

# Me, Myself, and (I), (D), or (R)? Partisanship and Political Cognition through the Lens of Implicit Identity

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Novel national survey data (spanning eight years), a parsimonious definition of identity, and a new Implicit Association Test are brought together to examine “implicit party identity” for the first time. This offers the most direct evidence available that voters associate themselves with their party at a visceral level, sometimes in a more or less pronounced way than they realize or report. This pre-introspection, automatic association relates strongly to voter evaluation and interpretation of the political world. Comparisons with standard explicit measures and three key outcomes (affect, differential evaluation, and motivated processing) offer insight regarding the nature, distribution, and measurement of party identification. Explicit and implicit measures largely corroborate each other in distinguishing between Democrats, Republicans, and Independents but deviate in registering partisan intensity. “Leaners” appear closer to partisans than to pure independents, and implicit identity yields a more graduated relationship than explicit party identification with outcomes of political cognition.

Party identification (PID), perhaps the most consequential voter characteristic in American politics, has been increasingly conceptualized and empirically studied as a social identity (Greene 1999, 2000, 2004; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Huddy, Mason, and Aarøe 2015; Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Nicholson 2012; Nicholson et al. 2016). The notion of PID as a psychological attachment dates back at least to *The American Voter* (Campbell et al. 1960), where its presentation, though rooted in the dominant reference group theory paradigm of the time (Newcomb 1971), could be anachronistically described as an invocation of social identity and self-categorization theory. More recently, this conceptualization has been revived in the work of Bankert, Huddy, and Rosema (2016), Greene (1999, 2000, 2004), and Huddy et al. (2015), measuring PID as a social identity, as well as Green et al. (2002), who discuss partisan stability as the product of “social identification.” This article offers a fresh theoretical take on the identity approach to PID. I employ a new measure, focused specifically on evaluating party identity at a pre-introspection level, to advance our understand-

ing of partisan intensity and address some persistent conceptual and measurement questions related to this central political factor.

While the characterization of PID as an identity is frequently invoked in the political behavior literature, there is still much to be done in specifying the conceptualization and proper measurement of “identity.” Balanced identity theory (Greenwald et al. 2002) provides an elegant, intuitive definition of identity—the level of association in an individual’s mind between a category or group object and that individual’s self-concept. It is this association between self and group that is theorized to play an important role in generating downstream identity effects like ingroup favoritism and attribution error. This is because, when group and self are cognitively linked in this way, esteem for the group becomes linked to self-esteem. This parsimonious conceptualization forms the basis of what I call “implicit party identity” and suggests a measure suited to capture it. With new nationally representative survey data, a version of the Implicit Association Test (IAT) is used to measure this core-level party identity more

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directly than was previously possible. By measuring the relative strength with which a respondent's self-concept and the political parties are cognitively linked, the IAT measure discussed here can be thought of as revealing a key footprint of identity. If our conceptualization of PID as an identity accurately captures the true nature of this attachment in the political cognition of voters, such a link between self and party must exist.

Using novel data from four national online surveys fielded over the course of eight years, including a nationally representative survey run through YouGov in the fall of 2013, we see, for the first time, direct evidence that voters associate themselves with their party at a deep, pre-introspection, automatic level. This association is sometimes more or less pronounced than respondents realize or report via explicit measures. My findings show that the traditional two-item, 7-point PID measure and the new implicit measure corroborate each other in substantial ways when it comes to distinguishing between Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. This finding offers the clearest evidence to date that an implicit identity component is a dominant feature of PID. There is considerable divergence, however, between implicit and explicit measures when it comes to capturing variations in intensity. I explore the consequences of partisan intensity by examining how three key outcomes of political cognition (affect, differential evaluation, and motivated processing) vary in relation to both the standard explicit PID measure and the party identity IAT. Analysis of all three outcomes suggests that implicit party identity consistently captures additional variation, perhaps providing a more graduated measure of partisan intensity. Furthermore, analysis in light of implicit party identity reveals that Republican partisans, over the past eight years, have been consistently stronger partisan identifiers than their Democratic counterparts, suggesting that the GOP may benefit from an "identity gap." And this new measure allows us to show that "leaners" from both parties appear closer to partisans than to pure independents, bolstering claims that these individuals are best analyzed along with their copartisans. These results have significant implications for our understanding and measurement of PID and its consequences for political cognition.

## DEFINING AND MEASURING PARTY IDENTITY

### Party identification's de facto definition

In terms of conceptualizing PID, the Michigan and social identity approaches have not been the only entrants, and alternative conceptualizations remain influential in political science (Franklin 1984; Franklin and Jackson 1983; Jackson 1975a, 1975b; Kroh and Selb 2009; Page and Jones 1979). Key and Munger (1959) had offered a somewhat different view, describing partisanship as a "standing decision." The "running tally" or Bayesian updating models (Achen 2002; Fiorina 1981;

Zechman 1979), which may be conceptually more in keeping with Key's take, would emerge in reaction to the Michigan model. Most recently, scholars have offered theory (Sniderman and Stiglitz 2012) and typologies (Dalton 2007) that meld emotional, spatial, and cognitive accounts of PID, by focusing on the informational role of party reputations. It is not entirely clear that the discipline has coordinated on a single, dominant, precisely stated definition of PID. What is clear is that the Michigan School's mechanism for measuring PID (a two-item survey measure generating a 7-point scale) has become the de facto operationalization of the concept.

Scholarly faith in this measure comes despite the fact that we do not fully understand its microfoundations. And our use of it has persisted despite suggestions that it may suffer from non-monotonicities or "intransitivities" (Petrocik 1974), or mask multidimensionality (Craig 1985; Dennis 1988a, 1988b; Weisberg 1980), and indications that it may not dominate alternatives or combinations of measures in terms of measurement error (Green and Schickler 1993). Part of the challenge is defining the underlying concept we are measuring and selecting outcomes to which it should or must correlate. In some cases the point of reference is something like candidate preference (Green and Schickler 1993). In others, it has been participation (Petrocik 1974). Certainly, we would like our underlying concept to correlate with behavior. But we should also aspire to clarify the concept itself. For the Michigan scholars, "partisanship was conceptualized as a psychological identification with a party . . . entirely a matter of self-definition" (Campbell et al. 1986, 100). Converse and Pierce (1985, 145) describe this "self-identity" concept more precisely, saying an individual's PID is one among those "attributes felt to be part of his or her persona, or definition of the social self."

Important work has been done to more directly measure the identity component of PID by manipulating the wording of the standard survey items (Burden and Klofstad 2005) or by applying a psychological scale to measure identity (Greene 1999, 2000, 2004; Huddy et al. 2015). But tapping directly into a pre-introspection, unconscious level of identity is something that has not been done before. That is because explicit measures simply are not appropriate for this task. They are, by their very nature, the product of introspection. In his groundbreaking work on PID, Greene (1999, 2000, 2004) made extensive use of the 10-item identification with a psychological group (IDPG) scale (Mael and Tetrick 1992). Huddy et al. (2015) have recently developed and tested a four-item measure and used it to examine the role of party identity in political engagement. Greene's findings on the relationship between PID and "identity" provided clarification on a number of fronts, including the "anomalous behavior and identity of partisan leaners" (1999, 393). As these prior studies have shown, the IDPG and similar scales offer many advantages for measuring iden-

tity, but there are some important limitations. They are still explicit measures, so they remain the product of introspection. Furthermore, they assume the direction of partisanship. If you indicate that you are a Democrat when faced with the standard measure, you will answer questions regarding your identification with Democrats. Thus, it is not possible with such measures for a respondent who reports being a Democrat to have an identity score that suggests otherwise. This is because, fundamentally, the IDPG is not an alternative to the standard measure, it is an extension of it. Its implementation is predicated on the results of the Michigan measure. Also, since the IDPG is not a relative measure, it only shows the level of identification with one group and does not include the other side of that coin—distance from the out-group or the extent to which association with the other group generates dissonance. The partisan version of this measure also does not work for pure independents. These are all limitations not suffered by the IAT measure used here.<sup>1</sup>

### Defining identity

The most commonly invoked treatments of identity emerge from social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 2004) and self-categorization theory (Turner and Onorato 1999). The key interaction for self-categorization theory (which emerged directly from social identity theory) is the one between the self-concept and a given social group: “The basic process postulated is *self-categorization*, leading to *self-stereotyping* and the *depersonalization* of self-perception” (Turner and Onorato 1999, 20–21).

I examine party identity as a pre-introspection association between self and a partisan group. This focus, and the measurement strategy I use, emerges from a more recent theory that offers a conceptualization of identity. Balanced identity theory (BIT) defines identity in simple terms: it is the degree of association between an individual’s self-concept and a social category or group (Cvencek, Greenwald, and Meltzoff 2012; Greenwald et al. 2002). In BIT, individuals associate themselves with an assortment of social objects (e.g., male, white, college professor, American), and these associations can vary in strength.<sup>2</sup> The most notable feature of BIT’s definition for the examination of implicit party identity is that it points directly to a measurement paradigm. As Greenwald et al. (2002) put it, the IAT is suited for measuring the connections in BIT because “some of the associative links of [the social knowledge structure] may not be available to intro-

spection and may therefore not permit accurate assessment by self-report measures (cf. Greenwald and Banaji 1995),” and “self-report measures are susceptible to artifacts (such as impression management and demand characteristics) that can distort reporting even of associations that are introspectively available.”

## MEASURING IMPLICIT PARTY IDENTITY

### The Implicit Association Test

Like all implicit measures, the IAT seeks to reveal an attitude or association present in a respondent’s mind without directly asking the respondent about it. This is done using response latency. Implicit measures that rely on response latency are based on the following premises: (1) that less mental processing is required when a given task corresponds with associations that preexist in a respondent’s mind and (2) tasks that require less processing will take less time (Donders 1969).<sup>3</sup>

IAT participants are asked to classify stimuli that appear on their computer monitor in rapid succession. The task normally pairs attribute concepts (such as Good and Bad) and target concepts (such as Black and White), each of which is represented by a set of words and images (the aforementioned stimuli). The IAT consists of a series of blocks (each of which will present the respondent with a series of images or words that they must classify). The difference between one block and another is not in the words or images that will be presented to the respondent. Rather, it is in the classification instructions a respondent is provided as she begins each block. This difference forms the basis of the measure. In one block, a respondent may be asked to press a key with her left hand when presented with stimuli that represent Good and Black. That block would also include instructions to press another key with her right hand when she sees stimuli that represent Bad and White. This type of block is measuring the associations between Good and Black and White and Bad. When the instructions are reversed (using one key/hand for Good and White and another for Bad and Black), the associations between Bad and Black, and Good and White are being measured. In each block, respondents are asked to classify the stimuli that pop up as quickly as they can while making as few errors as possible (errors being defined as a failure to follow the classification instructions). When an error is made, a red “X” is typically displayed on the screen. The speed with which respondents are able to perform each type of block (as defined by the instructions) is not meaningful on its own. But, after several blocks with each attribute-to-target classification combination, we have the ability to

1. The relationship between the party identity IAT D score and the IDPG scale is shown in the appendix. The most notable feature of the relationship between these two measures is that there is not much of one. While related, they seem to be capturing somewhat different constructs.

2. For a more detailed discussion of BIT and the theory behind the identity IAT, see Theodoridis (2013).

3. Lane et al. (2007) and Nosek, Greenwald, and Banaji (2007) are among many sources for more discussion of work using the IAT and the details of the test itself.

compare the average latency across block types, generating a measure of relative association.

When faster automatic reactions conflict with slower conscious ones, we expect the task to take longer (Smith and Nosek 2011). Thus, IAT measures are less subject to introspection than their explicit counterparts. The more introspection, the more opportunity there is for social desirability effects or higher-order cognitive control. In the case of party identity, this might be the difference between deciding that you prefer one party over the other on issue proximity as opposed to feeling at a gut level that one party or the other is part of your identity. More introspective reprocessing by respondents creates greater potential for deviation from the root association. The IAT is a measure, albeit a noisy one, of precisely this association. Whether the presence of introspection produces a measure that is better or worse depends on the purpose of the measurement enterprise.

Party identity measures hardly represent the first application of the IAT to politics. Even excluding work on race and ethnic politics and system justification, one finds no shortage of research being done on topics related to electoral politics, attitudes and ideology (e.g., Arcuri et al. 2008; Friese et al. 2012; Gawronski, Galdi, and Arcuri 2015; Graham et al. 2012; Intawan and Nicholson, forthcoming; Jost, Nosek, and Gosling 2008; Mo 2015; Nosek, Graham, and Hawkins 2010; Pérez 2010, 2016). One notable recent application in political science is by Iyengar and Westwood (2015), who use a party attitude (Good vs. Bad) IAT to measure the new affective polarization construct (Iyengar et al. 2012). The IAT measure used by Iyengar and Westwood (2015), and also in Nosek et al. (2014), is ideally suited for that purpose, as it is an implicit analogue of the party feeling thermometer (an explicit measure they also use). The IAT used here, on the other hand, is more analogous to explicit PID items, so it is less suited for measuring affective polarization but uniquely suited for measuring party identity. While affective polarization and the implicit party identity discussed here are distinct concepts, the former is likely a downstream consequence of the latter. So we might expect party attitude IATs to be correlated with the party identity IAT in the same way we would expect feeling thermometer scores to correlate with PID. Given the nature of most identities<sup>4</sup> and general tendency toward positive self-esteem, it is hard to envision an implicit identity existing without generating implicit affect, but the reverse is less difficult to imagine. For example, men have been shown to display positive affect for “female,” while still identifying as “male” (Aidman and Carroll 2003; Rudman and Goodwin 2004).

4. Some stigmatized groups (e.g., overweight) provide exceptions, wherein group identifiers show outgroup favoritism.

### Party identity IAT

The application of the IAT discussed in these pages differs from most common applications because it seeks to measure identity rather than an attitude. To do this, “self” and “others” are used as the attribute concepts (rather than, say, “good” and “bad”) and a social category (e.g., Democrat or Republican) is used as the target concept (Devos and Banaji 2005; Greenwald and Farnham 2000; Nosek, Banaji, and Greenwald 2002). For implicit party identity, this is operationalized as the association of the terms “I,” “me,” “myself,” and “they,” “them,” or “others” with Democratic or Republican images. In many cases, the IAT is used to overcome social desirability bias in attitude self-reports. The application presented here could certainly be used to combat social desirability effects in the case of partisanship, as there may well be partisans who claim to be pure independents (Klar and Krupnikov 2016). However, reconciling this sort of discrepancy between implicit and explicit measures of party identity is not the primary way in which the IAT is used in this article. Standard explicit measures of PID generally identify fewer than 20% of respondents as pure independents (and, presumably, some of those are genuinely independent). Even though their ranks are relatively small, revealing the partisan leanings of these individuals is certainly of value (for an example of work that does so, see Hawkins and Nosek [2012]), but it is not the primary focus here.

Despite its relative novelty and the inherent noisiness of implicit measures, the identity IAT has proven reasonably robust as a way to tap into a wide range of constructs. Identity IATs have demonstrated validity in numerous studies when it comes to their correlation with known identities (convergent validity) and outcomes we expect identity to produce (predictive validity). Hawkins and Nosek (2012) find that a party identity IAT similar to the one used here predicts the leanings of self-declared Independents. Lindner and Nosek (2009) find a liberal-conservative identity IAT predictive of differential application of free speech principles. Mitchell, Macrae, and Banaji (2006) use the liberal-conservative identity IAT to categorize subjects in examining the neural correlates of evaluation of similar and dissimilar others. Beyond politics, the identity IAT has been applied to gender identity (Aidman and Carroll 2003; Greenwald and Farnham 2000) and math-gender stereotypes (Cvencek, Meltzoff, and Greenwald 2011), minimal group contexts (Pinter and Greenwald 2011), weight identity (Grover, Keel, and Mitchell 2003), and alcohol drinking identity (Gray et al. 2011; Lindgren et al. 2013).

These studies also differ from more common IAT work in that the brief IAT (BIAT) (Nosek et al. 2014; Sriram and Greenwald 2009) was used. The BIAT features a somewhat different procedure designed to decrease the time required

to administer it, but the basic logic remains the same. While the standard IAT makes all four categories focal in its various blocks, each BIAT block makes only two of the categories focal. In other words, when presented with a Democratic block of this BIAT, respondents are told to press one key on the keyboard for Democratic images and the words “I,” “me,” “myself,” and they are told to press another key for anything else. In the standard IAT, the other key would be expressly designated for Republican pictures and “they,” “them,” and “others.” In my studies, pronouns referring to the self are always focal, while those referring to “other” are always nonfocal. This is because self-associations have proven more reliable than “other” associations (Sriram and Greenwald 2009). Each block in these studies presented respondents with eight pictures and six words. The task featured six blocks, three in which self is to be associated with Democratic images and three in which self is associated with Republican images. The repetition of block types increases measurement accuracy. (The appendix, available online, provides further details and example blocks.) A respondent’s average response times for these two types of blocks are the components of the IAT D score that indicates relative identity:

$$D = \frac{\overline{Latency}_{Self\ Democrat} - \overline{Latency}_{Self\ Republican}}{SD}, \quad (1)$$

where  $\overline{Latency}_{Self\ Democrat}$  and  $\overline{Latency}_{Self\ Republican}$  represent the response latency (measured in milliseconds) for a subject on IAT blocks for which the task instructions require the association of self with Democratic and Republican images, respectively. SD is the overall standard deviation of response latency for that subject. This is a bounded version of Cohen’s *d*, producing a summary measure with a theoretical range of  $-2$  to  $2$  but a narrower range in practice.<sup>5</sup> All measures discussed here (both implicit and explicit) are coded to be centered at zero and such that negative scores are associated with Democrats and positive scores associated with Republicans.<sup>6</sup>

5. For more information on the calculation and properties of IAT D scores, see Cai et al. (2004); Greenwald, Nosek, and Banaji (2003); and Sriram, Nosek, and Greenwald (2006)

6. The processing protocols for the BIAT data in the studies presented here are developed based on the guidance in Sriram and Greenwald (2009) and Nosek et al. (2014). Latencies  $>10,000$  ms are removed. Latencies  $>2,500$  ms are truncated to 2,500 ms, and latencies  $<250$  ms are truncated to 250 ms. Respondents are not purged on the basis of error rate, because only 4% of respondents produced an error rate  $>35\%$  and fewer than 1% of respondents generated an error rate  $> 50\%$ .

## Studies

The data examined here emerge from four separate large-N online studies fielded over the course of eight years. Most of the analyses focus on data from a study fielded through YouGov in September of 2013 using a nationally representative sample ( $N = 1200$ ). Analyses of this study employ sampling weights to maximize representativeness, allowing for more reliable population inferences. Also analyzed here are data from three other studies in which the party identity IAT is used: a May 2008 American National Election Study pilot designed and hosted by Project Implicit ( $N = 2507$ ); a study using a sample from the Project Implicit research pool in the summer of 2011 ( $N = 1616$ ); and, a two-wave panel study fielded in late January and early February of 2016 among Survey Sampling International (SSI) respondents (wave 1:  $N = 698$ ; wave 2:  $N = 500$ ) using quotas for race, gender, education, and age to match American Community Survey benchmarks for the voting age population. The relationship, across all four studies, between 3-point explicit PID and the implicit party identity D score is shown in figure 1. Despite the differences in sample source and composition and the eight-year span covered by the surveys, the pattern is remarkably consistent.<sup>7</sup>

## Interpreting the IAT

It is important to note that IAT measures are better used in the aggregate than at the individual level. This is because the IAT, like other implicit measures reliant on response latency, is inherently noisy, especially when compared to explicit measures (Blanton, Jaccard, Christie, et al. 2007; Blanton, Jaccard, Klick, et al. 2009). On the other hand, many IAT measures have performed favorably in terms of average test-retest reliability, internal consistency and correlation with established explicit or observed measures (Greenwald et al. 2002). My two-wave panel SSI study allows us to assess the consistency of this particular party identity BIAT measure. Among the 500 respondents administered the task in both waves, the test-retest correlation for the measure was 0.624. Lane et al. (2007, 70) report that “in 20 studies that have included more than one administration of the IAT, test-retest reliability ranged from 0.25 to 0.69, with mean and median test-retest reliability of 0.50.” This distribution highlights the variability of IAT test-retest reliability, which is partly a product of the

7. The only study with appreciably different magnitudes, albeit with the same overall pattern, is the initial ANES pilot. Tempting as it is to attribute this to that study being the only one fielded under the George W. Bush Administration, the difference is more likely due to the fact that this pilot study did not include the standard explicit PID measure. So, respondents are categorized on the basis of a single item asking whether they “prefer” Democrats, Republicans, or Neither.

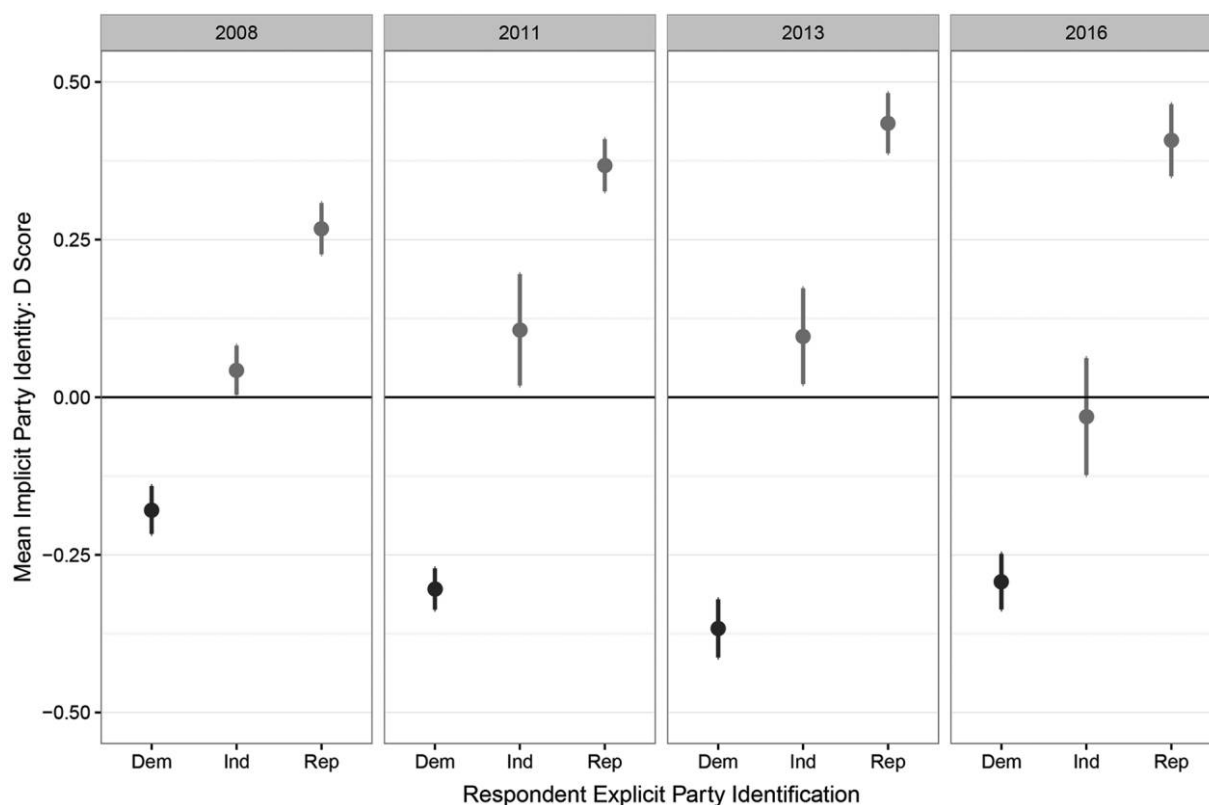


Figure 1. Party identity over time. These plots show mean party identity IAT D scores for Democrats, Republicans, and Independents (based on explicit self-reports) across four different studies conducted between 2008 and 2016. The 2008 explicit PID variable is drawn from a single item asking respondents whether they “prefer” Democrats, Republicans or Neither. In all other cases, PID is determined using the standard two-item measure, and leaners are included as partisans. Error bars show 95% confidence intervals. Sample weights are used for the 2013 YouGov study. IAT = Implicit Association Test; PID = party identification.

fact that the IAT is a method, not a construct. Beyond the noisiness of the measure itself, consistency will always be a function of the coherency and variance of the construct one uses the method to measure. The party identity BIAT’s test-retest  $r$  is near the top of the distribution described above.

Common critiques of the IAT often focus on its interpretation (Arkes and Tetlock 2004; Blanton, Jaccard, Christie, et al. 2007; Blanton, Jaccard, Klick, et al. 2009).<sup>8</sup> One particular line of criticism for IATs designed to ascertain attitudes emerges from the environmental association model, which posits that “the IAT may tell us what associations the

8. Some have also expressed concern regarding the potential for individuals “gaming” the IAT in order to mask associations that may not be socially desirable. While it is possible (Kim 2003), the nature and temporal resolution (milliseconds) of the task make it exceedingly difficult for subjects to consciously manipulate their responses without extending latency so much as to make their efforts obvious (Cvencek et al. 2010). The social desirability bias in this case is likely less compelling a reason to “cheat” than on some other IATs. Also, a subject so concerned that she might appear to identify with the opposite party on an online measure that she would go to the trouble of attempting to fake results is likely quite partisan.

person has been exposed to in his or her environment rather than the extent to which the person endorses the attitude object” (Karpinski and Hilton 2001, 783). Again, this is less problematic for the party identity IAT. When measuring the association between self and party, it is not entirely clear what environmental association would mean. It may imply that an individual does not think of herself as a Democrat but believes the outside world thinks of her in that way. Such inconsistency with regard to party seems less likely than for attitudes. And one would imagine that knowing that those around you categorize you a certain way might actually translate into you identifying with that category. The relevant distinction here is that the party identity IAT asks respondents about themselves where other versions are asking for attitudes regarding groups or concepts that may or may not be related to the respondent.

#### PARTISANSHIP THROUGH THE LENS OF IMPLICIT PARTY IDENTITY

I now apply the new measure to address a set of important questions regarding partisanship: (1) Is it reasonable to think

of PID as a social identity in the sense described by balanced identity theory? That is, do voters associate themselves with their party at a pre-introspection level? (2) In what ways does this relate to the explicit survey items we currently use to measure PID? (3) Does identity appear to operate in a similar way across the two parties, or are there differences? (4) Are “leaners” more similar to partisans or pure independents in terms of their intensity of party identity? And (5) how does partisan intensity as measured by implicit and explicit party identity relate to outcomes of political cognition we expect it to “predict”?

### The identity dimension of PID

I begin by exploring the basic question of whether partisans appear to associate their party with their self-concept at a pre-introspection level. Such an association is important to an account of PID as a deep psychological attachment.<sup>9</sup> Figures 2 and 3B, which use data from the YouGov study, show levels of association (as measured by the party identity IAT) for each point on the standard 7-point Michigan measure.<sup>10</sup>

A few observations stand out regarding figures 2 and 3B. Used as a 3-point indicator (see fig. 3A), the standard measure appears to be capturing implicit identity quite well. However, the implicit and explicit measures diverge somewhat as measures of intensity within each party. Explicit PID relates to implicit identity differently on each side of the aisle, primarily differentiating between the parties rather than identifying variation in intensity within each party. We see one case of non-monotonicity, or what Petrocik (1974) called “intransitivity.” That is, in only one case is the average for one category greater than that for the category to the right of it. While the difference is not statistically significant, it appears that “not so strong” Republicans identify less intensely with their party than do Republican leaners. The relationship is more linear among Democrats, where the standard scale

9. On the other hand, this is an association one might not expect to emerge for voters whose partisanship is best described as a “standing decision” or “running tally.” To be sure, these descriptions are not necessarily in conflict with an identity account of PID. It is easy to imagine an associational identity emerging from iterative updating of party evaluations in light of new information. Once it develops, however, the association would likely interfere with the individual’s ability to continue incorporating political information in a disinterested fashion.

10. One might note that the mean for pure Independents is not precisely zero, falling at 0.097. This should not be attributed to the calibration of the measure, and does not indicate that the true zero point for this measure is 0.097. The IAT D score, being a relative measure, is centered on zero at the individual level by construction. If a respondent takes exactly as long for the Republican blocks as for the Democratic blocks, that individual’s score will be zero because the numerator of equation (1) above will be zero. So, the deviation from zero seen here reflects the composition of the pure independents.

produces a near interval-level variable with regard to implicit identity. The overall relationship between the party identity IAT and the standard PID measure supports the contention that PID behaves as an identity in the minds of voters. We see clear evidence for precisely the sort of association between self and party that is called for by balanced identity theory. This provides perhaps the “smoking gun” evidence to simultaneously confirm the role of identity in what PID has come to mean, and the ability of the standard measure that has defined it to categorize respondents along that identity dimension.

We are also able to compare relative implicit identity across the parties, as defined by explicit PID. We see that Republicans of every intensity appear to be stronger identifiers than are their Democratic counterparts (though the difference is not statistically significant for each individual level of PID strength). Thus, we see evidence that PID, as conventionally measured, means different things in terms of identity among Democrats and Republicans, and that there may be an “identity gap” separating the two parties at the moment. This too is most clear in figure 3A. In the YouGov study, the gap between Republicans and Democrats in magnitude of identity is 0.07, with a bootstrapped *p*-value of .009. Figure 1 shows that similar asymmetry is evident in all four studies, despite the fact that they were fielded in different years and with different samples. The observation of a gap in intensity is consistent with other recent findings in political behavior (Goggin and Theodoridis 2016; Theodoridis 2012) and is one obfuscated by both the standard PID measure and the IDPG scale. In fact, the 7-point PID scale points to a very different conclusion. In the YouGov study, 47% of Democrats rate themselves as “strong” partisans, as compared with only 34% of Republicans. This skew of the intensity distributions across the standard measure might lead one to conclude that *Democrats* are the more intense identifiers. The IDPG scale averages (which range from zero to four) within the various levels of the 7-point and 3-point PID scales also do not expose any remarkable differences between the parties. Among the YouGov sample, the average IDPG scores for Democrats (1.97) and Republicans (1.94) are nearly identical. The comparison of average IDPG score by 7-point PID shows that only Republican leaners (1.77) identify more strongly than their equivalent Democrats (1.58).

### Implicit identity and the building blocks of PID

Having demonstrated a strong overall relationship between explicit PID and the new IAT measure (correlation = 0.61), I now examine the relationship between implicit party identity and the Michigan measure’s component parts. Figure 3B suggests how the responses to each item of the standard PID

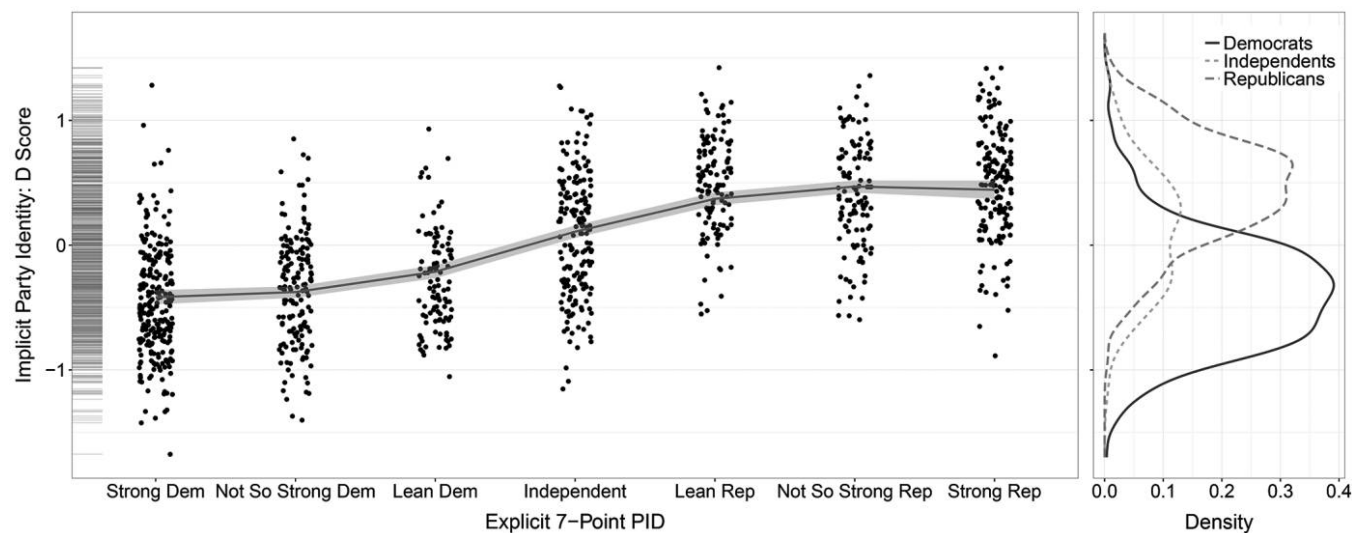


Figure 2. Implicit and explicit. These plots illustrate the distribution of D scores emerging from the party identity IAT. The jitter plot shows the relationship between the D score and the standard 7-point PID measure, while the rug plot along the y-axis displays the overall distribution of D scores. The density plot to the right shows the distribution of D scores for each 3-point PID category, with leaners included as partisans. Sampling weights were used to generate both the loess (with 95% confidence intervals; span used in curve estimation is  $\alpha = 0.2$ ) and the density lines. IAT = Implicit Association Test; PID = party identification.

measure relate to implicit party identity. (The relationship for each item is shown in the appendix.) The introductory question captures the most variation in implicit identity, with implicit and explicit measures correlated at 0.56. The leaner question also captures meaningful variation, producing a 0.52 correlation. The two partisan strength items capture the least variation with correlations of 0.08 for Democrats and 0.11 for Republicans.

The standard explicit PID scale appears to capture most of the variation in implicit identity through the introductory question and the follow-up item for Independents. The strength items add only modestly in this regard. The non-monotonicity discussed above involving Republican leaners is produced by the way in which the items interact to generate a 7-point scale. The two-item measure does exceptionally well at distinguishing those with implicit Democratic identity from those with implicit Republican identity (due to the effectiveness of the introductory question and the “leaner” question). On the other hand, we see that explicit and implicit measures do not match up entirely when it comes to intensity of party identity.<sup>11</sup>

11. We might wonder whether there simply is no variation in strength of identity for the 7-point scale to capture. That is, perhaps modern, polarized partisanship generates three clusters of respondents. But, far from such a bi- or tri-modal distribution, the rug plot and density plot in figure 2 suggest that the distribution of D scores is uni-modal and features a substantial central tendency. So, while the figure 2 density plot highlights that Republicans and Democrats are polarized along an implicit identity dimension, there is also

### Closet partisans?

The effectiveness of the “leaner” question in capturing variation in implicit identity also offers substantial support for the contention that “leaners” are best thought of (and analyzed) as partisans when it comes to attachment to their party. This is especially clear on the Republican side, in light of the breakdown of identity levels by 7-point PID discussed above and shown in figures 2 and 3B. While there is no non-monotonicity on the Democratic side, “leaners” are far closer to the “not so strong” Democrats than they are to either pure independents or zero. While many scholars have argued that “leaners” are, in fact, partisans (Keith et al. 1992; Magleby and Nelson 2012; Norpoth and Velez 2012; Petrocik 2009), some have offered evidence casting doubt on this claim (Abrams and Fiorina 2011; Miller and Shanks 1996), and Campbell et al. (1960) even grouped “leaners” with pure independents. Others (Klar 2013; Klar and Krupnikov 2016) have shown that “leaners” are more like partisans in some ways (e.g., preferences) and more like pure independents in others (e.g., participation). One reason for disagreement on this point may be that there has been no consensus outcome to use in comparing “leaners” to partisans. Should it be vote choice on which we examine proximity? Split-ticket voting? Participation levels? Given the intentions of the Michigan scholars, intensity of identity seems an eminently defen-

sufficient overlap and density in the middle to produce meaningful variation for an explicit measure to capture.



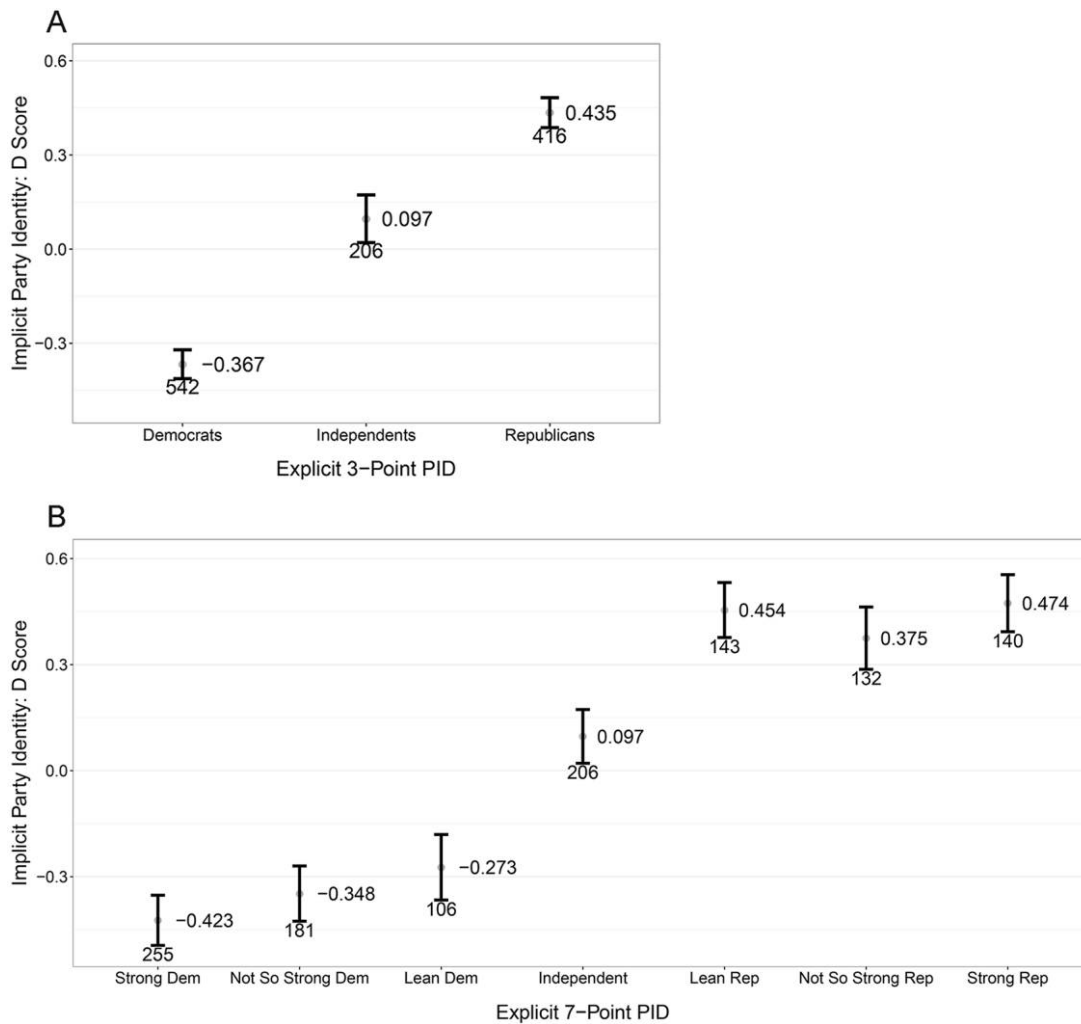


Figure 3. Mean levels of implicit identity by PID. These plots show the mean implicit party identity IAT D score at each level of the standard 3-point and 7-point PID scales, with bars representing 95% confidence intervals. Leaners are included as partisans for 3-point PID, and sample weights are used. IAT = Implicit Association Test; PID = party identification.

sible choice for comparison of intensity. And, as this new measure and these new data demonstrate, “leaners” are more like partisans than they are like pure independents on this important dimension. This is not meant to suggest that “leaners” and partisans are the same in every way. Obviously they are not (in terms of the way in which they answer survey questions, at the very least). But it should provide guidance on how scholars use the 7-point scale, especially those seeking to collapse it into a three-category variable. Since the stated goal of the PID items was to ascertain partisan identity, it appears far more appropriate to group “leaners” with partisans rather than pure independents when collapsing the scale.

**PARTISAN INTENSITY AND POLITICAL COGNITION**

We should expect robust measures of partisan intensity to be associated with gradation in important outcomes of po-

litical cognition. My studies allow us to explore how three such outcomes (affect, differential evaluation and motivated processing) vary in relation to both the standard explicit PID measure and the implicit party identity IAT.<sup>12</sup>

12. Throughout the analysis of outcomes, the IAT D score is collapsed into a six-point scale by dividing respondents into three equally sized magnitude levels by overall quantile. Thus, zero is retained as the midpoint. The use of equal quantiles is arbitrary, but it is also agnostic as to the appropriate distribution of cut points. The end result for both measures is “Low,” “Medium,” and “High” intensity-level categories. For the standard measure, these levels correspond to “Lean,” “Not So Strong,” and “Strong,” respectively. The analysis of 7-point PID measures excludes pure independents, as that measure does not provide a mechanism for assigning pure independents to one party or another. The IAT allows us to include pure independents as they can be classified as partisans on the basis of the charge of their D score. This highlights another useful feature of the measure, one exploited in Hawkins and Nosek (2012).

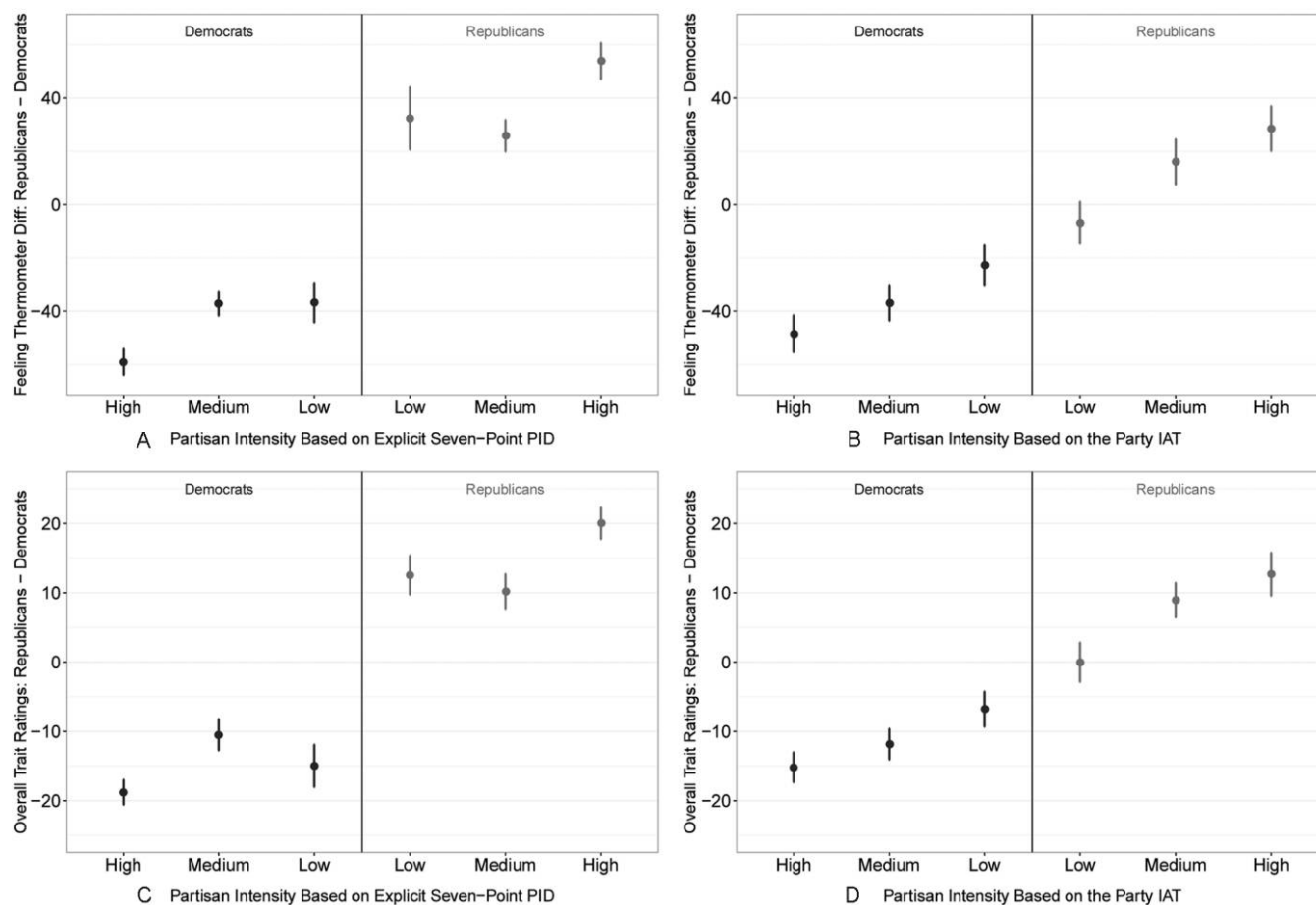


Figure 4. Differential affect and evaluation. These figures show differences affect and evaluation by partisan intensity levels as determined by either the explicit 7-point PID measure or the party identity IAT. Affect is measured as the difference between a respondent's feeling thermometer ratings for Republicans and Democrats. Differential evaluation is the difference between a respondent's overall positive trait ratings for "typical" Republican and Democratic candidates. In the case of 7-point party identification, "Low," "Medium," and "High" intensity corresponds to "Lean," "Not So Strong," and "Strong," respectively. The IAT scores are broken into six levels by quantile, for the sake of comparability. Error bars show 95% confidence intervals. Affect data are from the SSI study. Evaluation data are from the YouGov study, and sampling weights are used. IAT = Implicit Association Test; PID = party identification; SSI = Survey Sampling International.

Heading the increasingly influential proposition by Iyengar et al. (2012, 406) that "to the extent that party identification represents a meaningful group affiliation, the more appropriate test of polarization is affective, not ideological, identity," I begin my examination of outcomes by looking at affect. I operationalize affect, as do Iyengar et al. (2012) and Iyengar and Westwood (2015), using 100-degree thermometer ratings for Democrats and Republicans as recorded in the SSI study. Figure 4 uses the difference between a respondent's thermometer score for Republicans and Democrats as a measure of differential affect.<sup>13</sup> Plotting differential affect against explicit PID yields Democratic and Republican clusters. When intensity is measured using implicit identity, on the other hand, a gradual linear relationship emerges.

13. The relationships for Democratic and Republican thermometer scores separately are available in the appendix. The patterns are consistent with those in figure 4.

Partisans are also known to evaluate candidates from the two parties differentially on a number of dimensions. To examine the relationship between this behavior and intensity, I focus on trait ratings (Goggin and Theodoridis 2016; Hayes 2005). Each respondent in the YouGov study rated "typical" candidates from both parties on a set of positive traits (compassionate, really cares, inspiring, honest, knowledgeable, hard-working, moral and strong leader). Figure 4 uses the overall within-subject difference between these ratings. As with affect, we see a contrast in the pattern that emerges depending upon the intensity measure used. The means for explicit PID levels are clustered around each other, while the means for implicit party identity levels once again stack in a linear fashion.

Group identities, such as political party, are also frequently associated with the presence of perceptual biases and motivated reasoning favoring the ingroup over the outgroup (e.g., Bartels 2002; Jerit and Barabas 2012; Nicholson 2005; Pettigrew 1979; Redlawsk 2002). Campbell et al. (1960, 133) ex-

pected their identity based partisan identification to be no exception: “Identification with a party raises a perceptual screen through which the individual tends to see what is favorable to his partisan orientation. The stronger the party bond, the more exaggerated the process of selection and perceptual distortion will be.” The party identity IAT allows us to examine the extent to which the intensity of identity (“the party bond”) relates to the opacity of any perceptual screen. To measure motivated processing, I use an experimental manipulation. Subjects are asked to read a “news” report about a Senator admitting to lying about his opponent’s issue positions. The report (example shown in the appendix) was

designed to resemble a newspaper clipping. Reports were identical across experimental conditions except that the party of the politician is randomly manipulated. Respondents are then presented with a series of statements with which they could agree or disagree: (1) This report seems fair. (2) The person who wrote this is probably biased. (3) This sort of thing is important to me when deciding which candidate to support. (4) The Senator deserves credit for admitting this. (5) The behavior that got the Senator in trouble is typical. Their responses are additively combined to generate a single scale. The estimand of interest here is:  $Motivated_{Pro-Republican} = \bar{x}_D - \bar{x}_R$ , where  $D$  and  $R$  indicate the party of the Senator in

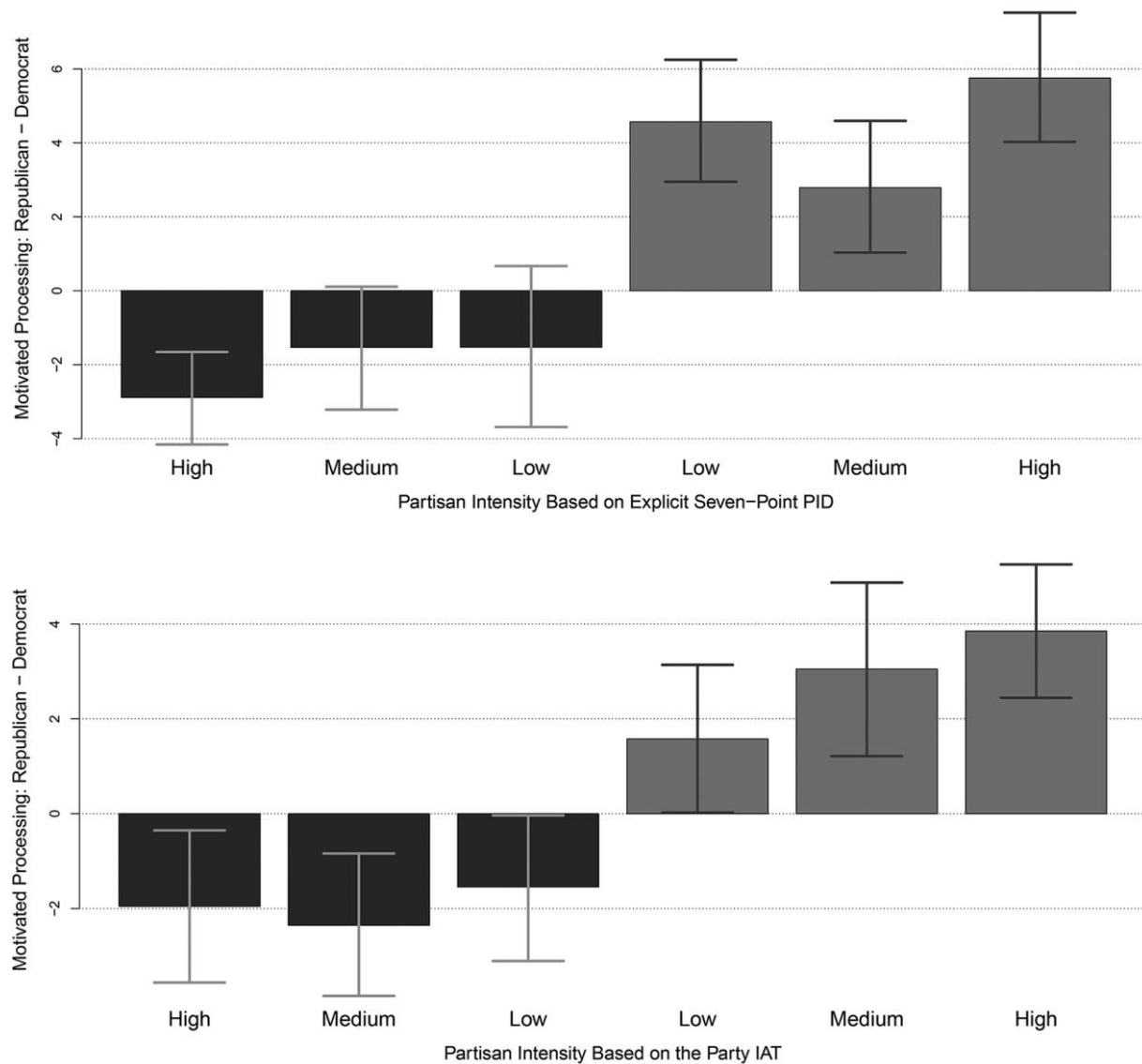


Figure 5. Motivated processing. These figures show the level of motivated processing by partisan intensity levels as determined by either the explicit 7-point PID measure or the party identity IAT. In the case of 7-point party identification, “Low,” “Medium,” and “High” intensity corresponds to “Lean,” “Not So Strong,” and “Strong,” respectively. The IAT scores are broken into six levels by quantile, for the sake of comparability. Error bars show bootstrapped (10,000 resamples) 95% confidence intervals. Data are from the YouGov study, and sampling weights are used. IAT = Implicit Association Test; PID = party identification.

the news report. This measures the extent of pro-Republican favoritism (negative values are associated with pro-Democratic favoritism).

The IAT measure appears to do best in “predicting” motivated processing among Republicans, but no similar trend emerges when using 7-point PID (see fig. 5). Among Democrats, neither measure does particularly well at differentiating levels of motivation.<sup>14</sup> While motivated processing appears to relate to identity in a more pronounced way among Republicans than among Democrats, analysis of the three outcomes taken together suggests that implicit party identity consistently provides a more graduated measure of partisan intensity than the standard 7-point scale.<sup>15</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This article builds upon an identity conceptualization of PID, clarifying the definition of identity and presenting a novel implicit measure of party identity. With new survey data, the measure allows us to explore partisan intensity and make comparisons with the status quo explicit measure of PID and partisan identity as they relate to both each other and indicators of key political cognition outcomes. With guidance from balanced identity theory, the IAT is employed to directly measure implicit party identity in a fashion that is consistent with the way in which Campbell et al. (1960) conceived of PID.

Given that the explicit measure has become the operational definition of the concept, this analysis is able to offer perhaps the most compelling evidence to date in support of an identity model of PID. The Michigan measure generally is most consistent with implicit party identity in distinguishing Democrats and Republicans from each other, not in distinguishing between levels of intensity within a party. The measure also offers strong evidence that “leaners” are closer to partisans than they are to pure independents in terms

14. The failure of both measures to capture meaningful variation on this outcome among Democrats could be interpreted in a number of ways. The overall level of bias on the Democratic side is lower (again perhaps indicating the asymmetry noted before), so there may just not be as much meaningful variation to measure. Or it may be that motivated reasoning is repressed to a greater degree by Democrats. Amodio et al. (2007) argue that political liberals demonstrate greater levels of cognitive control than do conservatives. This executive neural function could lead Democratic respondents to censor their impulse to bias evaluations, ultimately producing a less pronounced relationship between the intensity of identity and the expression of bias. Both interpretations require further exploration.

15. Regression models shown in the appendix corroborate these findings, showing that implicit party identity captures additional variation in differential affect and evaluation even when accounting for 3-point and 7-point explicit PID.

of the critical identity dimension of partisanship. Furthermore, comparison with measures of affect, differential evaluation and motivated processing suggests that implicit party identity consistently captures additional variation in outcomes of political cognition, perhaps providing a more graduated measure of partisan intensity than the standard 7-point scale.

Most importantly, this new measure allows us to see that partisan attachments in the United States are so ingrained in voter cognition that they appreciably impact reaction time when completing a simple classification task. Many Americans associate themselves with their party at a deep, visceral level, sometimes in a more or less pronounced way than they realize or report in explicit measures. This automatic association is very much related to the ways in which voters evaluate and interpret the political world.

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