	-.09 (.15)	.14 (.16)
Controls		
South	.05 (.08)	-.34 (.08)**
Year	.02 (.01)^	.00 (.01)
Age	.01 (.00)**	.01 (.00)*
Education	-.15 (.05)**	.13 (.05)**
Income	-.14 (.04)**	-.00 (.03)
Constant	-38.2 (19.5)*	-5.4 (19.3)
Pseudo R-squared		.14
N		5066

Source: NES Cumulative File **p<.01 * p<.05 ^p<.10

Table 5.A.2: The Different Dimensions of Independence – Pure Independents (Logistic Regression)

	Identify as Independent
<u>DOWSIAN MODEL</u>	
Independents as Moderates	
Weak Liberal	-.10 (.10)
Moderate	.51 (.08)**
Weak Conservative	.05 (.10)
<u>MICHIGAN SCHOOL</u>	
Independents as Apolitical	
Voter	-.84 (.06)**
<u>ALTERNATE DIMENSIONS</u>	
Independents as Extremists	
Environmentalism score	.06 (.04)
Feminist score	.17 (.07)*
Religious conservative score	-.17 (.04)**
Independents as Ambiguous	
Racial Conservatism Scale	.07 (.04)^
Racial Conservatism*Liberal	.16 (.10)
Controls	
South	-.22 (.06)**
Year	.02 (.00)**
Age	-.00 (.00)
Education	-.03 (.01)*
Income	-.02 (.01)*
Constant	-36.1 (8.6)**
Pseudo R-squared	.05
N	11338

Source: GSS Cumulative File **p<.01 * p<.05 ^p<.10

**Table 5.A.3: The Liberal Bias to Independence –Pure Independents
(Logistic Regression)¹**

	<i>Identify as Independent</i>	
<u>DOWNSIAN MODEL</u>	GSS	NES
Independents as Moderates		
Strong Liberal	.37 (.12)**	-.24 (.23)
Liberal	-.36 (.07)**	-.77 (.14)**
Weak Liberal	-.40 (.07)**	-.51 (.10)**
Moderate (excluded)	---	---
Weak Conservative	-.39 (.06)**	-.36 (.08)**
Conservative	-.59 (.07)**	-.76 (.10)**
Strong Conservative	-.54 (.15)**	-.67 (.22)**
<u>MICHIGAN SCHOOL</u>		
Parental Socialization		
Parents Independent	---	.53 (.06)**
Independents as Apolitical		
Voter/Participation	-.92 (.05)**	-.24 (.04)**
Political Interest	---	-.21 (.05)**
Political Knowledge	---	-.38 (.07)**
Government Trust	---	-.01 (.00)**
Political Efficacy	---	-.01 (.00)**
Controls		
South	-.24 (.05)**	.09 (.07)
Year	.02 (.00)**	-.02 (.00)**
Age	-.01 (.00)**	-.01 (.00)**
Education	-.02 (.01)**	-.12 (.04)**
Income	-.00 (.01)	.00 (.03)
Constant	-33.6 (5.8)**	30.8 (8.5)**
Pseudo R-squared	.05	.06
N	18810	12551

**p<.01 * p<.05 ^p<.10

QUESTION WORDING, CODING, AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

(FIGURES ARE MEANS WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS IN PARANTHESES)

American National Election Survey

PARTY IDENTIFICATION - Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, an Independent, or what? (IF REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT) Would you call yourself a strong (REP/DEM) or a not very strong (REP/DEM)? (IF INDEPENDENT, OTHER, OR NOPREFERENCE):) Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party? 0-strong Dem 1-weak Dem 2-Dem leaner 3-pure Independent 4-Rep leaner 5-weak Rep 6-strong Rep --- 2.9 (2.1)

INDEPENDENT - Party identification = 2,3, or 4 .36 (.48)

PURE INDEPENDENT - Party identification =3 .11 (.31)

LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE IDEOLOGY - In general, when it comes to politics, do you usually think of yourself as a liberal, a conservative, a moderate, or what? Do you think of yourself as a strong liberal/conservative or a not very strong liberal/conservative? 0-strong liberal to 6-strong conservative 2.8 (2.0)

STRONG LIBERAL -Ideology=1[.02 (.14)], **LIBERAL**- Ideology=2 [.09 (.28)], **WEAK LIBERAL** - Ideology=3 [.13 (.33)], **MODERATE**-Ideology=4 [.33 (.47)], **WEAK CONSERVATIVE** - Ideology=5 [.21 (.41)], **CONSERVATIVE** - Ideology=6 [.20 (.40)], **STRONG CONSERVATIVE** - Ideology=7 [.03 (.17)]

PARENTS INDEPENDENT - When you were growing up did your father (your mother) think of himself mostly as a Democrat, as a Republican, or what? 0 – neither parent independent, 1- one parent Independent, 2-two parents Independent .07 (.33)

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION - Number of acts during the campaign: Attended a meeting or demonstration? Worked for a candidate? Displayed a political sign? Contacted a public official? Try to influence others? – 1.6 (.98)

POLITICAL INTEREST - Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you, would you say that you have been/were very much interested,somewhat interested, or not much interested in following the politicalcampaigns (so far) this year? 1- not much, 3- very much 2.0(.75)

POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE - Do you happen to know which party elected the most members to the House of representatives in the elections this/last month? 1-correct .41 (.49)

POLITICAL EFFICACY- A reversed 100 point scale of agree/disagree responses to the following two statements: a) Public officials don't care much what people like me think and b) People like me don't have any say about what the government does. 55.2 (42.1)

GOVERNMENT TRUST- How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right -- just about always, most of the time or only some of the time? 35.6 (24.5)

ENVIRONMENTAL SPENDING - Should federal spending on improving and protecting the environment be increased, decreased or kept about the same? 2.4 (.61)

WOMEN'S EQUALITY - Some people feel that women should have an equal role with men in running business, industry and government. Others feel that a women's place isin the home (placement on a seven point scale) 2.8 (2.0)

ANTI-ABORTION VIEWS – Which one of the opinions on this page best agrees with your view? 1) By law, abortion should never be permitted. 2) The law should permit abortion only in case of rape,incest, or when the woman's life is in danger. 3) The law should permit abortion for reasons other than rape, incest, or danger to the woman's life, but only after the need for the abortion has been clearly

established.4. By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice. 1.1 (1.1)

RACIAL CONSERVATISM SCALE - Some people feel that the government in Washington should make every effort to improve the social and economic position of blacks. Others feel that the government should not make any special effort to help blacks because they should help themselves. (placement on a seven point scale) 4.6 (1.7)

RACIAL CONSERVATIVE – LIBERAL – Self-placement as to the left of center on basic ideology scale (1,2, or 3) and to the right of center on racial conservatism scale (4,5, or 6). .06 (.24)

FISCAL LIBERALISM SCALE - Some people think the government should provide fewer services, even in areas such as health and education, in order to reduce spending. Other people feel that it is important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending. (placement on a seven point scale) 4.0 (1.6)

RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVE – FISCAL LIBERAL – Those who are coded 1 or 2 on anti-abortion views and placed themselves left of center (favor more government spending) on the fiscal liberalism scale .137 (.34)

SOUTH – Residence in southern states .31 (.46)

YEAR –Year of the survey 1986 (8.6)

INCOME - Family income coded from 5 highest to 0 lowest 3.0 (1.1)

EDUCATION - Highest grade of school or of college completed – coded grade school, some high school, high school degree, some college, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, some graduate school, master's degree, doctorate 2.3 (.94)

AGE - Age in years 45.9 (17.2)

General Social Survey

PARTY IDENTIFICATION - Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, an Independent, or what? (IF REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT) Would you call yourself a strong (REP/DEM) or a not very strong (REP/DEM)? (IF INDEPENDENT, OTHER, OR NOPREFERENCE):) Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party? 0-strong Dem 1-weak Dem 2-Dem leaner 3-pure Independent 4-Rep leaner 5-weak Rep 6-strong Rep --- 2.9 (2.0)

INDEPENDENT - Party identification = 2, 3, or 4 .37 (.48)

PURE INDEPENDENT - Party identification =3 .15 (.36)

LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE IDEOLOGY - In general, when it comes to politics, do you usually think of yourself as a liberal, a conservative, a moderate, or what? Do you think of yourself as a strong liberal/conservative or a not very strong liberal/conservative? 0-strong liberal to 6-strong conservative 3.8 (2.0)

STRONG LIBERAL – Ideology=1[.02 (.14)], **LIBERAL**- Ideology=2 [.11 (.31)], **WEAK LIBERAL** - Ideology=3 [.13 (.34)], **MODERATE**-Ideology=4 [.34 (.47)], **WEAK CONSERVATIVE** - Ideology=5 [.17 (.38)], **CONSERVATIVE** – Ideology=6 [.15 (.36)], **STRONG CONSERVATIVE** – Ideology=7 [.03 (.17)]

VOTER - Voted in last presidential election? .74 (.44)

ENVIRONMENTALIST SCALE – 1) It is right to use animals for testing if it might save human lives. (strongly agree to strongly disagree), 2) People worry too much about human progress harming the environment. (strongly agree to strongly disagree), 3) Are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on... improving and protecting the environment? 2.5 (.65) Alpha .53

FEMINIST SCALE – 1) If your party nominated a woman for president, would you vote for her, if she were a qualified candidate? (yes, not sure, no) 2) It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the family and home. (strongly agree to strongly

disagree), 3) It is more important for a woman to help her husband's career than to have one herself? (strongly agree to strongly disagree), 4) Women should take care of the running of their homes and leave the running of the country to men? (agree, disagree, not sure), 5) Do you approve or disapprove of a married woman working in business or industry if she has a husband capable of supporting her? (approve, not sure, disapprove) 2.1 (.52) Alpha .71

RELIGIOUS RIGHT SCALE - 1) Please tell me whether or not you think it should be possible for a woman to obtain a legal abortion if ... the woman wants it for any reason? (yes, don't know, maybe), 2) When it comes to your religious identity, would you say you are a fundamentalist?, 3) When about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex – do you think it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all? 4) If a man and a woman have sex relations before marriage, do you think it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all? 2.0 (.75) Alpha .59

RACIAL CONSERVATISM SCALE - Are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on improving the conditions of Blacks? 1-too little, 2-about right, 3-too much 2.0 (.71)

RACIAL CONSERVATIVE – LIBERAL – Respondents who coded themselves as strong liberal, liberal, or weak liberal on the basic ideology scale and those who were against more spending to “improve the conditions of blacks.” .13 (.34)

SOUTH – Residence in southern states .32 (.47)

YEAR –Year of the survey 1986 (8.6)

AGE – Age in years 45.7 (17.7)

EDUCATION – Total number of years of schooling 12.6 (3.1)

INCOME Respondent's income coded divided into twelve categories from highest to lowest income 8.7 (3.5)