

RACE, IMMIGRATION, AND (NON)PARTISANSHIP IN AMERICA

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Preface

[PLACEHOLDER]

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

*Tweedledum and Tweedledee
Agree to have a battle!
For Tweedledum said Tweedledee
Had spoiled his nice new rattle.*

*Just then flew down a monstrous crow,
As black as a tar-barrel!
Which frightened both the heroes so,
They quite forgot their quarrel.*

Lewis Carroll (1871, 39-40)

Tuesday, November 4th, 2008: millions of Americans participate in the quadrennial political ritual of electing a president. The day was, in the elements, unexceptional. The Northwest endured wet and windy weather, a hard rain fell over Southern California, and light precipitation fell over the Northeast. Yet sun shined in the heart of the country, with record warm fall temperatures in the 70s, as Chicagoans revelled boisterously in an historic evening. The estimated 131 million voters who constituted the American electorate that day had elected the first American of African heritage to the highest office in the land. A body politic that had, at the nation's founding consented to count African Americans in fractions for purposes of allocating political offices without any rights of representation; that had witnessed the effective dismantlement of the African American franchise in the Jim Crow South, following the hard-earned progress with Reconstruction and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments; that had subsequently gloried in the effective reinstatement of the African American franchise, only to suffer through the continued deployment of the "race card" in electioneering; had done what few would have thought imaginable even a year before.

Spokespersons across many divides – partisan, ideological, racial – came together to commemorate and cherish the moment. President-elect Obama noted in his acceptance speech, "It's been a long time coming, but tonight, because of what we did on this date in

this election at this defining moment, change has come to America." His foe during the election, Republican Senator John McCain, too recognized, "This is a historic election ... we have come a long way from the injustices that once stained our nation's reputation." Similarly, in the editorial pages of the *Los Angeles Times* the following Wednesday, two African Americans usually at ideological loggerheads came to a rapprochement on the significance of the 2008 election. The progressive Michael Eric Dyson declared Obama's ascendancy a "quantum leap of racial progress ... Today is a benchmark that helps to fulfill – and rescue – America's democratic reputation." Even the conservative Shelby Steele, while registering a decidedly more sober and skeptical tone, asked aloud, "Does his victory mean that America is now officially beyond racism? ... Doesn't a black in the Oval Office put the lie to both black inferiority and white racism?"

This rosy blush of "post-racial" expectations quickly wilted under the glare of finer facts about the 2008 election. Pollsters and the punditry alike were initially aflush with predictions of a record turnout, bolstered by a mobilized youth vote and a decided willingness of white voters to defy the "Bradley effect" and aver their support for a Black President. Yet a deeper dig into the data reveals a decided racial cast to the 2008 election outcome. Of the 5 million new voters in 2008 (compared to 2004 election tallies), an estimated 2 million were African American voters, another 2 million Latinos, and 600,000 more new Asian American voters. According to the Current Population Survey, the number of non-Hispanic White voters remained statistically unchanged between 2004 and 2008 (US Census Bureau, July 20, 2009). Moreover, while the voting rate of 18 to 24 year olds increased from 47 percent in 2004 to 49 percent in 2008, this increase was highest among African American youth.

Perhaps more pointedly, Obama did not emerge victorious because he won over white America. In the end a clear majority – 57% - of all white voters opposed his candidacy. To put a finer point on it, the first ripples of the flood of scholarly studies on the 2008 election have emphatically found continued evidence of racial bias in whites' electoral preferences (see, e.g., Hutchings 2009, Jackman and Vavreck 2009, Pasek et al 2009, Tesler and Sears, forthcoming). Rather, Obama won in large part because the African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans who had expanded the voter rolls had supported his candidacy in overwhelming numbers. Quite apart from symbolizing our collective journey into a post-racial era, the 2008 election appears to reinforce the realpolitik of the twin influences of an increasingly diverse electorate and a persistent racial divide in the hearts and minds of American voters.

The growing clout of racial minority voters is indeed impressive. Less than 50 years ago, white voters made up 95 percent of the active electorate.¹ One could argue that white voters operatively controlled the outcome of any national context and that, in these electoral contexts, it mattered little, practically, who minorities favored. By the time of the Obama-McCain contest whites had declined to 74 percent of the electorate. Thus while whites may still be an imposing majority of voting Americans, their dominance has greatly diminished. Ever-larger numbers of black, Hispanic, and Asian American voters are filling the void and promise to continue doing so into the future.

The racial divide in the 2008 vote is equally impressive. Setting aside both public and privately viewed sentiments that Obama enjoyed his electoral success because, as Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid indiscreetly put it, he was a "light-skinned" candidate

¹ This is the proportion of all voters in the 1960 Presidential election that identified as white (based on the American National Election Study).

of African American descent with "no Negro dialect," the evidence of racial dissensus even in these allegedly best of circumstances is widespread. On one side, voters from the three largest racial and ethnic minority groups strongly favored Obama. He won 95 percent of the black vote, 67 percent of the Latino vote and 62 percent of the Asian American vote.² On the other side, the clear majority of white voters favored McCain. Only 43 percent of white voters chose to support the Democratic nominee. Moreover, the first wave of studies on the 2008 election finds little change in whites' racial policy preferences compared to the 1988 election, when the Reverend Jesse Jackson made an unsuccessful but legitimate run at the Democratic nomination for president (Hutchings 2009) and little change in the role of racial resentment in whites' vote choice between 1988 and 2008 (Tesler and Sears, forthcoming). Despite talk of a post-racial politics, the 2008 contest was as racially divided election as any in American presidential history.

To boot, there is little chance that this decidedly racial cast to American electoral politics will diminish in future contests. If anything, the continued change in the demographics of the U.S. voting population suggests that the significance of racial diversity and division will only become more important in the future. With whites predicted to lose their majority status in this nation somewhere near the mid part of this century, the balance of racial power will continue to shift and the outcomes of American democracy will increasingly hinge on the preferences and actions of racial minorities.

This has tremendous implications for anyone involved or interested in American politics and it has more than obvious import for the nation's two major political parties, the Democrats and the Republicans. Put simply, the future success of both parties depends in no small measure on winning over this relatively new racial and ethnic

² All figures are derived from CNN exit polls.

minority electorate. The burden on the Republican Party is clearly more onerous at this point. With McCain garnering almost all of his support from white Americans - 90 percent of all his votes in the general election were from white voters - and with the proportion of white Americans dwindling, the Republican Party will have to try to make in-roads into the minority population. An electoral renaissance for the Republican Party is unlikely to present itself without engineering a successful shift in the partisan proclivities of existing minority voters and without motivating greater participation among those voters of color already sympathetic to the Republican cause.

This may seem like a tall order. Decades of initiatives by the Democratic Party in support of the civil rights movement and other causes core to the African American community have created a widely held perception that the Democratic Party is the party of minority interests (Carmines and Stimson 1989). Obama's ascendancy to the presidency and his tacit role as leader of the Democratic Party could serve to further solidify a Democratic majority among the minority electorate.³ Despite the gesture of nominating Michael Steele as the Chair of the Republican National Committee in 2009, recent immigrant-bashing by certain segments of the Republican leadership and past efforts by Republican strategists to use racialized campaigns to generate a winning white majority also do little to portend large scale minority gains for the Republican Party in the near future (Edsall and Edsall 1991).

But one of the main story lines of this book is that the role of African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans in this partisan competition is far from pre-determined.

Despite the fact that these communities of color voted overwhelmingly for Obama in the

³ It is, however, important to note that there are already signs of discontent with the reluctance of President Obama and the Democratic Party to pursue comprehensive immigration reform or to address racial inequality in a significant way.

2008 presidential contest, the single most important finding in our research is that the bulk of this segment of the electorate remains uncertain about its place in the partisan landscape of the nation. The best data we have indicate that the clear majority of immigrant-based groups like Latinos and Asian Americans are not affiliated with either of the two major parties. For Latinos in the 2006 Latino National Survey only 44 percent of respondents identified as either Republican or Democratic. In the 2008 National Asian American survey that figure was an almost identical 46 percent. Even among the most steadfastly Democratic electorate in America, the African American community, the 2004 American National Election Survey (ANES) found that 38 percent choose not to identify with a major party and about 40 percent who will not label themselves as Democrats (even if they vote for a Democratic candidate for political office).⁴ In fact, even among Whites in the 2004 ANES, fully 39 percent choose not to identify as either Republicans or Democrats.

Critically, among Latinos and Asian Americans, the bulk of those who reject partisan affiliation do not label themselves as Independents – a population that can, at times, be hiding significant partisan ties. Instead, for both the Latino and Asian American population, the single largest group is what we call *non-identifiers*, individuals who refuse to place themselves on the party identification scale at all and who instead offer responses like “don’t know,” “no preference” or “none of the above.” These previously unrecognized non-identifiers represent some 38 percent of the Latino population and another 36 percent of Asian American population. Moreover, while the

⁴ The reasons for equating African Americans with Democratic Party identification are clearer when partisanship is limited to the choice between identifying as a Democrat or Republican. In the 2004 ANES, the proportion of African-American Democrats exceeds that of African-American Republicans by a ratio of roughly 38 to 1 (60 percent to 1.6 percent).

lack of a partisan affiliation is most pronounced within immigrant-based groups it occurs within almost all segments of the public.

Another important plot line in this racial and partisan equation is that there is every reason to believe that this diverse, unaligned population can be mobilized and integrated into one of the two major parties. The racial and ethnic minority population, as we will see, is far from homogenous in its political interests, social identities, and life experiences. Accompanying the nation's demographic diversity is a multiplicity of core issue concerns and ideological orientations, a bricolage of salient social identities, and a wide range of experience with and knowledge about American democracy. This will make targeting this diverse population complex and will likely require a multi-pronged approach. But it will also create openings for both parties. Republicans, for example, can point to the moral conservatism of many Latinos and Asian Americans as an avenue for partisan incorporation. Likewise, Democrats can point to widespread experiences with racial discrimination as an issue to exploit. Moreover, once either party touches on the right message, the evidence suggests that mobilization is possible. Experimental research indicates that contact to encourage voter participation does work and that it can be effective with members of the minority population (Ramirez and Wong 2006). Broader historical patterns also imply that if the motivation is strong enough, members of the minority population will become energized and involved in the partisan fray. In response to Prop 187, an anti-illegal immigrant initiative that was pushed by a Republican governor in the 1990s, Latinos in California substantially increased naturalization rates, voter turnout, and identification with the Democratic Party (Bowler et al 2006, Pantoja et al 2001). The spontaneous mobilization of over 3 million

immigrants in Los Angeles and other cities in support of immigrants rights during the 2007 Congressional debates on comprehensive immigration reform further attests to the potential of minority mobilization (Bada, Fox, and Selee 2006). The bottom line is that there is a real opportunity for both major parties. Party leaders and advocates need only act and in response the growing number of unaligned immigrants and minorities could offer a critical electoral edge.

The focus of this book is this critical linkage of racial and partisan considerations that we have just outlined. Our main goal is to offer a more encompassing model of partisan choice that incorporates the diverse range of people and perspectives found in America today. We seek to explain why – precisely for reasons of one’s racial and ethnic definition and immigrant experience – the pathways to partisanship or non-partisanship vary between Whites, African Americans, and immigration-based groups like Latinos and Asian Americans. In the ensuing pages, we explain why an account of the attachments (or lack thereof) of racial and ethnic minorities and immigrants to the present day political parties is important, why increased attention to nonpartisanship is warranted, and how the two are linked.

Is there a need for a new theory of partisanship? We maintain that the two dominant theories of partisanship – the Michigan School and the Downsian approach - do an excellent job of accounting for the partisan choices of the bulk of Americans whose views and experiences allow them to fit neatly along the spectrum of partisanship that defines the nation’s politics. But we also believe that these two theories often fail to consider the unique experiences and concerns of different segments of our increasingly diverse public. The Michigan School, for example, contends that party identification is a

strong psychological attachment that is developed early in life and largely inherited from one's parents through pre-adult socialization. But how can parental partisanship explain the party identification of immigrants whose parents have no obvious partisan connections in the American domain? The Downsian approach also neglects to incorporate some of the distinctive aspects of America's diverse democracy. Within the Downsian model individuals attach to the party whose publicly declared positions on the main issues of the day come closest to their ideal point on a liberal-conservative scale. But what happens if you have little knowledge of those issues or if your core issue concerns are ignored by both parties? What are the likely partisan attachments of the Filipino who is altogether unfamiliar with the issue stances of either party? What of the African American whose main ideological motivation involves the debate between integration and black autonomy? What of the Puerto Rican who is committed to Puerto Rican statehood?

In providing a comprehensive theory of party identification, we seek to understand not only how Americans who fit neatly into the partisan structure choose an affiliation but also how other Americans whose interests, ideologies, and identities fit less well choose to align or not align with one of the two major parties. That is, we offer an encompassing account of the partisan attachments that Americans have (or lack) and show how the pathways and patterns of partisanship vary crucially by groups defined by race and immigrant-origins.

In our theoretical account, we contend that the partisan significance of America's growing demographic diversity can largely be accounted for by three different factors that have generally been overlooked in existing accounts of party identification: 1)

disparity in levels of information across the electorate, 2) the salience of distinct social identities, and 3) divergence in core issue concerns and ideological orientations. Thus, our story, which we detail in the coming pages, is one of the central role of information, identity, and ideology in shaping party identification, and the variation in the dynamic interplay of these three factors between Whites, African Americans, and immigration-based groups like Latinos and Asian Americans. We hope that our account will not only provide greater understanding of the large numbers of unaligned partisan misfits that characterize America's increasingly diverse electorate but that it will offer both incentives and a strategies to incorporate this population.

America's Racial Transformation

To motivate the importance of understanding how patterns of partisanship vary by race and immigrant-origins, we need first to go back roughly four decades in time. The year 1965 is often thought of as a defining moment in our nation's history of racial politics. What defines this moment for many is the juxtaposition of two formative events – the passage of the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965 and, less than a week after President Lyndon Baines Johnson's official signing ceremony, the explosion of the Los Angeles community of Watts into racially-motivated riot and conflagration.

More often overlooked until recently was the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965. More commonly referred to as the Hart-Cellar Act, the Immigration Act of 1965 passed amendments that aimed to undo the restrictive quotas of the Reed-Johnson Immigration Act of 1924 and the McCarran-Walter Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952. Hart-Cellar was spurred by the same impulse that drove the successful passage

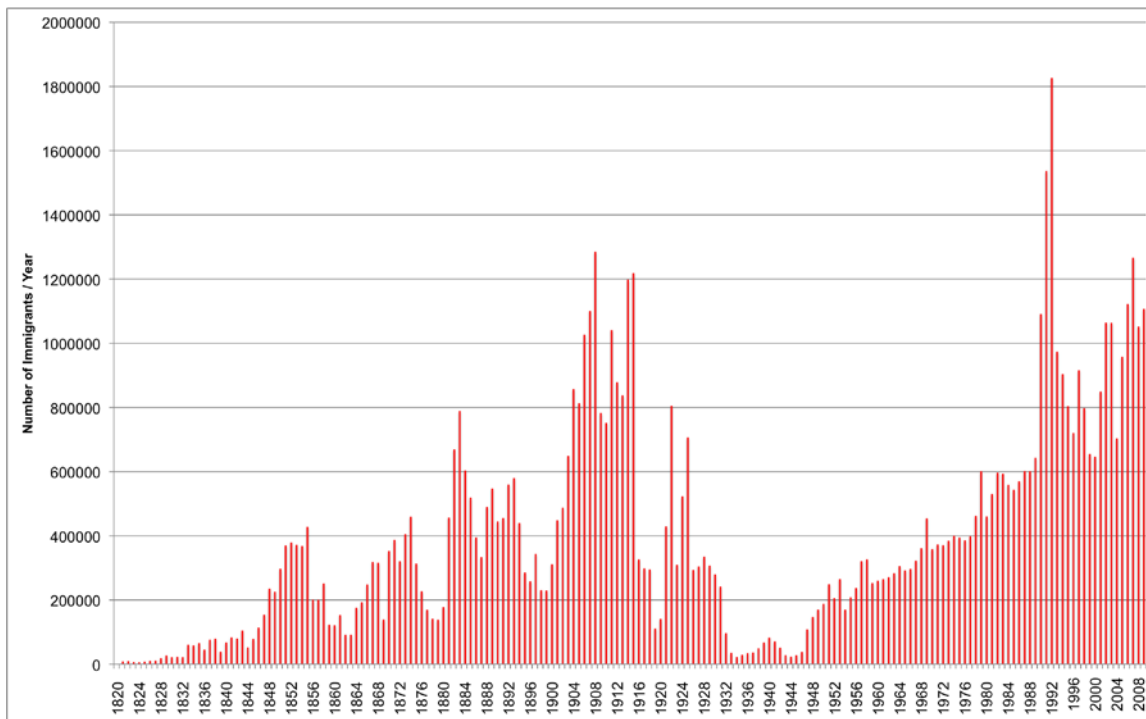
of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965: an urgent quest to rid the United States of any appearances of unequal political standing. Vice President Hubert Humphrey drew this linkage explicitly and declared that “We must in 1965 remove all elements in our immigration law which suggest that there are second-class people ... We want to bring our immigration law into line with the spirit of the Civil Rights Act of 1964” (quoted in Tichenor 2002, 215). President Lyndon Johnson declared, upon signing the Hart-Cellar act, that it would “repair a deep and painful flaw in the fabric of American justice. It corrects a cruel and enduring wrong in the conduct of the American nation (Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States 1965, 1038).”

The historical significance of the Hart-Cellar Act was initially somewhat understated because its legislative impact was widely viewed as anodyne. The actual terms of the bill were rather modest. US immigration policy would no longer set quotas based on national origin; it would allow for preferences to be given to relatives of persons already in the US and for preferences by labor skills and professional training. Eastern and Southern Europeans were expected to be the chief beneficiaries of these amendments, but in relatively limited numbers. The Immigration Act of 1965 received its support largely as an important symbolic gesture in the Cold War.

In the bill signing ceremony, President Johnson took a moment to remark that “[t]his bill we sign today is not a revolutionary bill. It does not affect the lives of millions. It will not reshape the structure of our daily lives, or really add importantly to either our wealth or our power” (Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States 1965, 1038).” Johnson was not alone in this expectation. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, in his 1964 testimony to Congress, remarked that “I would say for the Asia-

Pacific Triangle ... 5,000 immigrants would come the first year, but we do not expect that there would be any great influx after that.” Senator Edward Kennedy, in subcommittee hearings, remarked, “The bill will not flood our cities with immigrants. It will not upset the ethnic mix of our society.”⁵

Figure 1.1. Trends in Immigration, 1821-2008.⁶



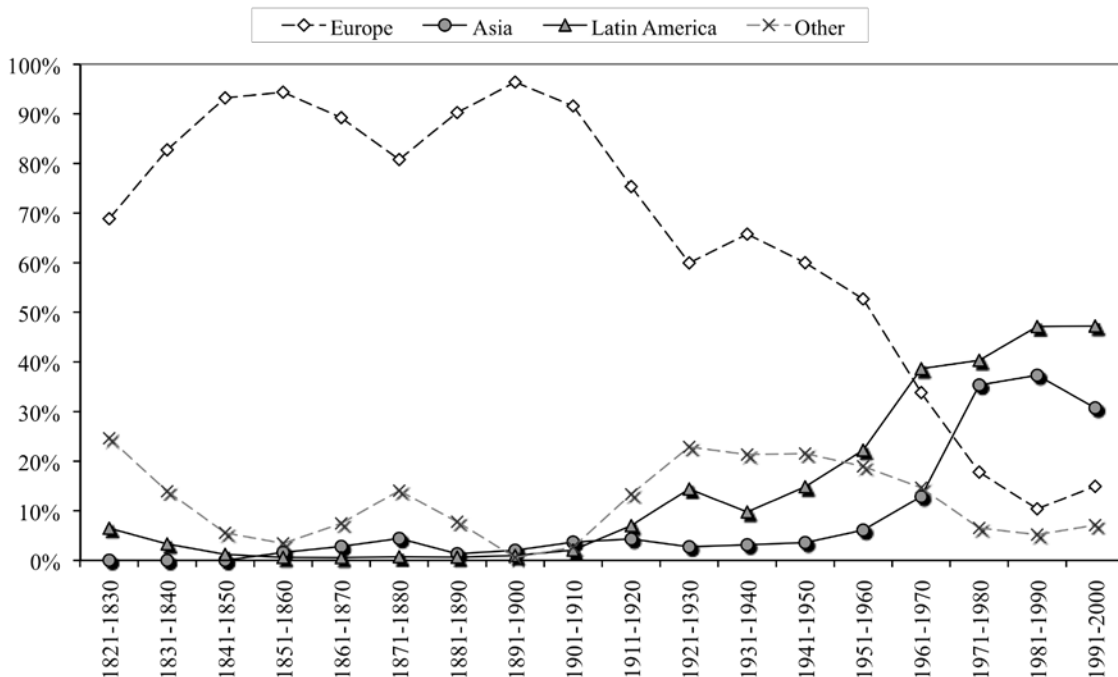
These conservative expectations of the Hart-Cellar Act, with the full benefit of hindsight, seem almost comically off the mark to us today. As many scholars have observed, the terms of the Hart-Cellar Act sparked a sweeping transformation in the nation’s demographic composition (e.g., Portes and Zhou 1993, Tienda 2000, Hirschman, Alba, Farley 2000, Lee and Bean 2004, Segura and Rodrigues 2006). In sheer volume,

⁵ For more details on the historical background, legislative dynamics, and ideological currents leading to the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, see, e.g., Reimers (1992), Tichenor (2001), Ngai (2004).

⁶ Source: Department of Homeland Statistics, *2008 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics* (2008).

we are witnessing the largest influx of immigrants since the early 20th Century (see Figure 1.1). In the period from 1995 to 2000, a net more than 1.2 million persons flowed in the United States per year (in-migration less out-migration). To give some comparative scale to the phenomenon, when migration flows into the U.S. are compared to other nations in the “Group of 8” (Japan, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, and the Russian Federation), Russia is the next closest in net gains at roughly 300,000 persons per year (Gans 2006). 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 more than 30 million second-generation immigrants in the US in 2004 (US Census Bureau 2004).

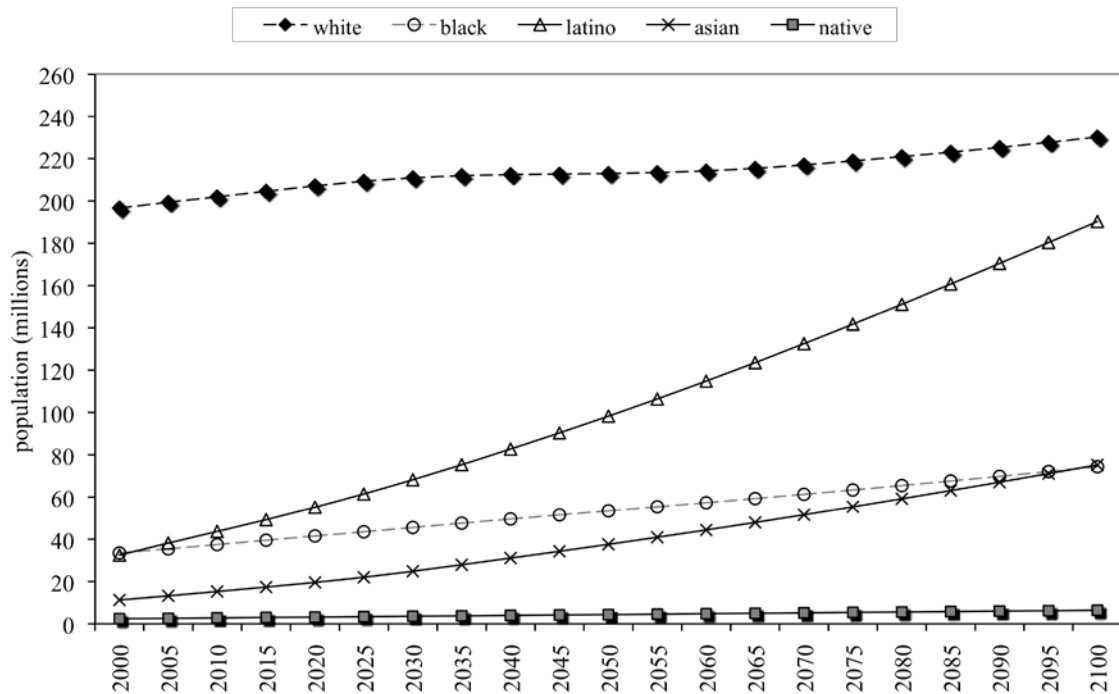
Figure 1.2. Immigration by Sending Region



In addition to the upsurge in the foreign born, this wave of immigration has also produced a sea change in the racial and ethnic composition of this nation. Contemporary immigrants come from different shores than the earlier immigrants from Europe, arriving instead from Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America. As Figure 1.2 shows, up until the first decade of the 20th Century, about 90 percent of new migrants to the US set sail from European shores. By the 1980s, this proportion had dwindled to about 12 percent, with about 80 percent of new migrants coming from Asia and the Americas (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2006). The impact of this change in global emigration rates on the nation's racial/ethnic composition cannot be understated. In the 1960 Census, African Americans constituted 92 percent of the non-white population of the United States. By the 2000 Census, African Americans were only about 50 percent of the non-white population.⁷ Many social and political observers tout the fact that African Americans are now no longer the largest non-white population in the US.

⁷ Given the introduction of a separate Hispanic "ethnicity" question and the introduction of a "mark one or more" multiracial identifier in 2000, there is no single correct representation of the proportion of African Americans in the non-white population. The lower bound is 48.5 percent (where the population count for African Americans excludes black Hispanics and excludes individuals who mark "African American" in combination with another racial category); the upper bound is 52.1 percent (where the population of African Americans includes both excluded groups); a middle ground estimate is 49.5 percent (where the population of African Americans includes black Hispanics but excludes individuals who are black in combination with another racial category).

Figure 1.3. Census Population Projections, 2000-2100



These demographic shifts, moreover, are likely to continue in the foreseeable future, as we show in Figure 1.3. According to Census Bureau projections, the US Latino population will grow from 36 million today to more than 100 million by 2050; the Asian American population will grow from 11 million today to more than 33 million by 2050. By sometime in the middle of this century, African Americans will comprise only one in every three non-whites and white Americans will no longer be a numeric majority in the nation. America, in short, will become a “majority-minority,” a composition that already describes the populations of New Mexico, Hawaii, and California, as well as three of the four most populous cities in the nation – New York, Los Angeles, and Houston. These wide-reaching changes tell us emphatically that a clear understanding of politics in America increasingly enjoins a better understanding the attitudes, attachments, and actions of racial and ethnic minorities.

The Centrality of Partisan Attachments

In this book we endeavor to explain how America's growing diversity finds its way into the nation's partisan politics. How does the American body politic – taken as a racially and ethnically heterogeneous corpus – choose to align itself with a particular party or, as is all-too-often the case, fail to so align? These questions are worth asking because, an individual's relationship to parties, commonly referred to by the terms “partisanship” and “party identification” is one of the most elemental features of American political life.

For better or worse, the American people have hung their most deeply held political convictions and sentiments, anxieties and aspirations with a political party for about as long as they have existed. Martin van Buren, founder of the first political machine in New York and principal architect of the first national political party (the Jacksonian Democrats), writes of “an unbroken succession ... Neither the influences of marriage connections, nor of sectarian prejudices, nor any of the strong motives which often determine the ordinary actions of men, have ... been sufficient to override the bias of party organization and sympathy, devotion to which has, on both sides, as a rule, been a master-passion of their members (1867, 7).” Today, our understanding of this “master-passion” has come principally to rest on one point: the concept of party identification. Virtually every published work in political science on public opinion, voting behavior, and political participation using survey data includes some version of the party identification scale. As Alan Gerber and Donald Green put it, “in the field of public opinion and electoral behavior, no explanatory variable is more pervasive than party

identification (1998, 794).” Given this seeming ubiquity, it is also little surprise to find that “the psychological attachment of individuals to one or the other of the major parties ... reveals more about their political attitudes and behaviors than any other single opinion (Keefe and Hetherington 2003, 169).”

As we shall describe in more detail in Chapter Two, the reasons why party identification is so central to the way that Americans think and act on politics are clear. Partisan habits are something that Americans are born into, starting with the partisanship of their parents and sustained through pre-adult and early adult socialization (Campbell *et al* 1960). For adults, it is a psychological attachment that serves as a critical means to navigate a political information environment that is often saturated with complex details and hortatory messages (Fiorina 1981, Popkin 1991). Voters can do without encyclopedic knowledge about each candidate’s issue positions and can navigate strategic communications by simply knowing which party and politicians they trust (and which they do not) and then using partisan cues to figure out “who is for what” (Lupia and McCubbins 1998). In effect, in the U.S., “Democrat,” “Republican,” and “Independent” are the defining identities in the political realm (Green, Schickler, and Palmquist 2002).

Growing Doubts about the Parties of Today

Two recent developments have, however, left some doubt about the ongoing effectiveness of parties in engaging different segments of the public. One potentially important limitation of the American party system is that it has remained remarkably stable in the face of the nation’s rapidly diversifying electorate. Party politics, of course, are not unchanged in the last few decades. Parties today are more national and candidate-

centered in their focus, and there has also been a growing ideological polarization between elites in the Democratic and Republican parties (Wattenberg 1990; Aldrich 1995; Hetherington 2001; Green and Herrnson 2002; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006).⁸ Yet at the same time, at the most basic level of the numbers of firms in a competitive market for party organizations, the number has remained constant at two for a remarkably long period of time. Since the onset of the post-1965 wave of immigration, there has been only nominal third party challenges like George Wallace's American Independent Party in 1968 and H. Ross Perot's United We Stand and Reform parties in 1992 and 1996. As one recent comparative study of party systems in the U.S., Great Britain, and India notes, "[s]ince the early twentieth century, the United States has displayed a pattern of virtually complete two-partism—that is, two national parties compete and win seats in every major region in the nation (Chibber and Kollman 2004)."⁹

Thus, while the polity has grown increasingly diverse and complex, the marketplace of political ideas, ideologies, and institutions in America remains a partisan duopoly. The period prior to the Civil Rights Movement and the Immigration Act of 1965 – characterized by highly restrictionist immigration laws and highly segregationist social mores and political rights – perhaps represents the kind of stable equilibrium conditions under which a partisan duopoly might capably canvass and coalesce the interests of the polity and serve as institutional intermediaries between the public and government. Our current era, however, begs key questions about how well Americans fit

⁸ There is an open debate as to whether this elite level polarization has been accompanied by a similar polarization in the mass public (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2005; Ansolabehere, Rodden, and Snyder 2006).

⁹ See also Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus (1984), Gillespie (1993), Sifry (2003), Hirano and Snyder (2007).

into and are represented by the party system. How can only two major parties speak to an American electorate characterized by a dizzying array of experiences, motivations, and worldviews? How well do the two parties fare at attracting those who are in various aspects ‘different’? Where do Americans whose interests, identities, and ideological beliefs are not recognized and represented by the two major parties go?

The other development that has led some to question the ongoing relevance of parties is the seeming reluctance or inability of the Democratic and Republican Parties to mobilize America’s newcomers. The classic view of political parties is of institutional umbrellas that capture and consolidate a diverse coalition of interests (see, e.g., Key 1964, Sorauf 1964, Eldersveld 1964; cf. Schwartz 1989, Aldrich 1995). In this classic view, parties are the pivotal organizational brokers between ordinary individuals in civil society and government. Thus scholars write that “political parties created democracy” (Schattschneider 1941, 1) and that “[p]olitical parties lie at the heart of American politics (Aldrich 1995, 3).” Thus as goes the ability of parties to accommodate the diversity of interests, identities, and ideological beliefs of ordinary Americans, so goes America’s aspiration for a vigorous pluralist democracy.

Viewed through the focal lens we wear in this book – race and immigration – parties are the key institutional mechanisms for leveling the political playing field because they “enable the many to pool their resources to offset the advantages of the few (Dahl 1967, 245).” Certainly, we hold dearly to cherished notions of the traditional role that parties played as a portal to civic engagement and democratic inclusion for strangers to America’s shores. By these mythologized accounts, machine ward bosses met immigrants at the docks, secured for them hearth and home, and shepherded them

through the trials and tribulations of acquiring citizenship (Dahl 1961, Wolfinger 1965). Such a view, of course, overstates the fervor of old-style parties to actively incorporate the entire range of immigrant Americans. More recent scholarship suggests that the willingness of parties to incorporate new citizens was not equal across all immigrant groups (Ignatiev 1995, Jacobson 1998), all historical contexts (Mayhew 1986) or all electoral circumstances (Erie 1988). The important point, however, is that local parties more often than not incorporated immigrants out of political expediency and necessity, not out of a sense of party responsibility or civic duty.

The warrants of expediency and need in electoral competition hold today as well, as political parties are pushed to target minorities and immigrant communities in campaigns. Campaign spending on Spanish-language advertisements has, for example, grown dramatically. Between 2000 and 2008 spending on Spanish-language ads in the presidential campaigns grew dramatically from \$3 million to close to \$50 million (Segal 2006, Shoer 2008). More and more candidates are using Spanish in their speeches and creating Spanish language websites. Barack Obama – taking a page from President Lyndon Johnson’s famous co-optation of the Civil Rights Movement’s rallying cry “we shall overcome” –co-opted as a core theme of his campaign the motto of the United Farm Workers and the rallying cry of the Spring 2006 immigrant protest marches – “¡Sí se puede!” (“Yes we can!”). To foray from the sublime to the ridiculous in this regard, our current political era is one in which former president Bill Clinton touts Toni Morrison’s declaration that Clinton is the first “black President” in US history and in which another former president, George W. Bush, touts his own place in history as the first and only bilingual (English and Spanish) president of the United States – credible or credulous,

these white politicians aim to claim credit and electoral capital for their ability to “authentically” represent the interests of minority electorates.

Yet the brunt of the evidence from carefully considered scholarship finds that parties no longer function as the institutional keys to democratic inclusion for racial minorities and immigrant-based electorates. For immigrants, the balance of the scholarship on how today’s political parties compare with those of yesteryear finds for the most part that today’s parties lack the organizational capacity, the political incentives, the cultural literacy, and perhaps even the democratic resolve to guide new immigrants into the political process and secure their loyalties to a particular political party (see, e.g., Jones-Correa 1998, Gerstle and Mollenkopf 2001, Ramírez 2002, Wong 2006). Similarly, while the origins of our party system can be attributed in no small measure to the need to create an institutional form that would subsume factional and regional conflicts (Aldrich 1995; read here: the “peculiar” institution of slavery), it has become all-too-easy for both political parties to ignore the interests and hopes of an “electorally captured” group like African Americans and relegate issues of race to the periphery of their partisan policy agenda (see, e.g., Walton 1972, Walters 1988, Frymer 1999). Simply in terms of the number of partisan contacts, there is clear evidence that the parties are much less active in trying to mobilize voters today than they were in earlier periods – and even more so when they are racial and ethnic minorities (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Ramirez and Wong 2006).¹⁰ Moreover, in the most prominent recent instance in which immigrants were politically engaged and mobilized – the protest marches that occurred across the nation

¹⁰ It is, however, important to note that even today the two major parties are the primary gateway through which Americans are mobilized to act in the political arena (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Parties may be much less active in voter mobilization than they were in the past but they still represent a potentially critical actor in any expansion of the mobilization process.

from late March to early May 2006 and rallied somewhere between about 3.6 million to over 5 million individuals (Bada, Fox, and Selee 2006) – both Democratic and Republican party elites, far from being at the vanguard, were clearly caught off-guard. Thus in the end, neither the Democratic nor the Republican Party has been so eager as to alter their core agenda and their party platform to actively recruit new electorates – at least, those segments of the electorate defined by race, ethnicity, and immigration.

Concerns about Incorporation and Representation

This apparent lack of effort on the part of America's partisan duopoly to engage the nation's increasingly diverse electorate raises real concerns about the political incorporation and meaningful representation of different minority communities. We have already seen that the majority of the Latino and Asian American population and large numbers of African Americans claim to have no allegiance to either of America's major parties. We have also revealed that the plurality of both immigrant-based communities (38 percent of Latinos and 36 percent of Asian Americans) are non-identifiers who are not even willing to place themselves at any point along the partisan spectrum and instead proffer responses like 'not sure' or 'no preference.'¹¹ If parties were the main institutional force driving the political incorporation of the minority community, the

¹¹ Uncertainty about the value of the two parties is not only evident in basic measures of party identification. Among Latinos, surveys also regularly reveal a prevalent sense that neither party is a clear advocate for Latino group interests. In the 2006 Latino National Politics Survey, for example, only one percent of Latino respondents agreed that political parties in America look out for their concerns. As one recent report on the Latino population indicated: "If anything, the survey shows that a growing number of Latinos are dissatisfied with both of the major parties" (Suro and Escobar 2006). African Americans too express this sense of political marginality. About a quarter of all African Americans, according to recent surveys, believe that neither the Democratic nor the Republican Parties works hard for black interests and some 38 percent favor the creation of a black political party (1996, 1992, and 1984 NBES).

widespread disconnect with today's parties implies that America's newcomers and its other minorities could now be falling through the cracks.

One of the putative results of this underwhelming partisan presence in the everyday lives of America's minorities is equally disappointing rates of political participation. According to the 2004 American Community Survey, only 28 percent of Latino adults and 30 percent of Asian American adults vote. That pales in comparison to the 66 percent participation rate among whites. African Americans fell somewhere in the middle at 56 percent participation. Much of the gap is due to a lack of citizenship among a large portion of the minority population. But even among citizens, there are clear disparities in political participation. Voter registration rates, for example, even when confined to the citizen population reveal substantial racial inequities. Fully 75 of white adult citizens are registered. That compares to a rate of only 52 percent among Asian Americans, 58 percent among Latinos, and 69 percent among African Americans. On almost every measureable aspect of political incorporation, racial minorities trail the white majority.

This underparticipation is also reflected in gross underrepresentation among the nation's elected officials. Despite the nation's vast demographic transformation, the political leadership of the United States remains overwhelmingly white. Although the national population is now roughly 13 percent African American, blacks hold only 1.8 percent of all elected offices nationwide (JCPS 2003). Latinos are even worse off, occupying less than one percent of the nation's elected offices even though they account for 15 percent of the nation's population (or 8 percent of all adult citizens) (NALEO 2008). And Asian Americans hold a negligible fraction of all offices despite

representing about 4 percent of the national population (or 3 percent of adult citizens) (APALC 2007). The consequences of all of this could be severe. Inequities in all aspects of political incorporation are more than likely to be associated with imbalances in democratic responsiveness. American democracy may speak more to the interests of the established white majority than to the concerns of the growing and increasingly diverse minority population.

Our Project

Fostering greater partisan mobilization and stronger ties to the two parties is not going to solve all of the problems of inequality in American democracy but it could be an important first step. Thus, our primary goal in addressing these disparities is to develop a more comprehensive theory of partisan choice that identifies and highlights the general reasons why such a large group of Americans remain largely unattached from the two major parties. By offering a partisan model that explicitly considers and incorporates the diverse range of people and perspectives found in America today, we hope to provide both parties and other interested observers with the means and the motivation to more fully incorporate this currently unaligned and often unengaged population.

Existing Theories

How then do people choose parties? As we shall see in the ensuing chapter, two accounts currently dominate our understanding of party identification. The first is a social psychological view developed in the 1940s and 1950s by Angus Campbell and his colleagues at the University of Michigan. This “Michigan school” of thought, as we refer

to it in this book, posits that party identification is a strong psychological attachment that is developed early in life and either inherited from one's parents or absorbed in other arenas of pre-adult socialization (see, e.g., Campbell et al 1960, Beck and Jennings 1991, Niemi and Jennings 1991). Much like our religion and religiosity, our attachments to a party and the party system are something we grow up with. The key implications of this account, in its classical rendition in *The American Voter* (Campbell et al 1960) are that partisanship is very stable over time; partisanship better predicts vote choice than one's positions on issues or one's views of the candidates running for office; partisanship is an expressive act and "extensions of the self (Miller and Shanks 1996, 122)"; partisanship is the "unmoved mover" that puts an indelible imprint on one's political attitudes and actions.

The main alternative to this Michigan school of thought is what we call the Downsian school of thought, following its lineal descent from Anthony Downs' *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957). This more economistic account views party identification a rational choice defined by information, instrumental reasoning, and self-understood interests (see, e.g., Fiorina 1981, Franklin and Jackson 1983, Achen 1992, Achen 2002, Erikson, Mackuen, and Stimson 2002). In contrast to the Michigan model, here issues and candidates not only matter, but so too does the stability of partisanship vary as a function of where voters and candidates stand on the issues. The first clear elaboration of this Downsian model is most often attributed to Morris Fiorina's view of party identification as "a running tally of retrospective evaluations of party promises and performance (1981, 84)," with more recent elaborations giving formal representation to this retrospective process through Bayesian learning models (Achen 1992, 2002; Green

and Gerber 1998; Grynaviski 2006). Importantly, the self-understood interests that underlie this Downsian choice are typically viewed as fitting a continuum of political preference orderings – from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. In the hurly-burly of American politics, self-proclaimed liberals, more often than not, identify as Democrats, self-proclaims conservatives ally with the Republican Party, and those with more middle-of-the-road views will tend to end up as Independents.

We review both Michigan and Downsian models of party identification in greater, gorier detail in Chapters Two and Three. There our focus is on how well both accounts explain non-partisanship and the varying patterns of partisanship (and non-partisanship) by race/ethnic group. Here our chief aim is a more general synthetic introduction. As one scholar of parties describes the difference between these two accounts, the individual under the Michigan model is “more of a *rationalizing* voter than a rational one (Wattenberg 1996, 13).” One is thus a story of psychological foundations; the other is a story in which one’s political “master-passion” is, at least in principle, constantly open to revision and updating.

Despite these major differences, both accounts share a common approach to measurement. In both cases, partisanship is typically measured as a simple, linear scale with Democrats and Republicans on the poles and Independents or nonpartisans placed squarely in the middle. The Downsian and Michigan accounts of partisan choices and this linear model of partisanship have proven to be remarkably resilient to modification. Despite a range of conceptual critiques and a host of measurement issues that we outline later in the book, virtually every study that uses or studies partisanship in America utilizes this linear scale and employs one or both of these theoretical perspectives. This

basic linear scale, in particular, remains almost universal in its use and dominant in its sway over how we believe Americans think and act in the political sphere.

Our own view is not that these traditional theoretical accounts or the standard linear measurement model of party identification are wrong. In highlighting the fact that the political views and orientations of a growing number of Americans do not fit comfortably with the fixed choice of identifying as a Democrat or a Republican, we do not seek to refute the reality that a lion's share of Americans continue to hold unrelenting attachments to the Democratic and Republican Parties. These attachments remain the single best predictor of whether one votes, how one votes, and what political preferences underlie one's vote choice. Furthermore, the evidence is quite clear that most Americans can quite capably place themselves along the linear partisan scale highlighted in so many studies of American political behavior. In short, existing theories and measurement approaches tell us a lot about how Americans choose parties.

Limitations to Existing Theories

At the same time, however, they do not tell us everything. A number of concerns and criticisms have been raised against these conventional accounts, which we review and discuss in some detail in the coming chapters. For the present, we note that one issue that has not drawn much attention is the relative absence of any consideration of race or immigration in the general literature on political parties and party identification. Paul Frymer, one of the few exceptions to this general rule, observes the ability of parties to successfully include and incorporate a diversity of groups and interests is typically taken as a presumption, rather than a topic worthy of empirical scrutiny and noting that

“scholars of African American politics make dramatically different arguments about the two-party system’s impact for democratic inclusion, emphasizing its limits and exclusionary nature (2005, 122).” Many studies simply drop respondents of color from the analysis and thus general accounts incorporate little of our understanding of how race works in America or of how the immigrant experience differentiates segments of the population. This absence is understandable given that accounts were by and large developed when America was a much less diverse place than it is today. In the mid-20th century milieu out of which the study of party identification was borne – a time when 90 percent of the US population was white and all but a tiny fraction was native-born – ignoring or relegating to a footnote the centrality of race and the immigrant experience may have seemed analytically expedient. In today’s politics, we ignore race and immigration at our peril.

We are, of course, not the first scholars to observe that the world around us has become more diverse. More recent scholarship has, accordingly, begun to try to rectify this omission. There is a welter of recent works that have focused specifically on the political choices of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos and on the political incorporation of immigrants has expanded our understanding of each individual group. This literature has also been extremely important in shifting the focus of attention away from the white majority and in beginning to identify the ways in which minorities and immigrants might be different.

Nevertheless, in our view, our understanding of the relationship between race, immigration, and partisanship remains incomplete. With a few exceptions, studies of party identification in communities of color simply re-apply some version of the

Michigan or Downsian model to these new groups. In so doing, such works assume that the influence of information uncertainty, a liberal-conservative ideology, and one's racial/ethnic identity is no different for Latinos, Asian Americans, and African Americans than it is for whites. The converse to this last point is also a limitation of much existing work: most studies focus on explaining the party identification of a single group, albeit a pan-ethnic group in the case of Latinos and Asian Americans. In so doing, they neglect to compare the underlying basis of party identification both *across* groups and *within* groups. Thus we are left with a series of ethnically separate literatures that focus on the peculiarities of each individual group in isolation.

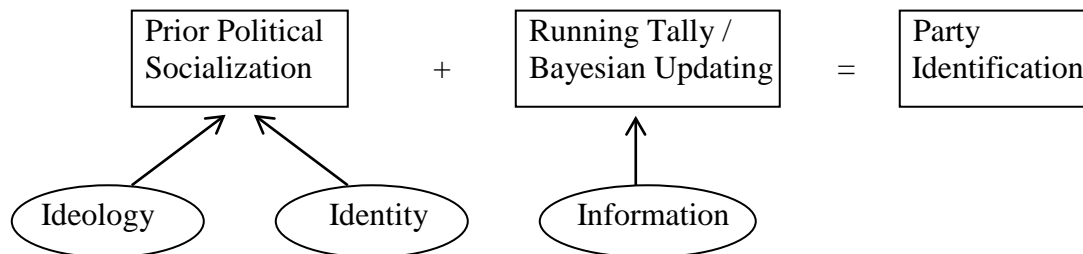
Alternate Pathways to (Non)-Partisanship: Information, Ideology, and Identity

This book thus offers an account of race and partisanship that unifies and expands upon these multiple, ethnic specific literatures. But are racial and ethnic minorities really different? And do any of these differences actually alter the ways in which individuals choose parties? The nub of our story in this book is that the partisan choices of all racial and ethnic groups share three key factors – the primary social *identities* and the *ideological* commitments individuals bring and the *information* environments individuals negotiate in deciding whether to affiliate with a party and which party to affiliate with – but that the particular ways in which information, ideology, and identity matter to our partisan choices varies across racial/ethnic groups. Our proposed framework of information, ideology, and identity is less an attempt to challenge and replace the existing Downsian and Michigan schools of thought than it is an effort to synthesize and adapt both frameworks to build a coherent and comparative explanation of party identification

among Whites, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans. In doing this, we hope to complement existing accounts with key alternate dimensions of partisan choice that, engage and address some of the aforementioned limitations of conventional theories of party identification.

Schematically, Figure 1.4 presents one synthesized representation of how the Michigan and Downsian schools of thought fit with one another and with the role of information, ideology, and identity that we propound in this book. We follow here Achen's effort to synthesize insights from both models by distinguishing "long-term party identification" from shorter-term factors (1992, 2002). Long-term considerations (e.g., one's prior political socialization or one's central political predispositions) are both logically and, based on the weight of the evidence, empirically prior to shorter-term considerations (e.g., one's "running tally" of retrospective evaluations or Bayesian learning). This distinction also parallels political science's prevailing view of the nature of public opinion, John Zaller and Stanley Feldman's "receive-accept-sample" model, in which opinion is an averaging function of short-term "top-of-the-head" considerations that are defined by one's level of political awareness and longer-term "core political predispositions" like ideology, partisanship, and, we submit, race (see Zaller and Feldman 1992, Zaller 1992; on race as a core predisposition, see Lee 2002).

Figure 1.4. Information, Ideology, and Identity and Party Identification



Both short-term and long-term factors contribute to one's partisanship, with the crux of the dispute between the Michigan and Downsian schools being which is foreground and which is background. To this core set of relationships, we layer in our emphasis on ideology, identity, and information as variants on long-term and short-term influences. As we discuss below, we expect ideology and identity to be longer-term influences partisanship because prior political socialization is not always equal across publics defined by race/ethnicity and immigrant status. Similarly, while retrospective and Bayesian evaluations are information-based accounts of short(er)-term influences on partisanship, we argue for a more complex consideration of the role of information in which not all observations or messages are equally transmitted or similarly influential on one's partisan evaluations and partisanship across publics defined by race/ethnicity and immigrant status.

Information

Our argument for adapting and refining our specification of the long-term and short-term influences on (non)partisanship across the contexts of race and immigration begins with the easy and readily apparent insight that not all newcomers to the United States arrive with fully formed and well acculturated views on politics. Sociologists (and some historians and political scientists) debate whether the process of coming to terms with a new society (and, by corollary, its social, economic, and political institutions) follows a linear, sequential process of assimilation (Gordon 1964, Alba and Nee 2003), or results from forming sense of racial identity and disadvantage (Glazer and Moynihan 1963), or develops in an uneven, segmented trajectory, where some groups are

seamlessly integrated into the main-lines of American life and other groups find those main-lines only selectively open to them or blocked altogether (Portes and Zhou 1993). Yet by any account, immigrants do not come fully versant in politics, American-style.

The point about incomplete socialization and unequal information environments does not only apply to first-generation immigrants. The offspring of immigrants often continue to reside in ethnic enclaves, retain the language of their parents, rely principally on ethnic media for their political information, or otherwise face continued hardship and barriers to full inclusion that leave them socially isolated. Similarly, the everyday lives and information environments of many African Americans continue to be isolated by forces within and external to the community – from a “counterpublic” sphere of “barbershops, bibles, and BET,” to borrow from a recent title (Harris-Lacewell 2004; see also Dawson 2003) to the persistent hypersegregation of residential neighborhoods, the resegregation of public schools, the disproportionate sequestering of African American men in prisons, detention centers, and other penal institutions, and so on (Wilson 1987, Massey and Denton 1993, Boger and Orfield 2005, Miller 1996).

Such circumstances have, we argue, important consequences for one’s politics and one’s relationship to political parties. The choice not to identify with either of the two major parties, for instance, may not be the result of a lack of interest in politics or a sense of political alienation. Rather, under conditions of uncertainty and low information about the party system and each party individually, non-partisanship may simply be a rationally adaptive strategy. Instead of choosing between two parties that one may be unfamiliar with or express allegiance to a party that one does not yet trust, a more reasoned option is to opt out altogether by professing nonpartisan.

Ideology

Another readily identifiable feature of both the immigrant and racial minority communities pertinent to party identification is that attention to the liberal-conservative ideological dimension that divides the two parties and that purportedly drives partisanship is decidedly uneven. Immigrants and racial and ethnic minorities are certainly not immune to a single-minded focus on the core debates that separate Democrats from Republicans. At the same time, however, they are especially likely to have concerns that are peripheral to the national partisan discussion. For immigrants, prolonged exposure to and prior socialization in a range of different political belief systems – from communist or former communist societies like Cuba, Russia, and Vietnam to authoritarian or former authoritarian states like Peru, Pakistan, and Nigeria to mature democracies like India, South Korea, and Costa Rica – should bring alternate issue concerns and ideological commitments to the fore. In particular, these alternate ideological orientations that immigrants bring may cut orthogonally to the liberal-to-conservative continuum that separates the two parties. For racial and ethnic groups, there are group-specific ideologies – like the nation-building ideologies of *mestizaje* among Latinos (Anzaldúa 1987, Gonzales 2000) or like the multiple ideological traditions in the history of African American political thought (McCartney 1991, Dawson 2001).

The consequence once again is diminished attachment to both parties. For any individual, the less that her core issue concerns are addressed by the parties and the more orthogonal her ideological predispositions are to the liberal-conservative scale that divides the two parties, the greater ambiguity partisans choices are likely to present. Latino immigrants, for example, who wish to see more open borders may have no clearly

attractive partisan option. Similarly, the 40 percent of the African American population that favors black separatist institutions may see no point in declaring allegiance to white dominated institutions like the Democratic and Republican Parties. With little motivation for choosing either party, many of these individuals should remain non-partisan or Independent. Once again, nonpartisanship becomes a rationally adaptive strategy for those who do not 'fit'.

The potential orthogonality of ideological views is not the only way we expect our existing views of party identification to be complicated vis-à-vis ideology. For most Americans, the typical spectrum of ideology from very liberal to very conservative views is sufficiently capacious to capture both their individual orientation and their perceptions of where political parties and their candidates stand. Some, however, may have intensely held and non-negotiable positions on issues that the two major parties and their candidates either choose to avoid taking positions on if possible (e.g., Puerto Rican statehood, environmental rights, reparations for descendants of slaves forcibly brought from Africa) or choose positions that are so ambiguous and similar to the other party/candidate that, for someone with intense preferences on the matter, the two parties look no different. Others may hold cross-cutting ideological views (i.e., a conservative on social/moral issues but a liberal on economic policy) that make it difficult for them to comfortably ally with a major party. By mapping partisanship on a linear scale with Democrats on the liberal left, Republicans on the conservative right, and nonpartisans in the moderate middle, we are, in fact, presuming that the standard set of liberal-conservative ideological concerns is the only kind of ideological predisposition that matters to one's partisan identification.

Identity

A final insight that is visible through the twin lenses of race and immigration is that one's primary political identity is often intimately linked to one's primary social group identity. Here there is a spectrum across racial and ethnic groups in America in the salience of the identities and their significance for defining a group politics. At one end of the spectrum are African Americans, for whom blackness is so distinct and defining an identity that for many African Americans, a "black utility heuristic" (where an African American divines what is in her best interest by first considering what is in the best interest of African Americans as a group) governs one's political calculus (Dawson 1994). At the other end of the spectrum are Whites, for whom whiteness is a taken-for-granted privilege that is perceived to be synonymous with "free" and "independent" and invisible as an identity to Whites themselves (Roediger 1991, Feagin and Vera 1995, Lipsitz 1998). In between these antipodes are immigrant-based groups like Latinos and Asian Americans who vary in their paths to assimilation and in their patterns of racialization (compare, e.g., Telles and Ortiz 2007, Jimenez 2008). Even for Latinos and Asian Americans – who are notable as groups for the juxtaposition and paradox of externally perceived homogeneity and internally experience heterogeneity as "panethnic" groups – racial and ethnic identity can be a script that, when activated, powerfully motivated their political engagement and partisanship (Padilla 1985, Lopez and Espiritu 1990; Espiritu 1992; Pantoja, et al 2001; Barreto 2007).

Racial/ethnic group identity thus represents a third key dimension to partisan choice. For some members of these communities of color, group identity will replace liberal-conservative ideology as the core dimension to one's political calculus. If the

major political parties downplay their appeals to racial/ethnic minority groups or present appeals that run counter to the perceived interests of such groups, then a group-based political calculus may push one toward non-partisanship rather than identifying with a major party. The key is how neatly a group identity coexists with the political identity of Democratic or Republican partisanship. For all groups and individuals, the more their own primary group identity matters and the less one of the two parties is clearly aligned with that identity, the greater the tendency to identify as Independent or nonpartisan.

These three dimensions – information uncertainty, ideological heterogeneity, and identity formation – form the foundation stones of our account of party identification. Importantly, all three dimensions have similar implications for partisan choices. In each case, immigrants, racial minorities, and whites with distinct ideological profiles will be motivated to remain neutral between the two major parties. When the choices the Democratic and Republican Parties present to the American public do not match our available stock of political knowledge (information), our deeply held political beliefs (ideology), or how we think of ourselves (identity), nonpartisanship becomes a rationally adaptive strategy.

The Structure of Partisan Choice

This elaboration of three alternate pathways to partisanship and nonpartisanship has a perhaps even more important implication. The fact that multiple, orthogonal dimensions affect party choice implies that partisan choices at the beginning of the 21st Century may no longer be so neatly ordered along a single dimension with Democrats on the left, Republicans on the right, and Independents in the middle. Diversity may not

only affect the degree of attachment to the parties but may also affect how many Americans think about parties in the first place. Many Americans who scholars might place in the middle of a party identification continuum from strong Republicans to strong Democrats may hold political commitments and views that are far from middling. The wide ranging motivations that we identified in these pages imply that nonpartisans will be a heterogeneous group with potentially extreme views along some ideological dimension, deep concerns on issues not raised by the two parties, or strong identities that are poorly served by both parties. In effect many nonpartisans may be far removed from our traditional impressions of Independents who are ideologically middle-of-the-road, apathetic, alienated, or otherwise apolitical.

Diversity, Broken Down

In the main empirical body of this book, we offer support for our empirical account of partisanship by focusing on three distinct sets of Americans: 1) African Americans, 2) immigration-based groups like Latinos and Asian Americans, and 3) White Americans. This grouping of the US population will strike some as excessively reductionist, flattening the rich diversity within each of these sub-populations. Others will object that focusing the looking glass in this way reifies groups and falls prey to a “groupist” logic that assumes that these sub-populations are fundamental social units of analysis. Yet others will add to this groupist objection the further protestation that there is only one single model of political reasoning and human psychology, not multiple models for each arbitrarily defined, historically contingent group.

We are quite sympathetic to each of these concerns and have written about them elsewhere (Lee 2008). In the present case, our choice of grouping the U.S. population in this way is analytically motivated. Specifically, our central claims are that (a) partisanship is defined by one's information, ideology, and identity and that (b) these three factors interact in distinct ways for African Americans, immigration-based groups like Latinos and Asian Americans, and White Americans. To put it one way, the modal non-partisan in each of these groups arrives at her non-partisanship through a distinct trajectory that we summarize below. For the present, while the following pages will liberally refer to racial and ethnic groups in global and homogenizing terms, the analysis and interpretations should be read with the complexity of actual group experiences and opinions in mind. Where possible and where warranted by theoretical imperatives, we endeavor to bring a finer level of granularity in our discussion of each aggregate group.

We begin with African Americans, who we argue represent the archetype of a sub-population for whom racial group identity plays a central, defining role in shaping partisan choice. If party identification will be shaped by racial identity for any group, we should find it within the African-American community. The long history and continued presence of racial domination and anti-black discrimination in the United States too should be a factor in bringing non-liberal/conservative ideological orientation and non-mainstream issue concerns to the fore for African Americans. In particular, adherence to black nationalism and its variants has deep roots in the African-American community, and we find evidence that this specific ideological orientation has consequences for African-American non-partisanship.

Our next grouping, Latinos and Asian Americans represent new and growing entrants to a political system. As a consequence of their recency and dynamism, these groups offer an opportunity to critically examine how partisanship is acquired when pre-adult political socialization into the American two-party system cannot be assumed. Here there are two key dimensions to partisanship acquisition: (1) what newcomers to the US bring with them in terms of political information, ideology, identity, experiences, and the like; (2) what newcomers learn about political and social relations upon coming to the US. Thus we are both interested in knowing whether one's prior socialization and continued ties to one's home country shape patterns of (non)partisanship and we are also interested to know whether and how one learns and navigates the terrain of politics and race in the US. Underlying these dimensions, furthermore, is the central question of how immigrants adapt and become incorporated into a new political society. To the extent that our party system is fully inclusive, we might expect to find evidence of a classic process of assimilation, where Latinos and Asian Americans are more likely to be partisans the longer they are rooted in the US and more likely to identify with a party based on their left-right ideological commitments and their parents' partisan habits. If, on the other hand, the party system is less than fully open to the interests and demands of Latinos and Asian Americans, we might find a more ethnically particularistic or segmented account of partisanship.

We end our analysis of groups with White Americans. Whites are typically, in the language of the social sciences, taken to be the "null group" against which other groups are compared. Here we want to know if the lessons that we have learned from considering race and immigration seriously shed any light on the partisan dynamics of the

majority white population. We believe, as W.E.B. DuBois noted long ago, that by studying groups like African Americans who have been marginalized by the larger society, we learn not only about the marginalized group but also about the interests and actions of a larger community that has actively sought to keep minorities on the outside. As we noted earlier, we expect a more capacious view of ideology and interests to generate some new insights into White non-partisanship. Beyond scholarly treatises that exhort us to examine multiple ideological traditions (e.g., Hochschild 1981, Smith 1993), we can simply look on the ground to find a diverse range of issues (globalization, urban sprawl, environmentalism, women's rights, perhaps even immigration) that are central to the political world view of many Whites but that are not yet well represented by either major party. Moreover, in the post-Civil Rights Era, there are a growing proportion of Whites whose ideological beliefs put them at the crosshairs of traditional New Deal partisan cleavages – e.g., economically liberal but racially conservative, advocates of full civil liberties but also weak, minimal government to protect those liberties, and so on.

A Few Words on Terminology

In the ensuing chapter, we give some thought to the proposition that to understand a theory we must first understand the conditions in which that theory originated. So we endeavor to situate the ontology of the concept of party identification in currents of political science as a discipline in the middle of the 20th Century. Here we give a moment to another important proposition that, irrespective of the conditions in which a theory is originated, we must at least understand the words that are being used. Giovanni Sartori once observed that “[a]s we are ... prisoners of the words we pick, we had better

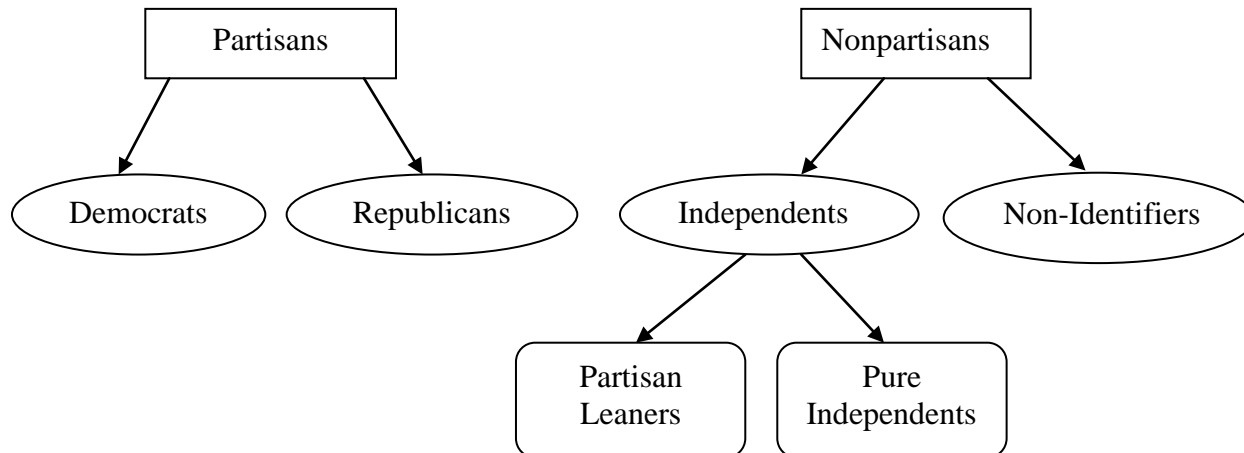
pick them well (1984, 60; quoted in Gerring 1999, 357).” We use many words in this book and hope to be clear about why we pick them and how we use them. In particular, there are two clusters of terms that we use repeatedly and that require mention.

First are terms used to describe the relationship that ordinary individuals have or fail to have to a political party or to our party system. In most of the scholarship we have encountered on parties (and, importantly, in everyday use), the terms “**party identification**” and “**partisanship**” are used interchangeably.¹² (Miller 1991, Miller and Shanks 1996). Our text mirrors this approach.

Second are categories employed to delineate the options that individuals choose within the realm of party identification. These different options are illustrated in Figure 1.5. The first major distinction we make along the partisanship scale is between “**partisans**” – those who profess some allegiance to either of main parties in American politics – and “**nonpartisans**” – those who at least at first blush claim no ties to either of these partisan institutions. Within the category of nonpartisans, we further distinguish between “**Independents**” and “**non-identifiers**.” The Independents group is simply all individuals who when asked initially about their partisanship, claim to be Independents or who profess allegiance to any other party. Non-identifiers are, by contrast, individuals who claim no place on the partisanship scale. They offer any number of uncommitted responses such as ‘don’t know’, ‘none of the above,’ ‘not sure’, or ‘refuse.’ Or they simply protest against the irrelevance or incomprehensibility of the choice (Democrat, Republican, or Independent) before them.

¹² We do the same here, noting the exception of no less a scholar of partisanship than Warren Miller, who remained steadfast to the conceptual difference between one’s first-order identification with a party (i.e., simply agreeing to the root question, “do you usually think of yourself as a Republican [or] a Democrat”) and the secondary relationship to parties among Independents.

Figure 1.5 Partisanship Categories



We believe that one of the main contributions of this book is in recognizing and attempting to understand this group. Non-identifiers are typically been viewed as a residual category that is ignored and deleted from any ensuing academic analysis. That is, as we will see, often a reasonable approach to “missing data” for whites and African Americans. It is a major omission for Latinos and Asian Americans. We will demonstrate that non-identifiers are both numerous among the Latino and Asian American populations – making up the plurality of both groups – and readily explicable. Finally, within the category of Independents, like us before us, we also consider the distinction between “Independent leaners” who when pressed a second time, do admit some sort of leaning or attachment to one of the nation’s two major parties and “pure Independents” who refuse to indicate a preference for either party. In line with existing scholarship, we believe that this distinction is important and that there is sometimes a real danger in lumping Independent leaners in with other nonpartisans. It is clear, as Keith et al (1992) have ably demonstrated, that large segments of the “leaning” population are, in fact, closet partisans. However, we also hope to show that the nature of the leaning

population the importance of the pure vs. leaner distinction varies considerably across racial and ethnic groups. Thus, in the analysis that follows, we typically repeat our analysis two ways. We first show our results with leaners included as nonpartisans but then replicate the analysis with leaners excluded, detailing any notable differences that emerge.

A second cluster of terms that require some choice and clarity at the outset regards the definition of populations by race, ethnicity, and national origin. First, we often use the terms “**race**” and “**ethnicity**” interchangeably and together with their hybridized variants, “**ethnoracial**” and “**race/ethnicity**.” We recognize, of course, that these terms define interrelated and overlapping, but not equivalent concepts. The similarities and dissimilarities between these terms have been well covered elsewhere (see, e.g., Omi and Winant 1994; Cornell and Hartman 1998; Hattam 2007). The most widely applied difference between the two terms is that race marks processes of external ascription and internal identification by putatively indelible (often biologically based) traits such as skin color and phenotype. Ethnicity, however, is commonly used to identify the ostensibly non-biologically processes of ascription and identification by traits such as one’s language and dialect, religion, culture, national origin, and the like. Where the terms are employed selectively to distinguish between minority groups in America, we follow a common convention of referring to African Americans as a racial group and to Latinos and Asian Americans as “**panethnic**” groups, the latter term denoting the prevailing practice of glomming multiple, heterogeneous ethnic/national origin groups under the umbrella categories of “Latino” and “Asian American.”

With the terms used to denote the specific groups we analyze in this book, we too are quite specific. We use “White” to refer, in the first instance, to survey respondents who self-identify with that racial/ethnic category and, more generally, to refer to individuals to whom the category of “White” is ascribed by virtue of their phenotypic appearance or European descent. Using similar criteria – self-identification in the first instance and general boundary conditions – we use both “black” and “African American” in this book. We favor the use of “Latino” over “Hispanic” for two important reasons: (1) because the latter term is sometimes used to describe a language-based identity of all Spanish-speaking people, which would include individuals we do not intend to encompass such as Americans from Spain and the Philippines; (2) because the former term more precisely and exclusively refers to individuals of Latin American origin. In our data analysis (i.e., given the data sets we analyze), “Latino” primarily denotes Americans of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban origin.¹³ Finally, we opt for the term “Asian American” rather than its alternatives “Asian Pacific American,” “Asian Pacific Islander American,” and “Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders” for the very practical reason that none of our data include Pacific Islanders. In our data analysis, “Asian American” primarily denotes Americans of Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese origin.

Outline of the Remaining Chapters

Chapter Two traces the origins of the study of party identification. We start with the mid-century debate over “responsible” party politics and show how, through the

¹³ One other point on terms here is that we follow common convention by using the masculine form of “Latino” (cf. “Latina”) in reference to both sexes of the population of Americans of Latin American origin.

development of the Michigan and Downsian models of partisanship, the study of the “party in the electorate” has come to take a singular form. Today, the concept of party identification is viewed in psychological terms and operationalized in almost every instance as a linear scale, measured in opinion surveys, of self-identification from strong Republicans on the far political right to strong Democrats on the far political left and Independents at the midpoint. While there have been ample criticisms of this linear view, they have been largely treated as technical footnotes, rather than concerns at the core of either school of thought on party identification.

In Chapter Three we reinvigorate the force behind these methodological criticisms by considering political Independents anew, through the lens of racial identity and immigrant assimilation. The chapter begins by tracing the historical evolution of Independents in the study of party identification. We theorize nonpartisanship as a multidimensional identity that interacts in important ways with one’s primary social group identities, ideological predispositions, and information constraints. The chapter concludes with our expectations for the distinct pathways to choosing nonpartisanship for African Americans, whites, and immigrant-based groups like Asians and Latinos.

We begin our empirical analysis in Chapter Four, with the case of African American party identification. While black partisanship is distinctive for the predominant role of a racially defined group calculus, we argue that the link between individual choice, group interests, and the coordination of collective choice in favor of the Democratic Party is neither automatic nor simple. We demonstrate that exit from the Democratic Party occurs under three conditions: when the sense of group identity is

attenuated, when commitments to black autonomy are intensified, and when evaluations change as to which party best serves the interests of African Americans.

We continue to test our account of race, immigration, and non-partisanship in Chapters Five and Six with an examination of immigration-based groups like Latinos and Asian Americans. Unlike the archetypic identity-based dynamics of African Americans, the partisan choices of Latinos and Asian Americans are mediated by a more pronounced ambivalence and proliferation of identities that are in formation. We argue that for Latinos and Asian Americans, partisanship should be conceived of and tested as a sequential choice: in the first instance, partisan thinking is either meaningful or irrelevant; in the second step, if partisan thinking has import and pertinence, then one chooses to either call oneself a Democrat, Republican, or Independent. The first step is one in which uncertainty and ambivalence about politics for immigrants and their offspring is dominant; in the second step, ideological orientation and identity formation becomes more important to choice. Importantly, we show in Chapters Five and Six important commonalities between Latinos and Asian Americans, but perhaps more striking and signal differences.

The strong test of our alternate account of partisan choice is its ability to shed new light on white Americans, the almost exclusive province of previous research. In Chapter Seven, we show evidence for two yet unconsidered routes to Independence for whites: policy extremism (being so far to the right or left as to be at odds with both parties) and partisan ambivalence (holding irreconcilably conflicting views – e.g., racial conservatism and policy liberalism). In both cases, those who are far from the middle ideologically,

end up violating the assumptions of a linear model of partisanship by identifying as Independent.

Much of the focus on political Independents in the extant literature centers on whether identifying as a non-partisan has any bearing on partisan behavior, with the best evidence weighing against the behavioral distinctiveness of Independents. In Chapter Eight, we argue that the paucity of such evidence results less from the irrelevance of Independence as a political alternative and more from the lack of tangible choices in a given election and an unwavering focus on white Independents. In elections where a viable third party option actually exists, Independent voters are more than willing to abandon the two major parties. Similarly, willingness to abandon weak partisan allegiances in favor of the other party, a third party, or non-participation varies dramatically across racial and ethnic groups. By better understanding *why* individuals identify as an Independent, we argue, we can better understand *when* that non-partisan identification will lead to non-partisan behavior.

In the conclusion, we review the book, recasting its theoretical contribution and empirical findings vis-à-vis the history of the scholarly study of parties and the historical role of political parties in incorporating racial/ethnic minorities. We also situate our theses and findings within current debates over ideological polarization, identity politics, and the putative decline of parties. We close with some thoughts in the normative and prescriptive realms: what our findings tell us about the vigor of American democracy, viewed through the lens of partisanship and nonpartisanship, and what they suggest for party organizations that wish to bring more otherwise nonpartisan voters into their fold.

CHAPTER TWO

PARTY IDENTIFICATION: THE HISTORICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL ORIGINS OF A CONCEPT

The political parties that I style great are those which cling to principles rather than to their consequences; to general and not to special cases; to ideas and not to men. These parties are usually distinguished by nobler features, more generous passions, more genuine convictions, and a more bold and open conduct than the others ... America has had great parties, but has them no longer; and if her happiness is thereby considerably increased, her morality has suffered.

Alexis de Tocqueville (1863)

All I know is we're not Republicans. My father isn't.—Judith, age 10

Greenstein (1979, 23)

In this opening chapter, we trace the historical and ontological origins of what we now call party identification. We situate the origins of our current linear measurement model of party identification within three broad intellectual currents of the last half century: the decline of a more praxis-oriented, normative advocacy of “responsible” party politics and the roughly contemporaneous rise of the two most prominent developments in recent political science scholarship – the survey-based, cognitively-oriented study of political behavior and the game theoretic, mathematically-oriented analyses of electoral competition. These latter two frameworks motivate the leading present-day accounts of the party in the electorate, the enduring, psychological attachments associated with Angus Campbell and his colleagues at the University of Michigan and the more positivist, rational, and ideological derived from Anthony Downs’ rediscovery of the median voter theorem. The rest of the chapter describes these two frameworks and the principal concerns and criticisms raised against both schools of thought—focused on the particular way in which the concept is defined and operationalized as a linear measure of individual-level attributes. Although our historical account will recognize the three different view of parties (as physical organizations, as organs of governance, and as

collectives of voters), our focus in subsequent chapters will fall squarely on the party in the electorate and will delve into the attachments (or lack thereof) of ordinary citizens.

The goal of the chapter is to lay the foundations for a modified account of party identification. In Chapter Three we link the methodological concerns raised here with two important omissions in the foundation work on party identification (inattention to racial and ethnic heterogeneity in the electorate and limited concern for the role of nonpartisan) to propose a more contingent but also more robust model of party (non) identification.

The Early Studies of Party Systems

In *Party Government*, E. E. Schattschneider famously declared that “modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the political parties (1942, 1).” Some sixty years hence, one might equally forcefully claim that modern parties are unthinkable save in terms of their constituent electorates. Today, we mostly take for granted that there are three chief components to thinking about political parties: their structure as organizations, their function in governance, and their basis in the citizenry of a polity. This central place of partisans in the electorate to our very conception of political parties, however, is a relatively recent phenomenon. The concepts and categories with which we are all-too familiar today – such as partisanship acquisition and party identification as Democrats, Republicans, and Independents – have emerged in the main over the latter half of the Twentieth Century. As we shall see, the 1950s marks a turning point in how political scientists have come to study political parties.

The first critical backdrop to the emergence of our current view of party identification is the landmark effort by the Committee on Political Parties of the American Political Science Association from 1946 to 1950 to consider, as systematically as they could given the science of the day, how work of political parties might be improved to better the governance of the United States.¹⁴ Culminating in the publication of “Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System” by the *American Political Science Review* in 1950, the report of the APSA Committee was sweeping in scope and ambition. Theodore Lowi would proclaim it as “second only to the 1937 President’s Committee on Administrative Management as a contribution by academics to public discourse on the fundamentals of American democracy (1985, 68).” In particular, it represented a milestone in the organized effort of political scientists to marshal the prevailing research on what parties actually do to reflect upon what parties *should* do.

The Committee had sixteen members: Schattschneider as its chair, some well-known scholars of parties like Clarence Berdahl, Hugh Bone, Louise Overacker, and Howard Penniman and others, like Merle Fainsod and Fritz Morstein Marx, who were not among the leading “stasiologists” of the day. The basic diagnosis of the Committee Report was that the U.S. party system functioned “as two loose associations of state and local organizations, with very little national machinery and very little national cohesion,” with the result that “either party, when in power, is ill-equipped to organize its members in the legislature and the executive branches into a government held together and guided by a party program ... This is a very serious matter, for it affects the very heartbeat of American democracy (1950, v).” This diagnosis serves as a point of departure for a long

¹⁴ Much of this discussion of the 1950 APSA Committee on Political Parties report is based on discussions in Kirkpatrick (1971), Pomper (1971), David (1992), White (1992), and Green and Herrnson (2002).

and detailed set of proposals to better organize a more “responsible” two-party system in the United States.

From the very start, this effort to meaningfully engage the doggedly messy world of politics met with substantial skepticism. The report is perhaps as notable for the breadth and depth of the criticisms it sparked as it is for its historical place in political science scholarship on political parties. The objections ranged from differences on how “responsibility” ought to be defined (Ranney 1951, 1954), to challenges to its diagnosis about what ails the American two-party system (Turner 1951), to quarrels about the Report’s sympathies toward majoritarian, parliamentary, Westminsterian party systems (Pennock 1952, Epstein 1956), to condemnation over the policy prescriptions themselves and, especially, their lack of foundation in careful political analysis (Turner 1951, Kilpatrick 1971). One of the Report’s sharpest critics was a former committee member and signatory on the Report, Evron Kirkpatrick. On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Committee Report, Kirkpatrick surveyed the litany of criticisms brought against the work and drew the unsparing conclusion that “collectively, these criticisms amount to an indictment of the Report’s analysis and recommendations as ill-conceived, ill-formulated, and, most often, simply mistaken about parties, about people and about political systems” (1971, 968-969).

The authors of the report at least partly anticipated such a response. They took pains to circulate an initial draft and canvass critical views of their analyses and recommendations before publishing their work to the general public. They also note, in the Report, that “the Committee on Political Parties is impressed with its own limitations, with the areas that have remained inadequately illuminated, and with the rich

opportunities for research that challenge the imagination of the students of political parties (1950, ix).” Some 50 years hence, these words are powerful not only for their verisimilitude, but also for their irony. As a recent retrospective on the state of responsible partisanship notes, the current status of political parties has moved both closer to the Report’s goals vis-à-vis the growing national focus of U.S. politics *and* further from these goals vis-à-vis the ascendancy of candidate-centered focus of U.S. politics (Green and Herrnson 2002). Moreover, the decades following the 1950 Report have, as the Committee openly hoped, given rise to an upsurge of research into political parties. But little of it, however, turned on the questions that took center stage in the Committee Report.

Rather, one of the most substantial and significant topics germane to the study of political parties in the last half century has been to focus on the interests, intentions, and actions of rank-and-file party identifiers. The Report itself gives conspicuously little attention to what V.O. Key termed “the party in the electorate” (1942). There is a minimal and highly speculative discussion of what role the electorate might play in achieving party responsibility in which the boundaries of party membership are left undefined (Ranney 1951) and the discussion is organized around the familiar tripartite division of the electorate into non-voters, “standpatters,” and “switchers” (1950, 90).¹⁵ The Report does consider the underlying motivations of these segments of the electorate, albeit briefly and crudely. Non-voters are presumed to be motivated by their perception that elections do not matter and that the candidates are insufficiently distinct. Much like Ray Kinsella’s fabled aphorism in *Field of Dreams*, the presumption with non-voters is

¹⁵ Standpatters and switchers, as terms used to describe voting patterns, is usually attributed to Key (1942).

that if a responsible two-party system is built, these non-participants will come to the electoral process. Party regulars, by contrast are viewed as principally motivated by an interest in seeing their views “respected and carried out.”

Importantly, vote switchers are clearly 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).” We can strain to see a thin theory of how the electorate matters to the viability of a party system, but to the extent that the APSA Committee Report intended to set the agenda for future research on political parties, partisanship as we know it today is wholly absent.

To a degree, this absence is unsurprising, given E.E. Schattschneider’s reputedly pivotal influence on the Committee’s deliberations and its final report. Less than a decade earlier, Schattschneider, 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).”¹⁶ The absence of a conception of the party in the electorate is, however, somewhat ironic, given Schattschneider’s later articulation of the critical role that mass audiences play in determining the outcome of contentious

¹⁶ Not all members of the APSA Committee had so clearly ignored the role of party activism and attachment. See, for example, Berdahl (1942).

pluralist politics in *The Semisovereign People* (1960).¹⁷ What applied to political competition generally – responsible or not – was not seen, by the APSA Committee on Political Parties in 1950, to apply to partisan and electoral competition. As Herbert Weisberg (2002) and Pomper and Weiner (2002) argue, in retrospect it is this latter incarnation of Schattschneider that has won the day, as the dynamic role of the party in the electorate has shown itself to be an important impetus towards greater party responsibility.

Partisanship and Paradigm Shift in Political Science

To properly situate the evolution of a place for ordinary people in party politics, we need to understand the vestigial links between the APSA Committee's views on party responsibility and the previously dominant state-centered paradigm of politics. The Committee and its Chair, Schattschneider, are caught in the cross-currents of a paradigm shift. The very notion of political parties as organized factions vying against each other in the competitive marketplace of political ideas and institutions for the hearts and minds of ordinary Americans embodies the core aims of a pluralist paradigm of political science research. Yet the Committee Report also reflects a longing for more normative ends like “national cohesion” through party responsibility.

This state-centered paradigm dates back to the origins of political science as an organized social science discipline in the late 19th century. The discipline's founding

¹⁷ As Schattschneider would put it, “Every fight consists of two parts: (1) the few individuals who are actively engaged at the center and (2) the audience that is irresistibly attracted to the scene. The spectators are as much a part of the overall situation as are the overt combatants ... for, likely as not, the *audience* determines the outcomes of the fight ... To understand any conflict it is necessary therefore to keep constantly in mind the relations between the combatants and the audience ... *This is the basic pattern of all politics* (1960, 2, italics in original).”

fathers, Francis Lieber, Theodore Dwight Woolsey (Yale), John Burgess (Columbia), W.W. Willoughby (Johns Hopkins), and others, clearly derogated the idea that the core foundation of politics on American soil should be about what our founding fathers directed their focus to – the "consent of the governed," rooted in the "inalienable rights of men." Rather, the founders were all deeply influenced by the German tradition of scholarship on politics of the time, in which the "state" was an organic entity and the center of a disciplinary focus. Francis Lieber, commonly credited as the first scholar to advocate the scientific study of politics as an academic discipline in America describes the State as "the greatest institution on earth (1838, 78)" and a "sacred institution ... [that] elevates everything that appertains to it (1838, 180)."

For Lieber, Woolsey, and others, the rights of persons did not exist outside of the state. Rather, natural rights only made sense within the context of the state and society. No one is more direct about this than John Burgess, who described the State as "the source of individual liberty (1890, 89) and who remarked that although "the revolutionists of the 18th century said that individual liberty was a natural right; that it belonged to the individual as a human being, without regard to the state or society in which or the government under which, he lived ... it is easy to see that this view is utterly impracticable and barren. There never was, and there never can be, any liberty on this earth among human beings outside of state organization (1890, 175)." Burgess goes on to describe the State as "the most perfect organ which has as yet been attained in the civilization of the world for the interpretation of the human consciousness of right. It furnishes the best vantage-ground as yet reached for the contemplation of the purpose of the sojourn of mankind upon earth (1890, 85)."

Furthermore, they propounded a teleological view of the relationship of persons, society, and the state. The term "government" was explicitly distinguished from "State," with government representing the mechanical means of executing the will of the State. Sovereignty that obtained to the State was described by Burgess as "original, absolute, unlimited universal power over the individual subject and over all associations of subjects (1890, 53)." Burgess, however, takes a moment to note that "Of course the State may abuse its unlimited power over the individual, but this is never to be presumed. It is the human organ least likely to be wrong, and therefore, we must hold to the principle that the State can do no wrong (1890, 56)."

Such a state-centered, normatively laden stasiology as found in the APSA Committee Report in 1950 may strike readers of today's parties literature as peculiar, if not ingenuous or otherwise off-base. The shift from the approach to the study of parties in the APSA Committee Report to that which emerged in the 1940s and 1950s and prevails to the present day closely parallels what scholars of the history of ideas have described as a "paradigm shift" in political science as a discipline. There is some contention as to whether political science has undergone one or multiple paradigm shifts, but the era of viewing politics through a panoptic state was replaced by a shift towards pluralism and behavioralism sometime between World War I and the mid-1950s (Dahl 1961, Farr 1995, Gunnell 1995, Dryzek 2006).¹⁸ The impulse behind the move to pluralism as an empirical and normative framework was to reject the statist's predilection

¹⁸ The bones of contention here on the singularity or multiplicity of paradigm shifts revolve around several issues: (1) whether the rise of behavioralism really counts as a structural revolution; (2) so too for pluralism; (3) whether pluralism and behavioralism are separate or conjoined transformation in the discipline; (4) whether the "post-behavioralist" and "post-pluralist" shifts over the last few decades – principally in the direction of formal models premised on rational choice or the direction of historical institutionalism or perhaps even the most recent Perestroika revolt – count as yet another kind (or kinds) of paradigm shift (see Cohen 1985, Ball 1993, Farr 1995, Laitin 1995, Gunnell 2002, Dryzek 2006).

for viewing America's diversity as a "problem," rather than a defining feature of its polity. This plea for a pluralist conception of liberalism joined well with the behaviorist spur to (1) study politics using scientific methods; (2) study politics by observing, systematically, how people behave (Farr 1995). As we shall see in the coming sections, the emergence of the study of party identification powerfully embodies both the core aims of behavioralism and pluralism – political parties were the obvious institutional form for examining how individuals acted in groups to pursue collective goals and the "party in the electorate" would be best researched by using the most scientific method of the day to discern voter intentions, the public opinion survey.

This turn to the historiography of the discipline's approach to parties serves to foreground two critical points that we return to at this chapter's end. The first of these is to recognize that the methods and frameworks we bring to our analysis are not prefigured by some essential nature of the phenomenon we seek to study and explain. Second, following Kuhn's thoughts on scientific revolutions, paradigms not only capture prevailing social conventions for capturing reality, but can sometime also be constitutive of that reality (1962). Thus as the normative framework of plural liberalism and the empirical framework of political behavioralism come to the foreground, so too does a conception of political parties in which parties are valued normatively as an institutional intermediary between the people and their government and viewed empirically through the subjective lens of the people, as they affiliate, or fail to affiliate with, these institutional intermediaries.

The Party in the Electorate

The transformation, if not revolution, towards pluralism after World War I and towards behavioralism after World War II marked the end of what one mid-century scholar termed the “political-biography-cum-political-ideology” phase of stasiology (Diamant 1954, 377). In its place, we find a more prominent place for non-elites and party identifiers in the research agendas of political scientists that emerges roughly contemporaneous to the APSA Committee on Political Parties’ report. In fact, even as early as 1924, we find a pretty sound repudiation of Burke’s classic definition of parties and an affirmation of a more pluralist and electorally-centered view: “What we seem to have in the United States is a division of the electorate into two great groups, neither of which is a political party in the sense of a band of men bound together by a common doctrine or a specific program ... but only in the sense that each constitutes a great body of voters that have been in the habit of acting together on election day for the purpose of accomplishing certain tangible and immediate results (Robinson 1924, 7).”

By 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 asked 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, not to mention little evidence that this attachment might act as a force that impels the two-party system toward greater party responsibility.

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.¹⁹ 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

¹⁹ As Weisberg (2002) notes, Key is careful to attribute the phrase “party in the electorate” itself to Ralph Goldman’s doctoral dissertation (1951).

intensity “from the most unquestioning loyalty to the most casual sense of affiliation (*ibid*).”²⁰

Measuring Party Identification

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 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).”

The political context of this need to develop a firmer foundation for the relationship between party identification and voting behavior was the electoral ascendance of Dwight David Eisenhower, the first Republican elected to the White

²⁰ 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.

House after 20 years of Democratic dominance. Clearly, vote intention 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.

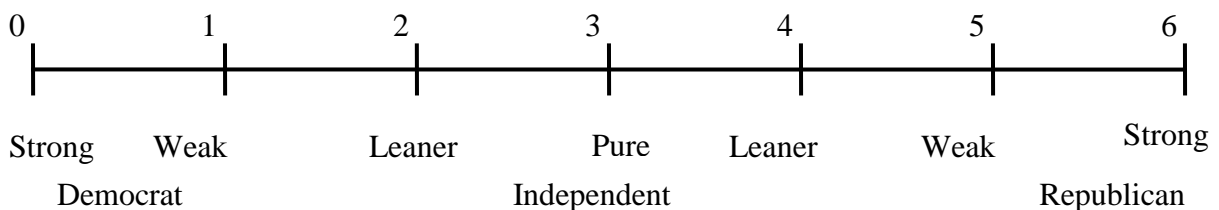
The development of a more precise and probing measure of party identification would first come in a 1951 pilot study of political attitudes in Ann Arbor by Warren Miller (Weisberg 2002). Then in the following year, the Michigan party identification measure was fully launched in the 1952 American National 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 staunch 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 that 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.

Figure 2.1. Party Identification as a Linear Uni-dimensional Scale



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 shown in Figure 2.1.

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.

Beyond this pointed comparison to the Gallup poll, the approach to studying the party in the electorate by asking randomly selected adults in opinion polls to self-identify with a political party or as an Independent also marks a turning point in the modern study of political behavior. The appeal of using survey data garnered great favor for several reasons. First, it promised to move the prevailing scholarship beyond what Campbell and his colleagues described as “tendentious” journalistic and historical accounts that “rest on anecdotal material or on impressionistic judgments (1960, 12).” The use of randomly sampled survey data and statistical inference enabled a rigorous means of adjudicating

between these anecdotes and impressions. Survey data also promised to hone in on the underlying relationships motivating voting behavior. Prior political science research (e.g., Eldersveld 1951, Lipset et al 1954) focused on the analysis of aggregate election statistics of state, counties, wards, and precincts that allowed, at best, fragile inferences on individual-level vote choices.²¹ Moreover, the other favored conceptualization of party identification – one’s intention to vote for a party (Belknap and Campbell 1952, Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954) – was tautological, unfalsifiable, and generally of little use in drawing causal inferences about voting behavior.

This empirical articulation of party identification 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. As Campbell and his colleagues contend, what better explains the variations in individual vote choice is one’s identification with political parties, conceived of as “a psychological attachment, which can persist without legal recognition or evidence of formal membership and even without a consistent record of party support.

It turns out that this scale of party identification fares extraordinarily well in explaining how we vote (Campbell and Stokes 1959, Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960, Miller and Shanks 1996). Party identification was able to account for more

²¹ The fragility here is due to the “ecological inference problem” (King 1997) – that individual-level patterns cannot be reliably inferred from aggregate-level data. The concern with ecological correlations was roughly concurrent with the work of Campbell, et al (see Robinson 1950 and Goodman 1953).

of the variation in vote choice than any competing explanation of the day. Specifically, the Michigan school's measure better explained a wide range of outcomes than the influence of social groupings like union membership, urban-rural residence, and religion. Lazarsfeld and his colleagues at Columbia's Bureau of Applied Social Research drew their inferences about voting behavior based on an "Index of Political Predispositions" studied in two separate contexts – Erie County, Ohio (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944) and Elmira, New York (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954). Campbell and his colleagues countered, seemingly definitively and with broader inferential reach, that social groupings mattered less when political predispositions were properly conceived of as party identification and survey data was properly collected from a random sample of the population of adults in the U.S. writ large.²²

Measurement Issues in Party Identification

It should be clear from our discussion thus far that how we have come to study and think about party identification today was far from preordained a half century ago. It was by no means certain to Angus Campbell and his young trio of collaborators in the 1940s that "the party in the electorate" would be so critical to our understanding of party politics and even moreso that it would take the particularly behavioral, and subsequent to that, cognitive, form that it takes today. This noted, it is fair to say that today this measure of party identification is seemingly ubiquitous in its use, uniform in its operationalization, and universal in its sway over the how we think and act in the political

²² There were several randomly sampled national opinion surveys of political opinion prior to the 1952 ANES: a 1944 poll by the National Opinion Research Center, and the 1948 ANES by the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan. These surveys, however, did not ask respondents to self-identify with a political party.

sphere. As Alan Gerber and Donald Green put it, “in the field of public opinion and electoral behavior, no explanatory variable is more pervasive than party identification (1998, 794).” Everett Carl Ladd of the Roper Institute notes that “[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). And Don Kinder and David Sears declare that “party identification remains the single most important determinant of individual voting decisions (1985, 686).” Despite this seemingly overwhelming consensus, few measures in political science have been as closely and critically scrutinized as party identification. In particular, there have been several forceful analyses on how we currently measure party identification and a vigorous debate over why people come to identify with a political party.

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 2.1) 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 2.2.

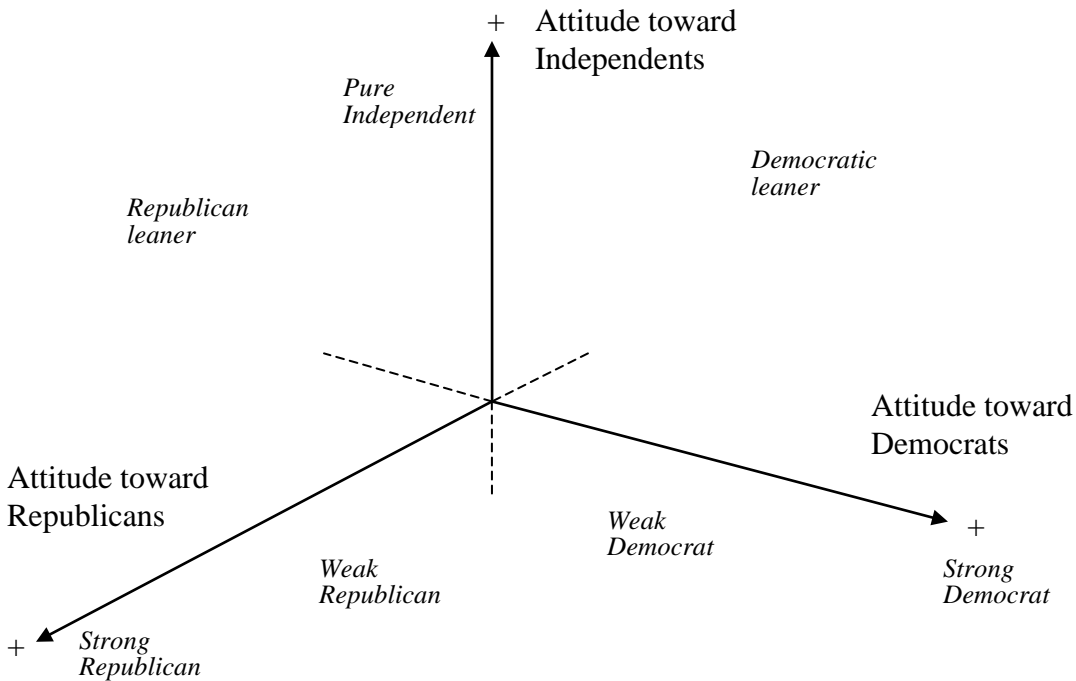
Figure 2.2. Party Identification in Two Dimensions

	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>

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. 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 2.3 (also adapted from Weisberg, 1980).

Figure 2.3. Party Identification in Three Dimensions



Figures 2.2 and 2.3 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. 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 parties 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.²³ Yet they are, in large measure, politely ignored, with their critical force often in lieu of practical considerations. For example, 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 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

²³ For a detailed inventory of these concerns, see Weisberg (1993).

Kessel's pragmatism is the shared feature of most methodological critiques of party identification: namely, 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.

Conceptual Issues in Party Identification

Methodological concerns notwithstanding, the genie of party identification is out of the bottle and there is no putting it back in again. Yet there is ample debate amongst capable judges over just who this genie is and where her powers come from. In this next section we sketch, in critical relief, the two leading theoretical accounts of party identification. We describe the more social psychological account first articulated by scholars at the University of Michigan and the subsequent emergence of a more information-based and ideology-rooted, Downsian view. We next identify some limitations common to each account. To preview, both accounts fall shy of the mark in explaining why we self-identify as a political Independent and how this self-identification varies across racial and ethnic groups. In Chapter Three, we argue that these two relatively neglected facets of party identification – political Independents and racial/ethnic group differences – offer critical leverage on our modified, more general account of party identification. This modified account, importantly, stakes its ground on theoretical foundations, not methodological considerations or empirical consequences.

The Michigan School

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).” According to the authors of *The American Voter*, “Most Americans have this sense of attachment with one party or the other. And for the individual who does, the strength and direction of party identification are facts of central importance in accounting for attitude and behavior (1960, 121).”

The claim in *The American Voter* is that this psychological attachment to party is 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 an enduring psychological attachment 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, Campbell et al 1960).²⁴

Beyond this linkage of political institutions to personal identity, Campbell and his colleagues described three defining characteristics of party identification. Partisanship,

²⁴ 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).

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). Thirdly, almost all Americans could locate themselves somewhere on the ANES continuum of party identification. 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).²⁵

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). On durability and stability, subsequent studies describe 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). Perhaps more devastating than this apparent instability over time were studies that suggested that party identification may not be the underlying predisposition in a funnel of causality leading to one's vote decision. Rather,

²⁵ 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)."

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).²⁶ More recently, however, 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 (Green and Palmquist 1990; Green and Palmquist 1994; Schickler and Palmquist 1997; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 1998; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002).

Perhaps the most forceful and sustained attack against the Michigan school of thought, however, is 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).

The Downsian Model

²⁶ 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).

This result, that familial socialization could not account for the party identification of a significant proportion of Americans, opened the door for what has become the leading alternative to the Michigan school of thought. If it is not the case that we always mimic the partisan habits of our parents, then, so the argument goes, our party identification is likely the reflection of our judgments about each political party, given our general ideological preferences over alternate states of the political world. Alternatively put, in this account, party identification is the manifestation of the perceived affinity between a person's political wants and needs and the publicly stated positions of the two parties on those issues. It is worth noting that this view of the party in the electorate too has its origins in the tumultuous sea changes in the intellectual currents of the mid-Twentieth Century. We earlier noted the shift – viewed through the change in focus from the 1950 APSA Committee on Parties report to the 1960 publication of *The American Voter* – from a research agenda wrought out of normative, praxis-oriented concerns about how parties as organizations might be changed to one based in empirical tests of competing causal claims about how parties are based in the electorate. This shift well exemplifies the behavioral revolution (Ross 1991), and its subsequent cognitive turn, in political science.

A shift in the research agenda of political scientists of comparable significance has been the move to ply the tools of the microeconomic trade – of especial note, axioms of instrumental rationality and market competition – to construct a “positive theory” of individuals and institutions in the political realm. With respect to the party in the electorate, this economistic turn is most often attributed to the formal derivation of the median voter theorem in Anthony Downs' (1957) and 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)."

This articulation of the centripetal force of electoral competition is often taken as damning refutation of the APSA Committee on Parties' advocacy of party responsibility. The assumption (or perhaps aspiration) of the Committee members was that if parties offered voters clear choices with well-defined differences, voters would make responsible electoral decisions that would hold parties accountable for their platforms. Given a barebones account of individual rationality, voter motivation, and candidates' strategic response, however, the median voter theorem shows that parties have no incentives to offer clear and distinct electoral choices.

To an extent, this seemingly devastating implication should have been no surprise to the APSA Committee on Parties, as the central insights of the median voter theorem were hardly earth-shattering to the leading political scientists of Downs' or Hotelling's day. Observations of ideological convergence and the reluctance of parties to take on consequential issues 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

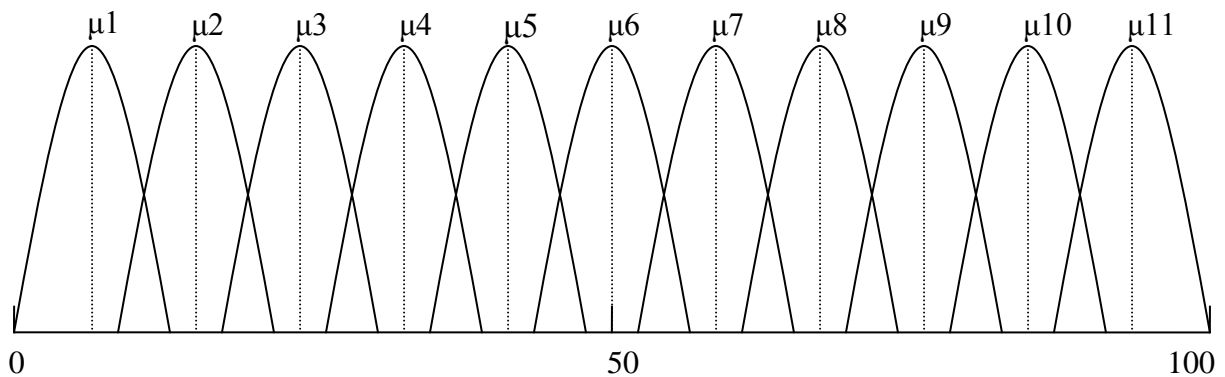
“political center of gravity” (1898). Among Downs’ and Black’s contemporaries, E. E. Schattschneider notes that “the most common criticism made of the American parties is not that they have been tyrannical but that they have been indistinguishable (1942, 85)”; V. O. Key observes that the act of juggling 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).”²⁷

What was novel and made a lasting impact was the carefully constructed logic underlying this centripetal result, wrought from arguments about competition in the duopolistic marketplace of ideas on the institutional side and arguments about rational ignorance, information costs, and the optimal use of partisan heuristics on the individual side. The keystone 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 issues comes the closest to her ideal point. Figure 2.4 shows a typical spatial representation of voter preferences over a single unidimensional continuum, from extremely liberal outcomes on one end to extremely conservative ones at the other. Where a person sits on this continuum depends on the pleasure or pain she derives over the range of possible states of the political world, 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

²⁷ See also Sait (1942, 190) and Goodman (1956, 45-6).

along the continuum. Set proximity voting into motion and 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 2.4, at the ideal point of voter 6, or μ_6).²⁸

Figure 2.4. Mapping Policy Preferences on a Single Dimension



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 reconceptualized 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

²⁸ 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 parties. Second, elections are decided by majority rule. Third, the principal means for candidates to win or lose is by positioning themselves along the continuum. Finally, there needs to be an odd number of voters in every election, although the basic intuition of the theorem is intact even when this condition is not met.

and Green 1998). 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).

This Downsian 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 view of party identification is the 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, Green 1988, 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 seemingly at odds with the thrust of *The American Voter's* (1960) finding that policy preferences and ideological consistency appear to pale in comparison to party identification as an antecedent of individual vote choice. As the authors put it, “forces not based on party loyalty that influence the decisions of the American electorate appear almost wholly free of ideological correlation (Campbell *et al*

1960).”²⁹ Philip Converse’s subsequent “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics” (1964) presents the most exacting and devastating 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 responses “non-attitudes” (1964, 1970). 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.³⁰

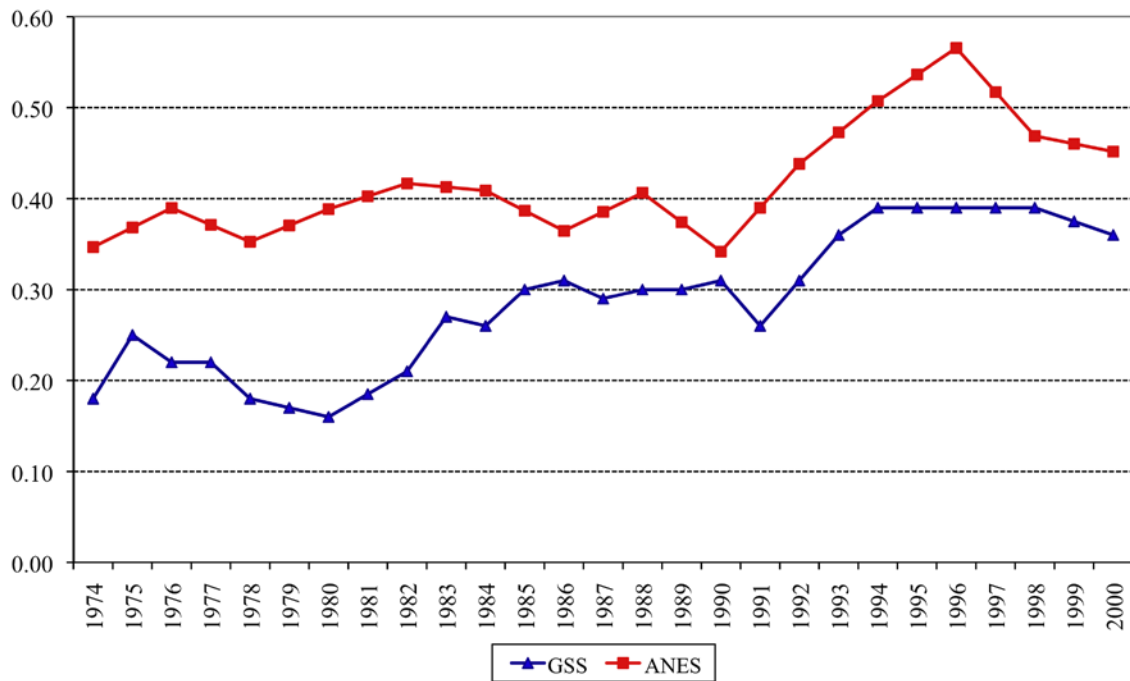
The first attempt to reestablish a more coherent, constrained basis for Americans’ public policy views foundered on the rough current of question wording (Nie, Verba, and Petrocik 1979; cf. Bishop, Oldendick, and Tuchfarber 1978, Bishop, Tuchfarber, and Oldendick 1978, Sullivan, Piereson, and Markus 1978). In fact, efforts to adjudicate the seeming potency of party identification and seeming impotency of ideology as a constraint, and the relationship between the two continue to focus on methodological issues like measurement error and the commensurability of survey items (Achen 1975, Green 1988, and Krosnick and Berent 1993). More recently, however, the evidence favoring a more intimate relationship between partisanship and ideology is gaining force, and doing so as a result of substantive shifts in the nature of partisan politics in the United States. Specifically, the evidence of the increasing coherence of ideology as a primary political predisposition coincides with the evidence of a rise in the ideological

²⁹ 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).

³⁰ See also Duverger (1954, 231-33) and Sartori (1976, 335-36).

polarization of elites and masses (Dionne 1991, Fiorina 2004). Numerous studies suggest a resurgence of sharp partisan differences in Congressional roll-call voting and primaries (e.g., Poole and Rosenthal 1984, 1997; Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; Burden 2001; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006).

Figure 2.5. Correlation of PID and Ideology, 1974-2000



To the extent that public opinion responds to elite cues (Carmines and Stimson 1989, Brody 1991, Zaller 1992), this increasing elite ideological polarization may result in the greater clarity of partisan cues at the mass-level (Hetherington 2001). The upshot here is that Americans are increasingly able to find decisive differences between the two parties and correctly place the Democrats and Republicans ideologically. Figure 2.5 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.³¹ Thus as Green suggests “the mass public draws evaluative connections *across* ideological and partisan groups in relative coherent ways (1988, 772).

Yet, this growing linkage between partisanship and ideological self-placement does not necessarily imply that party polarization among elite politicians has brought on ideological and partisan polarization among ordinary Americans. It simply means that the two scales are increasing in their correspondence. The nation, as a whole, may be growing more moderate ideologically, and more Independent in partisan terms, and the pattern over time that we see in Figure 2.5 would hold. As Fiorina argues, “Americans are closely divided, but we are not deeply divided, and we are closely divided because many of us are ambivalent and uncertain, and consequently reluctant to make firm commitments to parties, politicians, or policies (2005, ix).” Even Fiorina’s critics in the debate on whether the masses are following elites in being divided acknowledge that Americans, for the most part, are ideological moderates (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008).

Moreover, as we shall see in Chapter Three, one striking feature of the growing linkage of party identification and ideological self-placement is that it has occurred at roughly the same time that the proportion of non-partisans in America has grown. Thus, while it may no longer be accurate to portray America’s two major parties as

³¹ In the most recent 2008 ANES data, this relationship continues to hold strong, with a correlation coefficient of 0.52.

Tweedledum and Tweedledee, many Americans may still view them as insufficiently distinct to matter to *them*. Voters (and non-voters) in America still face a very limited menu of partisan choices. Furthermore, by comparison to the ideological spectrum of major parties in European nations, American party choices come with a limited and mostly centrist range of ideological views and policy positions (Castles and Mair 1984). Thus despite assertions that parties play the functional role of collecting and representing the diverse interests of a plural electorate – and, as a result, enable a working democracy itself – there are reasons to worry that America’s major parties and its two-party system remains alienating, unrepresentative, uninformative, and off-screen to many. Party identification, the once 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 govern supremely or singularly.

Michigan and Downsian Approaches in Historical Context

In this chapter, we have started our journey towards a fuller account of race, immigration, and political Independents by mapping the historical and ontological origins of the political scientific study of party identification. Our narrative starts in the middle decades of the twentieth century, a critical juncture in these origins. Prior to this period, the political science scholarship on parties (as exemplified by the 1950 APSA Committee on Parties report) vigorously engaged real-world consequences and normative controversies but neglected, in the main, to consider the “party in the electorate” as a topic of inquiry. In the ensuing decades, the attachments of ordinary individuals to

political parties not only begins to take center stage, but also comes to be embodied in a distinct and, for the most part, invariant form.

This distinct and invariant embodiment of what party identification is and how we study it, moreover, comes to light from the inspiration to develop a cumulative science of politics and governance (Ross 1979, Lowi 1992, Farr and Seidelman 1993, Farr 1995). In the process, the focus of this science vis-à-vis the party in the electorate has primarily been shaped by the way in which political action has come to be conceptualized and party identification has come to be operationalized. Viewed as a linear continuum from strong ties to the Democratic party to strong ties to the Republican party, party identification takes on a form that fits comfortably with both the Michigan and Downsian accounts—in the first case, vis-à-vis the varying intensities of social group identification and in the second case, vis-à-vis the underlying dimension of left-right ideological preferences. The upshot, as Keith *et al* put it, is that “In its modern meaning, ‘party identification’ is a product of survey research (1992, 3).” To most scholars in this field today, party identification, ontologically, does not exist outside of how we measure it in social surveys. As we have seen in this chapter, one effect is that much of the critical debate about party identification is focused on competing claims over the appropriate methodology (how to define, operationalize, and scale party identification) and the better explanatory model (whether party identification is better viewed as a product of long-term considerations like one’s socialization and social group identity or shorter-term considerations like running tallies of parties and their candidates).

Rather than focus on adjudicating whether we are bound by the ties of habit and history *or* by the ties of information and interest, our standpoint is that the explanatory fit

of this positivist, measurement-based study of partisanship depends on the historical contexts and relevant groups in question and the actual substance of party competition. One key point of this chapter is that *how* we choose to study political phenomena depends in no small measure on *when* we choose to study it. The transformation in how we study political parties and the relationship of ordinary individuals to them over the last half century or more has been nothing short of sweeping. Not coincidentally, the post-World War II milieu out of which the APSA Committee Report beckoned the end of one era of stasiology and *The American Voter* heralded the onset of another is markedly different from our present-day era. Beyond the general observation that political science research is probably better characterized today as “post-behavioralist” and “post-pluralist” and the more specific impression that the study of parties and political behavior too has changed with it (Converse 2007, Reiter 2007), we call attention in Chapter Three to two other important changes: the nature of pluralism vis-à-vis racial/ethnic diversity and, with it, the growing importance and multidimensional determinants of non-partisanship.

To underscore the importance of properly situating the study of party identification in historical contexts, it is no surprise that the NES root party identification question – a conceptualization in which party identification is explicit prior to partisan voting behavior *per se* – arises out of the seemingly contradictory circumstances of the 1952 election, in which a Republican candidate, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, successfully gained the presidency despite the overwhelmingly Democratic “partisanship” of the country. Similarly, it is no surprise that the empirical evidence favoring a more ideology- and information-based Downsian view of party identification

coincides with the growing polarization of party elites and politics of divided government. Thus the seeming conceptual rift between the Michigan and Downsian schools of party identification is ultimately a not-so useful and a not-so oppositional dichotomy. Like many other competing theoretical frameworks in the social sciences, it is less a case of which 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 the relationship that the mass electorate has (or fails to develop) with the party system in the United States.

Recognizing the contingent contributions of each account, however, is not equivalent to conceptual carelessness, theoretical agnosticism, or a radical form of contextual relativism. To avoid these pitfalls, we animate the broader directive to understand the party in the electorate by considering what has actually changed since *The American Voter* vis-à-vis the relationship that mass electorates have with the political parties that purport to represent them. In the chapter that follows, we present the case that both Michigan and Downsian schools of thought have yet to fully take account of two major transformations of the last half-century – one in the actual distribution of party identification and the other in the individuals comprising the mass electorate. We argue that these foundational changes give new force to the methodological criticisms and conceptual limitations we have discussed in this chapter and, as a result, critical leverage into what a more capacious theory of party identification might look like. Thus in Chapter Three, we present the case for focusing analytically and substantively on the choice not to self-identify with either the Democratic or the Republican Party and on the racially and ethnically group-specific pathways to that (non)partisan identification.

CHAPTER THREE

IDENTITY, IDEOLOGY, INFORMATION, AND THE DIMENSIONALITY OF NON-PARTISANSHIP

No party holds the privilege of dictating to me how I shall vote. If loyalty to party is a form of patriotism, I am no patriot. If there is any valuable difference between a monarchist and an American, it lies in the theory that the American can decide for himself what is patriotic and what isn't.

Mark Twain (in Paine 1912, 779)

"I'm *nothing*. Don't holler about it."

Anonymous survey respondent on her party identification
(Miller and Wattenberg 1983, 108)

Nonpartisans 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 nonpartisans. As such, every election cycle is saturated with intense scrutiny of Independents by candidates, their consultants, and media commentators alike. Yet despite all of this attention, our understanding of why individuals identify as nonpartisan is in many ways limited. With the exception of a few studies that we will discuss in detail, the literature on nonpartisans 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 nonpartisan 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).

Our pitch for a revised account of party identification is thrown straight down the middle of the ANES scale, taking aim at its categorization of nonpartisans. Specifically, in this chapter we follow the lead of other scholars discussed in Chapter Two in questioning the logic of this linear, unidimensional scale, which presumes that nonpartisans fall squarely in between strong Democrats and strong Republicans and, often by corollary, between extreme liberals and extreme conservatives. We begin with a historical overview of the oft normative accounts with which scholars of American politics have portrayed Independents. We then revisit the Michigan and Downsian schools of thought on partisanship and follow the lead of other scholars discussed in Chapter Two in questioning the logic of a linear, unidimensional scale. We further articulate the limited purview of both accounts of party identification in explaining why members of different racial and ethnic communities come to self-identify as nonpartisan. 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 nonpartisanship that are progressively more important in America’s increasingly diverse population.

A History of the Study of Independents: From Privileged Status to Misfits

Attention to Independents and other non-partisans 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, the status of political Independents has shifted from a positive conception to a negative conception – both normatively and empirically. Normatively, there has been a decided shift in the way we think about political Independents from Independents as virtuous citizens to Independents as fickle and feeble voters who threaten democratic stability, a shift which shades the background of our empirical analysis in this book. 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.³² It is in this era that James Bryce writes, “Neither party has as a party any clean-cut principles, any distinctive tenets ... [b]oth have certainly war cries, organizations, interests, enlisted in their support. But those interests are in the main the interests of getting or keeping the patronage of the government (1888, 3).” James Russell Lowell takes a more acid pen to the point and declares, “Parties refuse to see, or, if they see, to look into, vicious methods which help them to a majority, and each is thus estopped from sincere protest against the same methods when employed by the other ... But 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 (1888, 305-6).”

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

³² 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).”

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 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. In Lowell’s essay, “The Place of Independents in Politics,” Independents are defined by reference to the following poem in which non-partisanship is unambiguously identified with liberty itself:

I honor the man who is ready to sink
Half his present repute for the freedom to think,
And when he has thought, be his cause strong or weak,
Will risk’t other half for the freedom to speak,
Caring naught for what vengeance the mob has in store,
Let that mob be the upper ten thousand or lower (1888, 299).

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).” If this reading is correct, we have already seen that the Committee members view this as the most critical element of the electorate in reinforcing party responsibility and democratic

accountability. Independents, at least from the mid-century *weltanschauung* of the APSA Committee on Political Parties are the equivalent of Fiorina's retrospectively rational actors.

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, Eldersveld's point is that 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). In Eldersveld's oft-quoted observation, for example,

the stance is decidedly a more neutral one “that 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 be intelligent or fickle; and the effects of independent voting on the political system may be beneficent or dangerous (1952, 735).”³³ Each of these possibilities begs questions that demand discriminating empirical inquiry, inquiry based more on the “objective” operationalization of Independents than on any normative aspirations for enlightened democratic citizenship.

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*.³⁴ 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

³³ Similarly, an issue of *The New York Times Magazine* from 1952 defines the Independent as “a statistical rather than a mortal entity. He doesn’t fit into any neat categories of wealth, social position or intellectual outlook. He’s as likely to be a farmer as a small business man or a wage-earner. He has no particular habitat, has no special religious preoccupations nor any marked regional or tribal prejudices to be exploited. Nor is his independence always a matter of will and principles to be melted down by sound logic (July 13, p. 8, from Goodman 1956).

³⁴ 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.

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.³⁵

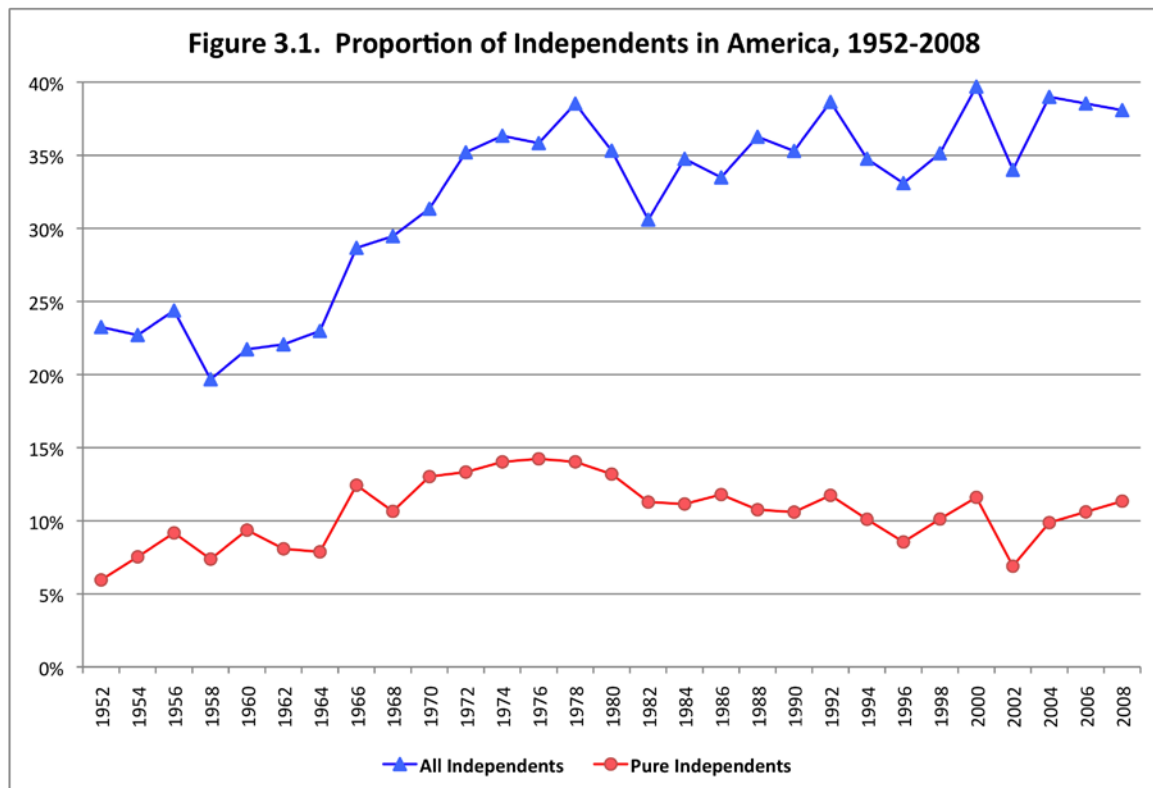
Growing Nonpartisanship

This epistemological and evaluative move, perhaps ironically, perhaps revealingly, occurs in the midst of a remarkable rise in the proportion of Americans who choose to identify as Independents over the second half of the Twentieth Century. Figure 3.1 shows data from the 1952 through 2008 ANES. 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 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.³⁶ By the

³⁵ 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.

³⁶ 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.

1980s, this increase results in more Americans self-identifying as an Independent than do so with either party.



Pre-election surveys are not the only data sources that reveal a substantial increase in nonpartisanship. Data on party registration closely parallel the trend in Figure 3.1. Between 1960 and 2004, the proportion of all eligible adults who registered as Independent or some other third party option grew from 1.6 percent to 21.7 percent (Committee on the American Electorate 2006). Exit poll data also reveal a growing trend in nonpartisanship over a several decades-long time span. Although we know that these figures overstate the trend since many who identify or register as Independent can and often do act like their partisan brethren when it comes to election day, the rise still seems remarkable (Keith et al 1992)b.

Current Theories of Independents

Most current theories of Independence and nonpartisanship, to be fair, avoid much of the normative language of earlier scholars. Yet the background assumption that non-partisans are somehow “misfits” and out of the norm remains. In this current section, we outline the two main theoretical accounts of non-partisans as well as the principal critique of these conventional accounts. The most enduring view of nonpartisanship 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. Independents are then more than likely to be the children of Independent parents.

A more negative, dim view of Independents also emerges in the Michigan school’s accounts of nonpartisanship. 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.³⁷ 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 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 nonpartisan 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,

³⁷ 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.

Layman and Carmines 1997, Abramowitz 1995, Alvarez and Nagler 1998, Abramowitz and Saunders 1998).³⁸ 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 to hold few, if any, strong views about politics and what opinions they do hold are “middle of the road.”

There are a couple of common elements to both of these conventional views of nonpartisanship. First, both accounts place Independents squarely in the middle of a linear partisan scale. Whether by virtue 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. If Independence is measured as an ordinal scale (cf. a categorical, unordered scale) with an assumed monotonicity and equidistance from both extremes of the scale, a person who self-classifies as Independent is thus as equally unlikely to convert to a strong Democrat as she is to convert to a strong Republican. 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. As we noted in the previous chapter, there are compelling arguments that the standard 7-point ANES

³⁸ 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.

scale conflates at least two empirically distinct dimensions of party identification. Following Weisberg (1980), we described in Chapter Two 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 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, defining feature of Independence is neutrality or indifference between the two parties. Put plainly, we identify as Independent when we observe no distinctions between 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.³⁹ 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

³⁹ 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.

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 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.⁴⁰

Concerns with Existing Accounts

Raising questions about the dimensionality of partisanship is, we believe, an important task and in our own theory of nonpartisanship 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 nonpartisanship. 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

⁴⁰ 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.

another way, none really tells us why people have a particular set of attitudes toward the parties or independence in the first place.⁴¹ 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 or other forms of nonpartisanship, we will need answers to these deeper questions.⁴² Developing this kind of a more general, unified account of the multiple pathways to nonpartisanship is imperative because it is substantively and, ultimately, normatively consequential for how we think about who identifies as a nonpartisan, 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. As Johnston's authoritative review of the party

⁴¹ 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, 2000), and using appropriate, more recent, statistical methods to do so.

⁴² 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.

identification literature concludes, this “initiative seems to have gained more ritual genuflection than widespread acceptance” (2006:334). 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).

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.

Race, Identity, and (Non)Partisanship

We have reviewed several extant accounts of (non)partisanship, each with their insights and short sights. In the ensuing section, we take account of both the strengths and limitations to develop our story about partisan choices. We start with the core proposition—that the social groups (from the Michigan school’s standpoint) and the ideological predispositions (from the Downsian view’s standpoint) that define one’s

partisan or non-partisan self-identification are multiple and interacting. To make this point, we start with the observation that scholars who take seriously party identification as a social identity do so in isolation, without regard to other primary social identities that might inform and influence a person's political orientation. This exclusiveness stems, perhaps, from the historical origins of party identification that we have discussed—specifically, in the manner in which *The American Voter* controverted the claims of Paul Lazarsfeld and his colleagues in *The People's Choice*, that “a person thinks politically, as he is socially. Social characteristics determine political preference (1944, 27).” What Campbell and his colleagues showed, rather decisively, was 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.

Yet there is wisdom lost in inferring from this impressive empirical result that non-partisan social groups are either irrelevant, of secondary import, or ultimately reducible in their influence to partisan considerations. *Partisan Hearts and Minds* (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002), perhaps the most forceful restatement of the power and persistence of party identification in which partisanship is viewed as a social identity, is illustrative of this exclusion of non-partisan social identities. *Ab initio*, Don Green and his colleagues acknowledge that “identification with political parties is a minor part of the typical American's self-conception. Race, sex, ethnicity, religion, region, and social class come immediately to mind as core social identities; political party does not (2002, 2).” Yet they note that “when our attention turns to politics, however,

partisan attachments become highly influential, whereas more fundamental social identities ... tend to have less predictive power (*ibid*).”

Partisan Hearts and Minds does acknowledge one exception to this rule. Race, too is a powerful predictor of one’s vote choice, the authors note. Yet Green *et al* assert that this power stems principally from the predominant alignment of African Americans as staunch Democrats. The political proclivities of other racial and ethnic groups, they suggest, are not so distinctively organized by their non-partisan identities. 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).” In affirming the Michigan school’s “funnel of causality,” however, Green *et al* proffer the somewhat uncomfortable juxtaposition of claims: that race is a “fundamental social identity,” yet one with foundations that are permeable enough for partisan identity to absorb it. 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. 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).

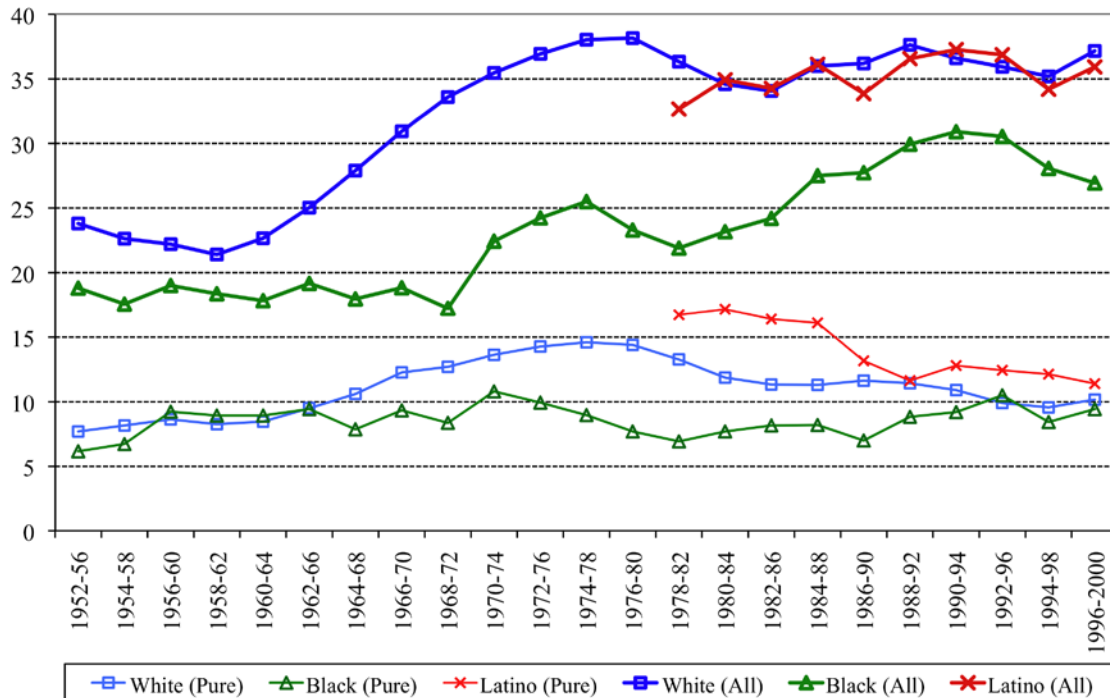
This absence of race and ethnicity from a consideration of party identification, moreover, is not unique to *Partisan Hearts and Minds*. In many instances, such as *The Myth of the Independent Voter*, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans are simply excluded from the analysis. Ray Wolfinger and his collaborators justify this

exclusion on the grounds that Independence 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). 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).” Likewise, James Sundquist readily admits in the landmark book *Dynamics of the Party System*, that his analysis of independents “disregards blacks” (1983: 403). Perhaps even egregiously, in trying to determine whether or not racial concerns affect partisanship, Abromowitz (1994) takes the questionable and all-to- determining step of dropping all African Americans from the analysis. In yet cases, such as Jack Dennis’ article series on political Independents, there is 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 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, Figure 3.2

shows the change over time in self-categorization as an Independent disaggregated by racial/ethnic group.⁴³

Figure 3.2. 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 we

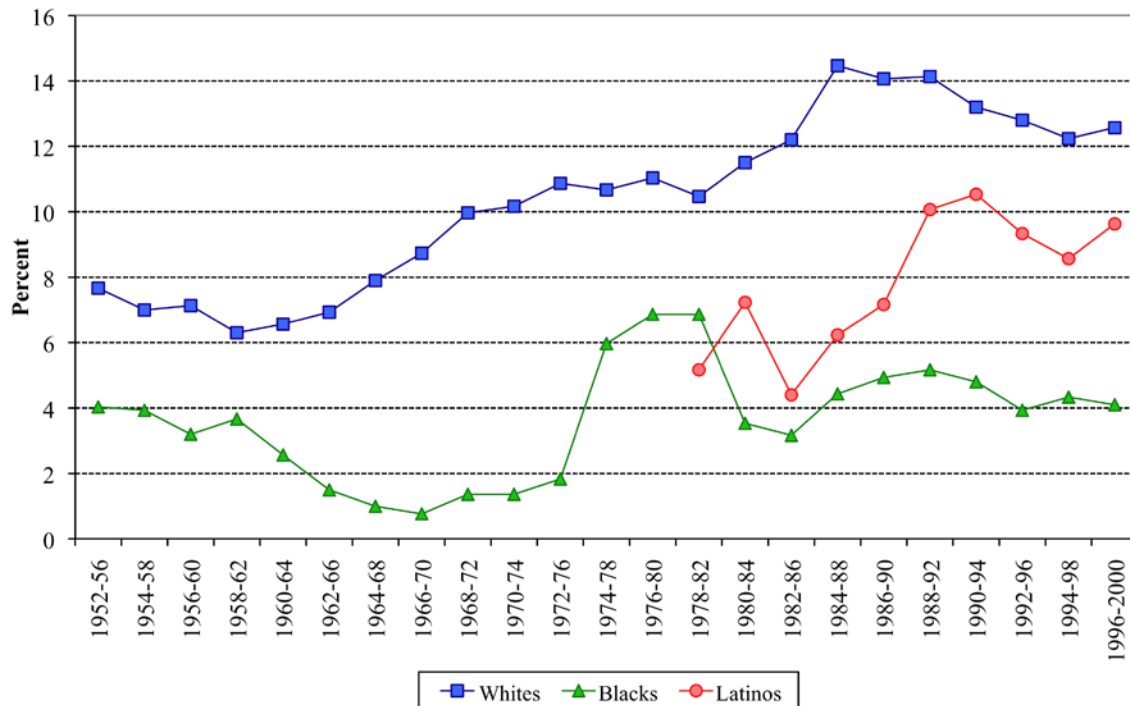
⁴³ There are too few Asian Americans in the ANES samples to include in the analysis.

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 3.3) 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.⁴⁴ These figures suggest, with compelling visual effect, that there are racial and ethnically distinct patterns of party identification.

Figure 3.3. Independents Leaning Republican, by Race (3MA)



Testing Conventional Accounts of Non(Partisanship)

To put more empirical bite to this suggestion, we demonstrate that the two principal theories of party identification—the Michigan and Downsian accounts—offer a far from complete explanation of 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 3.1, we test these hypotheses

⁴⁴ For Democratic leaners, the most conspicuous result is the lack of any differences. Similar proportions of each group identify as leaners, and this proportion changes over time similarly for each group.

with a logit analysis using data from the ANES from 1978 to 2000. Pre-adult socialization is measured by the party identification of one's parents (specifically, whether they were Independents). We test for the effects of ideological self-placement by comparing moderates (the base category) to conservatives and liberals (strong and weak). The degree of political engagement is measured by respondents' level of political knowledge, their self-reported political interest levels, their personal political efficacy, their trust in government, and their self-reported voting or political participation. Asian Americans are not included in the analysis due to their small numbers in the ANES sample.

Table 3.1 Testing Conventional Models of Independence⁴⁵

	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)
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)**

⁴⁵ Based on an analysis of 8030 whites, 850 African Americans, and 443 Latinos in the ANES, 1978-2000.

The effect of ideology is tested by comparing self-described moderates (the three middle categories of the 7 point ideological self-placement 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 online Appendix.

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 more mixed.⁴⁶ For whites, both the Downsian and Michigan accounts seem to fit the partisan proclivities of much of the population.⁴⁷ Ideological moderation and indifference between the two parties strongly and significantly predict Independence among the white population.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ When we repeat the analysis focusing on pure Independents (including Independent leaners as partisans), we reach the same conclusion.

⁴⁷ One interesting anomaly among white Americans 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.

⁴⁸ It is not just a basic liberal-conservative orientation that tends to separate out white 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

So too does childhood socialization and political apathy. Having one or more parents who identified as Independent 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.⁴⁹ 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.⁵⁰ 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.⁵¹

The decision-making processes of African Americans and Latinos, however, seem to be less closely tied to the basic dimensions portrayed in the literature. Judged simply by the number of significant variables, much less matters for either group. The Downsian ideological model, in particular, fails to help us place blacks and Latinos on the partisan

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.

⁴⁹ 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.

⁵⁰ 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.

⁵¹ 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.

scale.⁵² 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.

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 3.1 with a reduced white sample size. Second, we repeated –as closely as possible - the analysis of blacks and Latinos in Table 3.1 using larger samples from single year studies of those two communities (the 1996 National Black Election Survey and the 2006 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.

⁵² 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.

The other two conventional perspectives do, however, get 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.⁵³ 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.

The Continued (Partisan) Significance of Race

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. Yet these preliminary findings clearly point to some pointed differences in party identification by race/ethnic group. At root, the reason that we expect a more explicit consideration of race and ethnicity to shed such light is that party identification as a social identity is not likely to be singular or exclusive in its influence on our political bearing. We take our personal identity to be the resultant of the multiple, cross-cutting group identities that define us. Applied to the study of the party in the electorate, this insight is voiced even in the generation before the behavioral revolution by Charles Merriam, who describes the social group bases of party identification by noting that:

⁵³ 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.

“It is also possible to make a study of the party system by viewing the various social forces and elements out of which the party is made, and by showing how these factors are combined to produce the Republican or Democratic or other party result. We may look at the various groupings, of class, race, religion, section, in their relation to parties ... We may see how the party becomes a going concern, an institution, an attitude; how party allegiance becomes part of the political heritage of many persons ... We may, in short begin the analysis of the party by examining its composition in terms of political and social forces (1922, 1-2).”

While our identification with one of the two principal political parties in the United States is apt to define political identity and orientation for many of us, not all of us identify so exclusively or forcefully with a political party and many of us define ourselves politically through non-partisan social group identities. Viewed thus, the central question is not whether party identification is prior to racial group identification, or *vice-versa*, but rather how both enduring attachments interact to define our relationship to political parties.

Thus these findings do 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 under gird 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.

Why Race Matters: Information, Ideology, and Identity

So what is it that is different about racial and ethnic minorities and immigrants groups? In the Introduction 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 under-girding 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” with 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).⁵⁴ 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-à-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.

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-

⁵⁴ 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)?”

identification as a nonpartisan— 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 concept underlying 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. 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 nonpartisan. Nonpartisanship 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.

A third concern 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 nonpartisanship. 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 nonpartisanship will represent more than ideological moderation.

African Americans: Exit from the Democratic Party

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. 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 3.2. 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's claim that "belief in the importance of black interests translates into preference for the Democratic Party" (Dawson 1994, 113) is we think a bit too deterministic.

More specifically, a sense of linked fate may not automatically translate into support for the Democratic Party without the mediation of two key steps necessary to link black interests with identification with the Democratic Party. 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. For instance, Dawson 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). 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 between black group interests and the Democratic Party. 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. While Barack Obama's rise to the presidency and his presumed role as leader of the Democratic Party may make the link between party and black interests temporarily clearer, emerging signs of discontent suggest that any gains that the Democrats make may not be lasting. Given the increasing prominence of black Republicans and conservatives like Clarence Thomas, Alan Keyes, Condoleezza Rice, and Colin Powell and 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 and even by Barack Obama himself 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 nonpartisanship, if race were simply reducible to partisan considerations, as Green and his colleagues 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. As we shall see in Chapter Four, it is also not the case that the racial foundation of black party identification has been trumped by changing ideological and economic considerations. Against these explanations, we shall

show that black nonpartisanship is best explained by the factors that contribute to the decoupling of racial group identity from partisan political identity.

A further 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 Four 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, 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 nonpartisanship 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 that we noted in the first pages of this book.

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., Abrajano and Alvarez 2010, Nicholson and Segura 2005, Wong et al 2009, Uhlaner and Garcia 2005, Lien et al 2004, Cain et al 1991, , Uhlaner et al 2000, Wong 2001, Alvarez and Garcia-Bedolla 2003), by and large, face several limitations. First, 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 (but see Bowler et al 2006).⁵⁵ Second, their principal concern, operationally, is in explaining the variation in how these emerging groups fix their loyalties given the pairwise choice between the Democratic and Republican parties. Third, with a few important 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. Finally, 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).

To be fair, this focus on explaining the party identification of Latinos and Asians is 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

⁵⁵ 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).

to parties. A disproportionate (relative to whites and African Americans) number of Latinos and Asian Americans reject the pairwise choice between the Democrats and the Republicans, or even the tripartite choice between Democrats, Republicans, and Independents.

The Widespread Nonpartisanship of Latinos and Asian Americans

Table 3.2 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 (Latinos are surveyed in all cities to this survey; Asian are surveyed only in Los Angeles), the 2001 Pilot National Asian American Politics Survey, the 2002 and 2004 Kaiser Family Foundation/Pew Hispanic Center National Survey of Latinos, the 2006 Latino National Survey, and the 2008 National Asian American Survey. 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.⁵⁶

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

⁵⁶ The two PEW surveys and the LNS 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 surveys respondents from the five major urban conceptions of Asian Americans – New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Honolulu. The 2008 NAAS is drawn from an extensive ethnic name list that oversamples respondents from California, the NY/NJ metro area and other metro areas that represent ‘new destinations’ for Asian American immigrants (see Wong et al 2009 for more information on the survey).

locate themselves on this continuum. Even in the more nationally representative 2006 Latinos National Survey and the 2008 National Asian American Survey, only a minority (44 percent in both surveys) of all respondents affiliate themselves with a major party. This distinct lack of enthusiasm for the major parties is evident in every one of the surveys in Table 3.2. This reluctance stands in marked contrast to the emphatic conclusion of the authors of *The American Voter* that “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 (Campbell *et al* 1960, 122; our emphasis).”

Table 3.2. Asian Americans, Latinos, and Non-partisanship

	Democrat/ Republican	Independent	Not Sure DK/Refused	Something Else/ No Pref./ Do not think in these terms
Asian American				
1993-94 MCSUI (LA)	28	11	6	55
2001 PNAAPS (5 cities)	50	13	18	20
2008 NAAS	44	20	10	26
Hispanics/Latinos				
1993-94 MCSUI (4 cities)	39	14	4	43
2002 PEW	51	28	11	10
2004 PEW	49	26	14	12
2006 LNS	44	17	20	16

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 fully described by a standard, linear, unidimensional continuum. As we shall further argue, neither is it likely to be completely 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.

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: information uncertainty, ideological ambivalence, and identity formation. These three factors which form the core of our more general account of party identification and political independence are, we argue, particularly critical in the party identification of Latinos and Asian Americans.

Uncertainty

The first dimension, 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. Conventional accounts of party identification assume a fairly intimate, lifelong relationship with party politics. Take the example of identification as an Independent. In the case of the Michigan school, Independents are viewed as the offspring of parents who are Independents or of circumstances of political socialization that lead one to identify as a political Independent. In the modified account of party identification as a social identity,

the corollary would be that Independents so identify because of it comports with their sense of political group identity. In the case of the Downsian view, Independents so identify either due to their steadfast ideological moderation or due to their inability to see meaningful differences between the two parties.

Both the Michigan and Downsian accounts, in short, presume fully assimilated and well-socialized citizens. With immigration-based groups, none of the preconditions for these pathways to Independence applies: 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. 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 Asians identify as non-partisans 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) 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.

Ideology

Second, we argue that prior political predispositions, the anchors that typically steady us through uncertain and unfamiliar environments, too have shaky moorings for immigrant-based racial/ethnic groups. Specifically, two central predispositions, one's ideological roots and one's sense of racial/ethnic group identity are also closer to moving targets than unmoved movers for Asian Americans and Latinos. With ideology, we posit that the partisan choices here are shaped by ambivalence and that it does so in two distinct ways. First, we expect Asians and Latinos to be ambivalent about their party identification because they have yet to "own" the terms of ideological discourse in the United States. 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).⁵⁷ Rather, these new Americans are more likely, at least initially, to try to adapt the cultural values, religious mores, terms of ideological discourse from one's homeland context to the U.S..

To further explicate this point, many immigrant-based groups might well be described as 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 often

⁵⁷ 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)?"

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).

Identity

Finally, we expect that for Asian Americans and Latinos 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.⁵⁸

Extremism, Ambivalence, and White Nonpartisans

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 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. The 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.

⁵⁸ 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.

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.⁵⁹ 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

⁵⁹ 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.

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 nonpartisans rather than choose between Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee. 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.

The second yet relatively unexamined pathway to nonpartisanship 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.⁶⁰ 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" 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, nonpartisanship 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 nonpartisanship is largely a function of ambivalence.

Implications

This multi-dimensional view of party choice and nonpartisanship raises important implications for scholars and practitioners of American politics alike. For political practitioners there are important lessons about who nonpartisans are and what role they

⁶⁰ Dissonance and ambiguity are both regularly invoked in discussions of public opinion. Layman and Carmines (1997) and Alvarez and Brehm (1993) are among a lengthy list of authors who highlight the importance that ambiguity can play in opinion formation. Others have even noted how ambivalence about parties can affect vote choice (Basinger and Lavine 2005, Greene 2005) and how ambivalence destabilizes party identification (Keele and Wolak 2006).

could play in shaping the balance of power in future electoral contests. In particular, our account of nonpartisans leads, we think, to a different normative view of nonpartisans. Nonpartisans should not simply be dismissed as non-ideologues prone to apathy and inactivity. Rather, as we indicate, they are multiple routes to nonpartisanship - many of which suggest that Independents are anything but apolitical. On certain issues, nonpartisans are the most engaged and most interested members of the American public.

In turn, this more positive view of nonpartisans leads to a different conclusion about the possibility that nonpartisan will be important political actors. If nonpartisans 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 nonpartisans 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. It seems clear that unaligned, uninvolved minorities and others 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 citizens, the party that can more successfully navigate these issues could have a critical electoral edge.

This account also suggests that parties and practitioners ignore race and ethnicity at their own peril. If our understanding of the unique circumstances and considerations of each is accurate, then a race to the median voter approach is unlikely to work as there is unlikely to be one median voter. Rather members of different racial and ethnic groups will have different core concerns motivating their decisions. Without a mutli-pronged

approach that seeks in some way to speak to each of these different perspectives, parties will have a difficult time acquiring a working majority.

For scholars of American politics, there are also important lessons. The alternative dimensions of nonpartisanship 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 at two points along 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 nonpartisans 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.

Another lesson for scholars is that our analysis has been 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 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 to 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 nonpartisanship – 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 non-identifiers. By offering responses that do not clearly fit one of the three main categories we suspect that these non-identifiers 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 non-identifiers within our larger category of nonpartisans. 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.

Rejoinders

Beyond these implications is at least one important concern related to our focus on Independents. One issue, touched upon briefly already, 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?

Table 3.3. 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 evidence marshaled in favor of this view of Independents as closet partisans is impressive. Table 3.3 replicates the core analysis of the *Myth of the Independent*

Voter, the seminal work on the partisan proclivities of nonpartisan voters (Keith *et al* 1992). The table details the voting tendencies of different kinds of partisans and non-partisans in Congressional and Presidential contests over the last half century. Judged by the behavior of the roughly 60 to 70 percent of Independents who are leaners – individuals who identify as Independent but who then reveal a preferences for one of the two major parties when asked - the partisan voting among Independents is widespread. The table shows quite clearly that in terms of their voting in these national 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 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. It should be clear that just because white Independent leaners, as Wolfinger *et al* note, “display an impressive tendency to vote for the candidate of the party they feel closer to” does not tell us a lot about the partisan proclivities of Latino, African American, or Asian American Independents (1992:65). 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 often fails to consider the full range of options available to nonpartisans in any given electoral contest. 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 nonpartisan voters to be searching for an alternative course of action (or inaction). Following the logic of Albert Hirschman (1970), we argue that assessments of the behavior of nonpartisans need to examine all of the options available including exit, voice, and loyalty. As we will see, under the right circumstances, Independent leaners are especially apt to not remain loyal and to choose either exit or voice. In presidential contests, for example, we will show that white Independent leaners are more than twice as likely as weak partisans to choose to vote for a third party. Similarly, since nonpartisans who are ambivalent and uncertain about partisan options have much less reason to go to the polls in the first place, it is not surprising that we find that leaners and other types of nonpartisans are quite likely to abstain from voting altogether.

Third, these findings tend to 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. Using a range of panel data, our analysis will show that much of the perceived loyalty of leaners to one party is illusory.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, all of this ignores context. How often nonpartisans express active support for candidates from one of the two major parties will vary significantly with the options that voters are afforded. 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 Eight. 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, we find markedly higher partisan defections among Independents of all stripes.

None of these criticisms refutes 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, we undertake two important tests in subsequent chapters. First, we repeat our analysis including or excluding different categories of Independents. Our primary analysis will focus on an inclusive category of nonpartisans that includes leaners and all others who do not identify as Democrats or Republicans. However, we also repeat all of the tests that

are presented in the chapters that follow grouping leaners with partisans and thus singling out pure Independents. To preview, when we repeat our analysis dropping Independent leaners from the nonpartisan category and focusing on pure Independents only, we find few striking differences in our account of party identification. Any substantial differences are noted. Second, 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.

Towards a Theory: Information, Identity, and Ideology

In these first three chapters, we have taken a long and deliberate journey into our empirical analysis of the distinct pathways to nonpartisanship for blacks, Latinos and Asians, and whites. The backdrop to this sojourn has been the changing centrality of the role of political parties in the electorate and with it, the coordination around a fixed conceptualization and operationalization of party identification. The particular vehicle of choice for political scientists, as we saw in Chapter Two, 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 nonpartisans 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 studying the party in the electorate (and dress up its passengers) by taking this middle seat out – that is, by focusing on nonpartisans 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, we have argued, offers an incomplete account for three principal reasons. First, party identification is not always best represented on a unidimensional scale. “Nonpartisanship” is not merely the absence of a social identification or the midpoint on a continuum. Second, not all individuals and groups are fully socialized into 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. The end result is that for many Americans who find themselves lumped together in the catch-all category of nonpartisan, their partisan choice is not merely the absence of a social identification or the midpoint on a continuum.

The Downsian, “running tally” view of partisanship too is incomplete for at least two reasons. First, not all individuals are equally familiar with the two-party system. With Asians and Latinos, in particular, we expect substantially greater uncertainty in establishing one’s ideological proximity to the Democratic and Republican parties or one’s ability to take meaningful running tallies of each party’s past performance. Second, not all issues and ideological beliefs fit comfortably under the liberal-conservative continuum. In the case of whites, ideological extremism and ambivalence (rather than moderation) may predict Independents. With African Americans, ideological separatism (rather than moderation) may better predict nonpartisanship. With Asians and Latinos, ideological beliefs may be salient and durable, but useful anchors to fix partisan cues on only in the political context of one’s home country.

Against these limitations, we build a more expanded 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 nonpartisan. 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. We now turn to a more careful consideration of each of the three distinctive pathways to nonpartisanship.

CHAPTER FOUR

LEAVING THE MULE BEHIND: INDEPENDENTS AND AFRICAN AMERICAN PARTISANSHIP

In this country, it's impossible for you to be aligned – with either party. Either party that you align yourself with is suicide ... once you are aligning, you have no bargaining power – none whatsoever.

Malcolm X (in Breitman, 1965, p. 132-33)

"We must reject separatism from whatever source. We must reject white separatism. We must reject black separatism. We must hold true to the course on which we have embarked the course which leads to an integrated society of magnificent pluralism."

Massachusetts Senator Edward Brooke

In Chapter One and Three, 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 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 that underscores two important points. First, African Americans have not always been so overwhelmingly Democratic in their party identification. Second, in the last few decades – at least until the successful candidacy of Barack Obama - 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. We close by considering the impact of a black Democratic president on future patterns in black partisanship.

Historical Trends in Partisanship

The history of African American partisanship is well known and 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).”

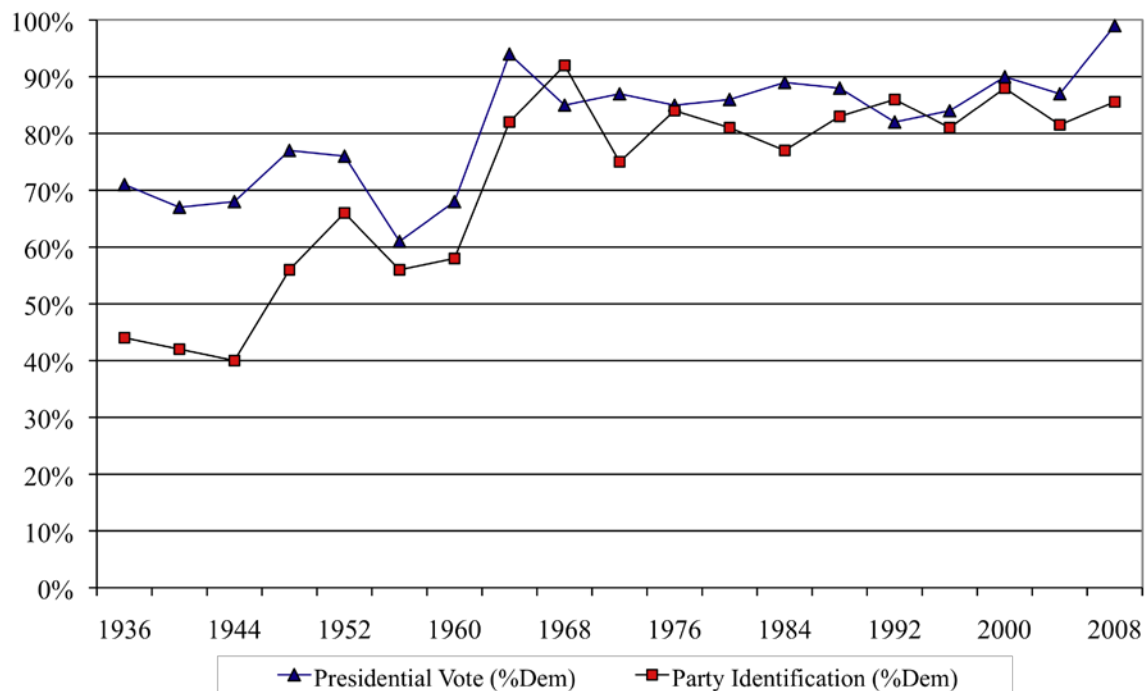
Over the next century, disaffection with the Republican Party grew but few blacks went so far as to support the Democratic Party (Walton 1972). It was not until the Great Depression that the black community’s almost unanimous support for the Republican began to wane. Dire economic circumstances and the 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 4.1 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.⁶¹

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 4.1 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.

⁶¹ Data for Figure 4.1 are from Bositis (2004). The figure includes Independents who lean Democratic as Democrats.

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 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.

Figure 4.1. African-American Voting and Party Identification, 1936-2008



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). As the tail end of Figure 4.1 shows, in the most recent 2008 presidential contest between Barack Obama and John

McCain, the racial bloc voting of African Americans reached an upper bound of sort, with 99 percent of African-American ANES respondents reporting their vote choice for Obama.

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).⁶² 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 – 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

⁶² 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.

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).⁶³

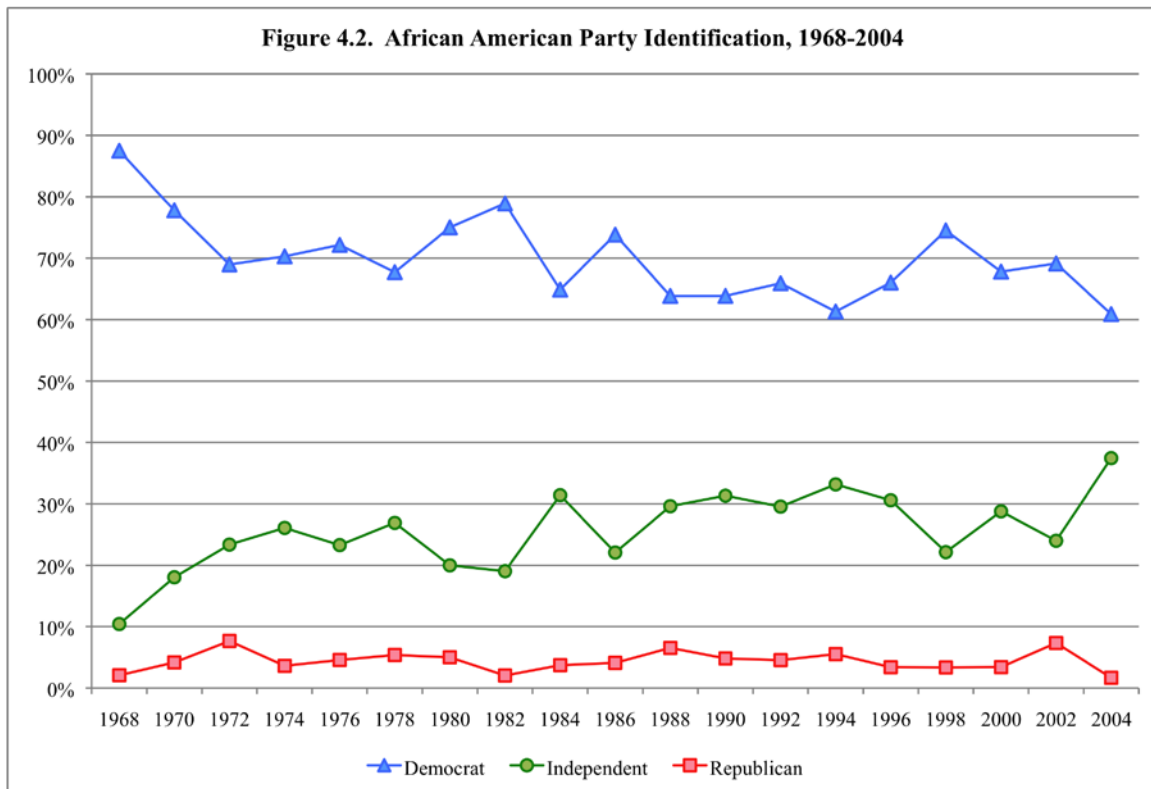
Whether they are responding to this electoral Catch-22 or not, trends in African American party identification over the last four decades indicate that African Americans are with increasing frequency choosing not to identify as a Democrat. Figure 4.2 shows the distribution of party identification for African Americans to the root American National Election Studies question from 1968 to 2004. Since the late 1960s there has been a gradual but significant shift away from the 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 roughly 20 percentage points during this period.⁶⁴ Among those who opt out of the Democratic Party, by far the vast majority leaves to become Independents.⁶⁵ According to the ANES, some 38 percent of all blacks in 2004 identify as Independents.⁶⁶

⁶³ 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 Kohfeldt 1989, Walters 1988).

⁶⁴ This trend is mirrored in a range of different surveys (see Luks and Elms 2003).

⁶⁵ Since so few African Americans are categorized as uncommitted nonpartisan, in this chapter we focus specifically on those respondents who label themselves Independent.

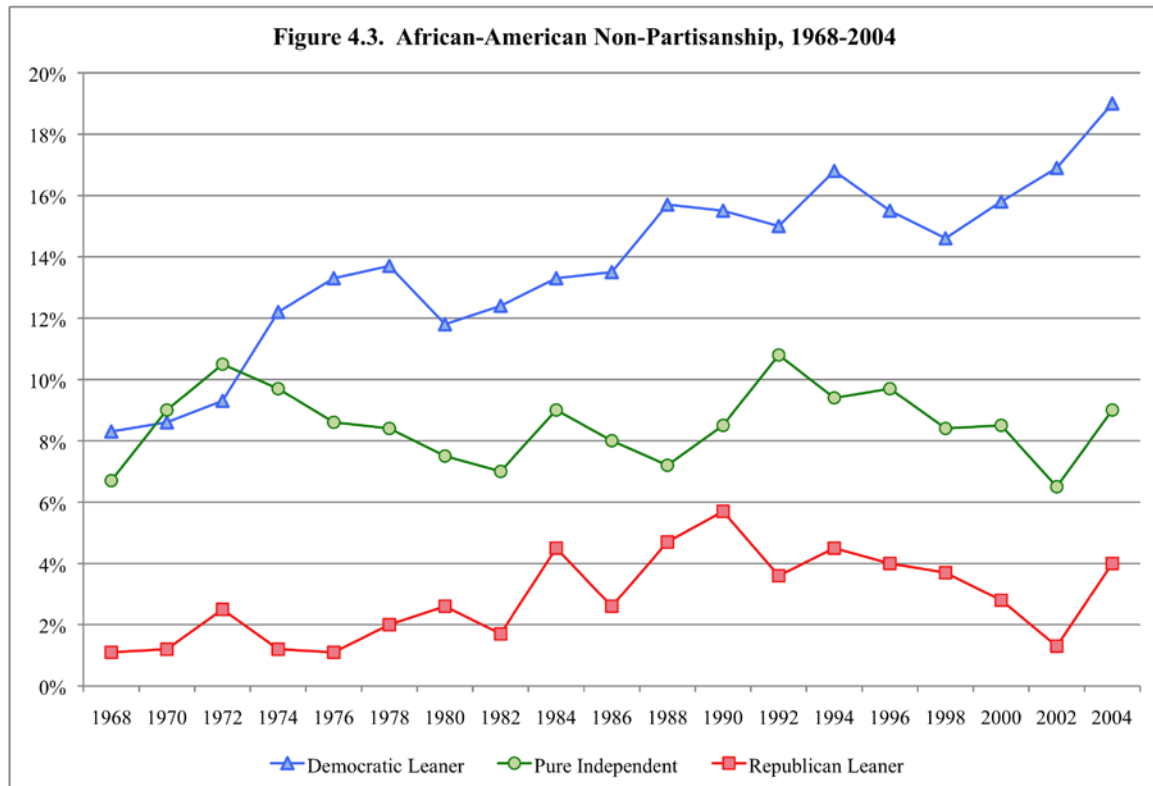
⁶⁶ These results are consistent with the three other surveys we examine. Republicans in the NES and other surveys represent about five percent of the black population.



Moreover, as Figure 4.3 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 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 8 percent in 1968 to roughly 20 percent by 2004.⁶⁷ 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

⁶⁷ 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>). The actual point estimate for 2004 is above 21 percent, but due to the smoothing, appears below 20 percent in Figure 4.3.

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 4.3 that a substantial proportion of African Americans do not identify with the party.⁶⁸ How much Barack Obama's presidency has altered these patterns is something we return to at the end of the chapter.



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

⁶⁸ Later, we detail what all of this means for the voting behavior of African Americans.

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 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 also living in extremely poor inner-city neighborhoods has also doubled (Jargowsky 1997).⁶⁹ 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 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 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

⁶⁹ This trend halted in the late 1990s but appears to have resumed in the last few years (Jargowsky 2003, Wilson 2002, Pearlstein 2002)

over whether this class effect really applies to blacks but to the extent it does, the following hypothesis should be true:⁷⁰

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, 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.⁷¹

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

⁷⁰ 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]).

⁷¹ 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.

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 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 a decades long shift away from 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).

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 Three, 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 are 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 2008).

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).⁷²

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

⁷² 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 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.

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 partisanship 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 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 readily apparent 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 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 4.1: 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 4.2: 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.⁷³

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 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

⁷³ 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).

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.⁷⁴ 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 online 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).

⁷⁴ 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.⁷⁵ 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 (Hajnal 2007). 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

⁷⁵ See also Wilson (1987) and Anderson (1991) on the divide in today's inner city black neighborhoods between 'street' and 'decent' sub-cultures.

divisions are clearly growing, it is not at all clear how much impact this growing class divide is having on black partisanship.

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."⁷⁶

Furthermore, there are signs that black liberalism is waning. In the 1972 ANES, 31 percent of African Americans self-identified as "liberals"; 18 percent as "moderates"; 8 percent as "conservatives"; 43 percent reported not having "thought much about it." By the 1982 ANES, only about 16 percent of African-American respondents identified as "liberals"; 18 percent again as "moderates"; a doubling of conservatives at 16 percent; 50 percent choose none of these ideological self-placement options. This shift has remained relatively steady since, with the primary change being an increase in self-identified moderates: in the 2004 ANES, 13 percent of African Americans declared themselves "liberals"; 30 percent "moderates"; 15 percent "conservatives"; 42 percent reported not having "thought much about it." This shift is also evident when we examine views about the larger role of government. On the question of whether the "government in Washington should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living," 65 percent of African Americans agreed that government had such a role, while only 6 percent believed that African Americans should be self-reliant. In the 2000 ANES, by

⁷⁶ Some even claim that outside a core set of racial policy questions, blacks are not at all distinct ideologically from whites (Canon 1999). Hajnal (2007) 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.

contrast, only 30 percent supported an activist government role while 32 percent agreed, “government should let each person get ahead on his own.” The proportion of African Americans who staked a middle ground between these two positions increased from 12 percent in 1972 to 21 percent by 2000. To put it provocatively, African Americans today are almost as disproportionately moderate, ideologically, as they are disproportionately Democratic, institutionally.

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).⁷⁷ 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.⁷⁸ 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 percent in 1972 to 21 percent in 1998. Similarly, the number 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.⁷⁹ In

⁷⁷ 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.

⁷⁸ On only one issue in the NES, women’s rights, were blacks markedly more liberal over time.

⁷⁹ Analysis of the General Social Survey data reveals an almost identical trend in black public opinion over time.

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 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 was 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 tied 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.”⁸⁰ As Table 4.1 shows, across the three surveys that we focus on in this chapter, two-thirds of blacks (68 percent) agreed that “what happens to black people in this country has [something] to do with what happens to me.” As two more recent points of reference, the 2004 “Racial Attitudes Study” (Dawson and Popoff 2004) and 2005 “Katrina, Race, and Poverty” survey (Dawson 2006) found that roughly 74 and 70 percent of its respondents, respectively, perceived a linked fate “somewhat” or “a lot.” 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).

⁸⁰ Comparative analysis indicates that black racial identity is stronger and more pronounced than the identities of other groups (Gurin 1995).

Table 4.1. Distribution of Linked Fate among African Americans.

	1984 NBES	1993 NBPS	1996 NBES	Total
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. As Table 4.1 shows, the distribution of blacks' linked fate orientation in the separate political surveys of African Americans 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. More recent surveys – although not strictly comparable – suggest that little has changed in the ensuing decade. In the 2004 National Politics Survey about two-thirds of blacks expressed a sense of linked fate.

Indeed, if the focus is on African Americans who think that blacks' interests are linked "some" or "a lot," there is actually an increase over the two decade period of our three polls 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).⁸¹ 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 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

⁸¹ 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.

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.

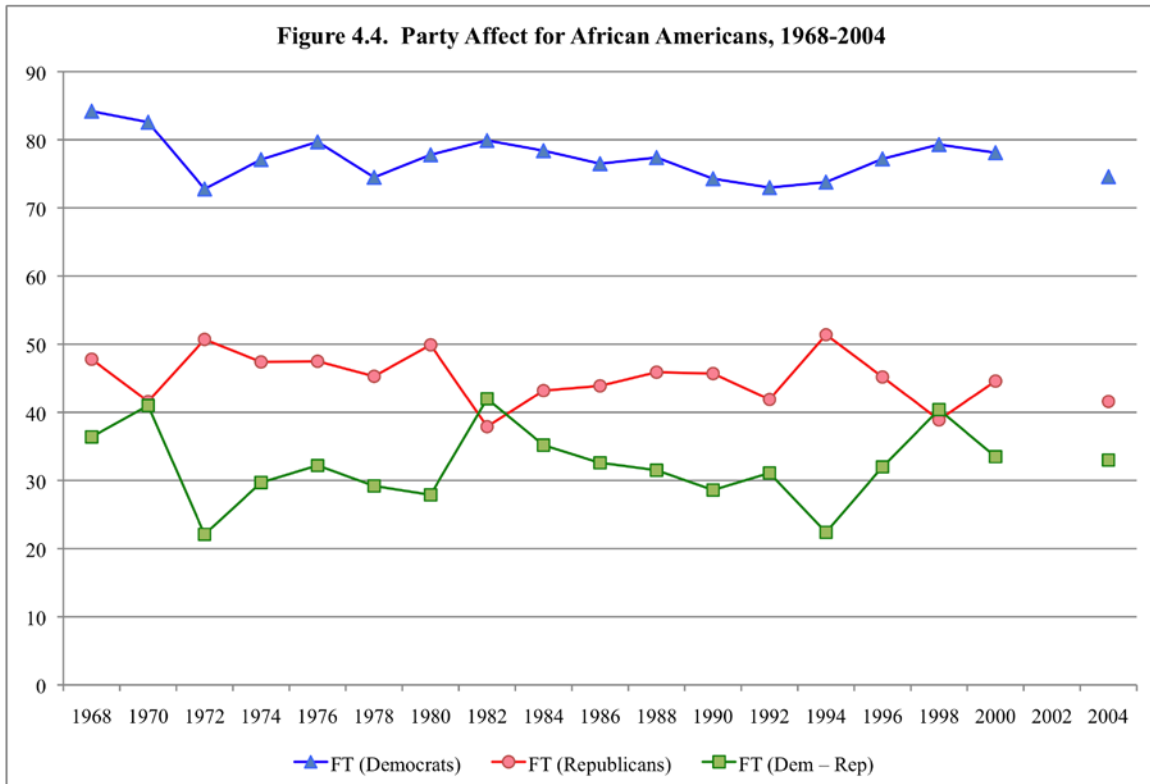
Coordination

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 4.4 below shows the over-time trends in party affect among African Americans, using the feeling thermometer items in the ANES.⁸² 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 late-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

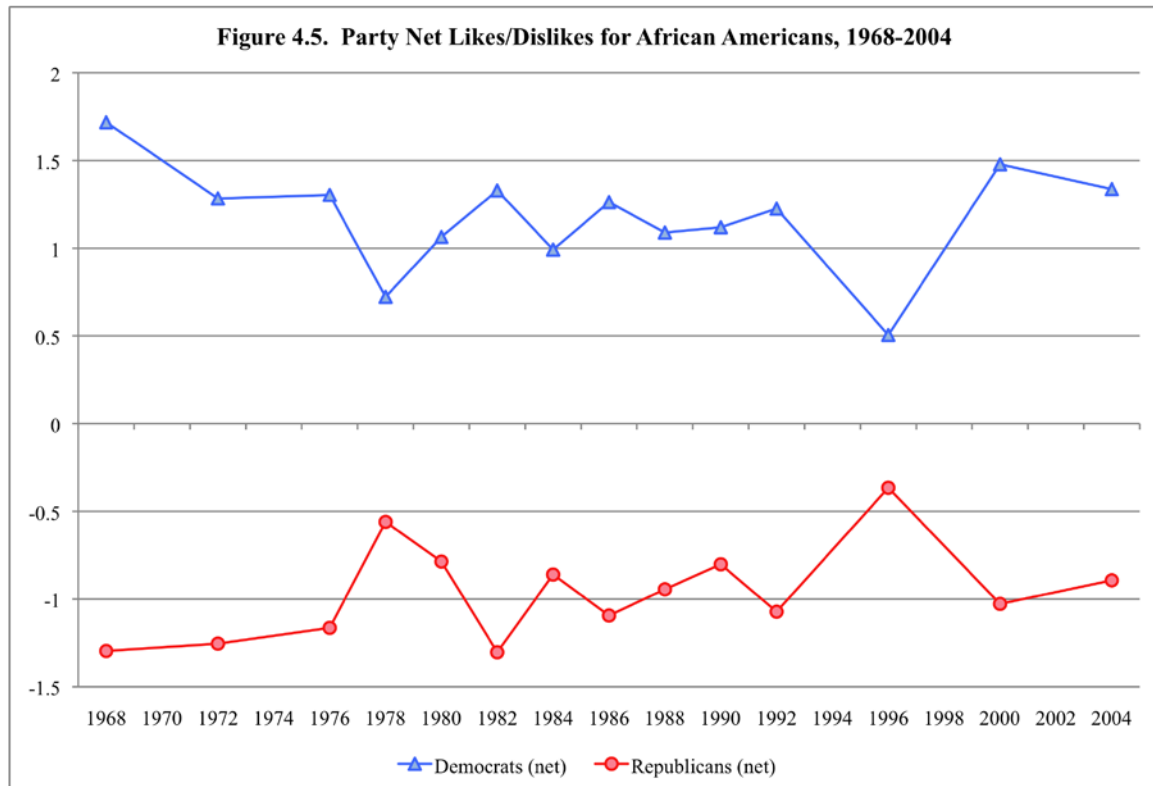
⁸² Figure Five shows a moving average (3 years) of feeling thermometer ratings in each biennial ANES survey.

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.



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 4.2, the level of party identification with the Democratic Party is at its highest in 1968, then gradually falls with a particularly low trough in 1992. This is roughly (with far greater changes from biennial ANES survey to survey) the trend we find in Figure 4.5, which charts the net of likes and dislikes mentioned for both the Democratic and Republican parties from 1968 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 4.2.



There is, however, a real problem with either of these measures of partisan affect. Neither the feeling thermometer nor 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.⁸³ 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

⁸³ There is no clear trend over time across our three surveys in how well each party is viewed as an advocate of black issues.

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 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 4.2, 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.⁸⁴ First, to determine the extent to which party

⁸⁴ In Tables 4.2 and 4.3 we cannot consider 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

identification is based on a traditional liberal-conservative ideological dimension, we include responses to a question asking respondents how they self-identify in ideological terms. Since one of our central contentions is that the relationship between ideology and party 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.⁸⁵ First, we constructed an index of nationalism as support for

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.

⁸⁵ 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

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 political party,” “black people should have a separate nation,” “black people form a nation within a nation.”⁸⁶ 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).⁸⁷

[TABLE 4.2 about here]

Table 4.2 presents three different models of African American party identification: a baseline model (with measures of ideology, class, linked fate, and our

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.

⁸⁶ The alpha reliability coefficient for the community nationalism scale is 0.65 and for the separatist nationalism scale it is 0.54.

⁸⁷ 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.

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 4.2 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.⁸⁸ The effect is discernible on only one end of the ideological continuum, however. That is, extreme liberals are about 16 percent more likely to identify as strong Democrats than moderates and moderate liberals are somewhat more likely to do so as well.⁸⁹ 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 4.4, 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

⁸⁸ 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 but see Goren 2005).

⁸⁹ For this and all other predicted probabilities detailed in the book, 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).

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 4.2 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 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 4.2 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.⁹⁰ 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 Democrats than are blacks who reject all aspects of community nationalism.⁹¹ 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 4.2 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

⁹⁰ 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).

⁹¹ 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).

for blacks' interests 28 percent less likely to identify as a strong Democrat than those who disagree.⁹²

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 to have no influence on one's party identification.⁹³ Perhaps the most conspicuous evidence of the mixed success of the results in Table 4.2 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.

⁹² 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.

⁹³ 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).

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 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.⁹⁴ Unlike many other studies of party identification, we have chosen not to separate out partisan leaners from other 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.”⁹⁵

A few other points on the interpretation of Table 4.3 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 – 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.⁹⁶ Also, Table 4.3, unlike most presentations of

⁹⁴ The results in Table 4.3 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 4.3 to prevail.

⁹⁵ When we repeated the analysis in Table 4.3 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 4.A.1 in the Appendix.

⁹⁶ For each pairwise comparison, say between identifying as a Democrat or Independent, Table 4.3 shows three statistics – the parameter estimate and its corresponding standard error and relative risk ratio.

multinomial logit regressions, presents estimates for every pairwise combination of the three categories.⁹⁷

[TABLE 4.3 about here]

There are two claims we wish to make based on the results in Table 4.3. 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 for 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.⁹⁸

As Table 4.3 demonstrates, once the assumption of an ordered dependent variable is discarded, the importance and orthogonality of black nationalism are evident.⁹⁹ Specifically, we find significant and contrasting effects for the two aspects of black nationalism. Once again, as in Table 4.2, belief in nationalism qua community control

⁹⁷ 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 columns one, two, and three show the results from two separate estimates – first, with “Independent” and then with “Democrat” as the base category.

⁹⁸ The structure of black partisan choices may be even more complicated than Table 4.3 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].

⁹⁹ 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 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.

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 4.3 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.¹⁰⁰ In both cases, Table 4.3 shows compelling evidence that partisan choices are not neatly ordered for African Americans.

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

¹⁰⁰ 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.

identify as a Democrat than ideological moderates, as we might expect. But Table 4.3 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).¹⁰¹ 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.

The analysis presented in Table 4.3 also suggests an answer to our question about the declining rates of identification with the Democratic Party over time. As we saw in Figures 4.2 and 4.3, 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 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 4.3 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

¹⁰¹ 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.

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 4.4, most of the variation over time and across individuals comes from liberals who now self-identify as moderates. Similarly, from Table 4.3 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 4.3 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).

The Impact of a Black Democrat as President

Barack Obama’s electoral victory on November 4th, 2008 was arguably one of the most important events in the history of black politics in this nation. In a country that has waged repeated, often passionate, and sometimes violent battle over the rights of African Americans to participate equally in the democratic process, the ascension of a black man to the nation’s highest office was both startling and potentially earth shattering.¹⁰² Given the promise of a black presidency, it is important to ask how much the outcome of the 2008 contest will change the patterns that we have reported in this chapter. Does a black Democratic president mean the end of the decline in African American attachment to the Democratic Party? Does it re-shape the racial, ideological, and partisan views of individual black Americans? In short, does it change everything? With Barack Obama having spent less than a year in office, it is far too early to offer a definitive assessment of the impact of a black presidency on the politics of the black community. Nevertheless, there are already signs of both change and retrenchment that may provide some insight into the long term consequences of the 2008.

The indications in the immediate aftermath of the 2008 presidential contest were of widespread euphoria and dramatic change in the black community. According to one poll, fully 71 percent of African Americans indicated that Obama’s election was either

¹⁰² Despite Obama’s mixed racial heritage, it seems clear that most Americans him as an African American.

“the most important advance that has taken place for blacks in the last 100 years” or “one of the two or three most important advances” (Gallup 2010). Among blacks, the Gallup Poll’s index of life satisfaction demonstrated a remarkable rise from a mean value of -1 before the election (October 2008) to 62 shortly after the election (April 2009). In a dramatic reversal, blacks went from being substantially less optimistic about the direction of the nation’s economy (11% positive for blacks vs 31% positive for whites) to being more than twice as likely as whites to expect their economic fortunes to improve (47% for blacks vs 22% for whites). Although the data is sparse and the evidence of change not dramatic, all of this may have had some influence on black partisanship. The Gallup party identification series reveals a small increase in Democratic Party identification. According to the Gallup Poll, black attachment to the Democratic Party grew from 75 percent before Obama’s election to 82 percent in November 2009.

But only a year into Barack Obama’s presidency, there are already signs of growing impatience and even some discontent within the black community. With Obama’s apparently conscious strategy to avoid the potentially divisive issue of racial inequality and with no significant racially focused legislation on the horizon, polling data suggest that many blacks are getting restless with the pace of change under Barack Obama and the Democratic Party. The perception that Barack Obama could help racial relations has fallen steeply from November 2008 when three quarters of all blacks believed that Obama would improve race relations to November 2009 when a slim majority (51%) agreed to the same statement (ABC News 2010).¹⁰³ And on questions about the future of race relations, black attitudes are essentially right where they were

¹⁰³ Similarly, Gallup reports that the proportion of African Americans who think race relations have gotten better shrunk from 23 percent in late 2008 to 11 percent in October 2009.

before the election. After declining significantly during the 2008 campaign, the number of African Americans who think that we will never find a solution to the nation's racial problem has grown right back to its pre-Obama levels. According to ABC News/Washington Post polls, the proportion of blacks who believe we will always have a racial problem fell from 56 percent in 2007 to 49 percent during the campaign but then rose back to 55 percent in October of 2009 (ABC News 2010). In an even more ominous sign for Barack Obama and the Democratic Party, the proportion of blacks who think "the policies of Barack Obama will not go far enough in promoting efforts to aid the black community" has risen sharply from 20 percent in June 2008 to 32 percent in October 2009 (Gallup 2010). The same two polls also showed a small increase in the number of blacks who think race relations have gotten worse.

The vast majority of blacks still approve of President Obama and there is as of yet no indication of any increase in black defection from the Democratic Party under Obama but the euphoria and high expectations that marked the beginning of his term are clearly gone. There is obviously a long way to go but based on these patterns it is not at all clear that Obama's time in office will greatly reshape the partisan politics of black America. Indeed, it seems likely that even though the Democrats were the first party to advance an African American presidential nominee, the partisan battle for black partisan allegiances will continue. For Barack Obama and the Democratic Party more generally, the key will still be to try to convince black Americans that black interests can best be served under the auspices of the Democratic Party.

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 is at least the potential that it will win more hearts and minds in the future. The Democratic Party has been very successful at making this claim in the past and the election of Barack Obama has the potential to further solidify that claim. But the reluctance of the president and the Democratic Party to push forward major reforms that address racial injustice has clearly been noticed by many members of the African American community. It is not clear how long the Democratic Party can continue to put racial issues near the periphery of its agenda before it begins to lose substantial black support. This is something that both parties need to seriously consider if they want to attract more black support.

Table 4.2. 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 4.3. 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.

CHAPTER FIVE

“WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A PARTISAN?”

“What does it mean to be an American?”

J. Hector de St. John de Crèvecoeur (1782)

I'm Indian first. Sikh second. Politician third. No, I'm American first. I must be grateful to this flag. Actually, I'm a human being first. American second. Indian third. I mean, Sikh third. Indian fourth. Irish, maybe fifth or sixth. I may not look it, but Duggal is an Irish name.

Harjinder Singh Duggal , quoted in Lehrer and Sloan (2003, 368)

Morshed Alam – an immigrant, laundromat owner, former electrical engineer, one-time student leader in Bangladesh's struggle for independence, and now a New Yorker – describes his rocky initiation to party politics in the United States: “In 1996, the Republican State Senator from my district wrote a book saying there are too many immigrants in America. It's time to put a padlock at the gates to this country ... I thought, I will challenge this guy for his Senate seat” (from Lehrer and Sloan 2003, 373). Rather than being greeted with open arms as a Democratic challenger or even begrudging recognition as a legal entrant into the electoral playing field, however, Alam faced a relentless stream of pressure from the Queens County Democratic Party and others to induce him to quit the race. The pressure ranged from legal challenge to the Board of Elections to physical threat and bodily harm. As Alam puts it, “even when I won the Democratic primary, and was legally the party's candidate, the party machine didn't help me. I'm thinking, is this a real democracy? I went through every kind of hell in that race ... I was sent to the hospital with two broken bones around my eyes (Lehrer and Sloan 2003, 373-374).”

Alam survived the physical attacks, but was outspent by the Republican

incumbent \$500,000 to \$35,000, never received the backing of the county Democratic Party, and ultimately failed to prevail in the election. Nonetheless, he won 42 percent of the vote in the general election and, ultimately, put the predominantly white Democratic establishment in Queens County on notice that naturalized immigrants like himself and Harjinder Singh Duggal (quoted in the epigraph to this chapter) could no longer be ignored. To this hard won recognition, Alam attributes his success to patchwork coalition-building: “[n]o one ethnic group will ever have a majority again in this borough. Now you have to have a coalition. My campaign committee was made up of a Colombian-American, a Jewish-American, a Black-American, a union worker, and a conservative Republican. It's not like years ago when you were Irish in an Irish neighborhood, or Italian in an Italian neighborhood (Lehrer and Sloan 2003, 373-374).”

How emblematic is Morshed Alam’s story of the state of affairs between immigrants and political parties in America today? Are local party organizations like the Queens County Democratic Party aloof, if not outright hostile, toward political newcomers, in stark contrast to our ballyhooed views of their central role in incorporating previous waves of immigrants from the late 19th and early 20th centuries? Alam’s travails are of course but a single anecdote, and the demographic changes in the United States described in Chapter One make it seem near impossible for either major party to ignore. If the Democratic and Republican parties are in fact ignoring new immigrants to America, they do so at their peril, given the razor-thin electoral margins that have decided recent presidential contests and the organizational imperative of both parties to sustain their membership rolls and maintain a base of party activists. These questions and considerations have generated a welter of new scholarship on “immigrant political

incorporation,” most of which has focused on the role of political parties and – in the absence of evidence of an incorporating role of parties – organizations that constitute civil society in local and transnational arenas.

In the next two chapters, we adopt a different tack. We invert the lens on immigrant political incorporation. Rather than peer from the top-down to see if key political institutions are bringing new Americans into active political life, we rake through individual-level survey data to see what relationship these new Americans have to political parties, if any. Do Latino and Asian American immigrants and subsequent generations of Latinos and Asian Americans think in terms of political parties? If so, will Asians and Latinos ally with the Democratic Party on the basis of collective racial interests as African Americans have since the Civil Rights era? Or will their ties to a political party be channeled instead by policy differences and liberal and conservative beliefs, as they are for many White Americans? Or something else? Such questions are of vital interest to scholars and practitioners of politics alike. The ties that Latinos and Asian Americans hold (or do not hold) will affect their potential to reconfigure existing party alignments, to act as swing voters, and the like.

Our two epigraphs for this chapter capture the kernel of our answer to these questions. It is both implicit and explicit in the existing literature that party identification is a key (if not *the* key) answer to de Crevecoeur’s query, politically speaking. Yet in the excerpt from Lehrer and Sloan’s collection of immigrant oral and visual histories, Crossing the Boulevard, Harjinder Singh Duggal voices plainly and powerfully how complex, ambiguous, and many are the political identities of immigrants in our present-day, post-Civil Rights ethno-racial landscape. Yet for Duggal – who, as a member of the

Queens Democratic County Committee (and, in that position, one of the first Sikhs elected to political office in New York City) – as clearly a political being – party identification is nowhere reflected among the identities he defines himself by.

The chapter begins with a review of the historical and present-day debate on whether party organizations are bringing immigrants into their fold and by surveying existing data and research on Latino and Asian American partisanship. Our focus here is on a relatively unconsidered aspect of party identification – namely, why a plurality of these new Americans, in most polls, choose not to identify with a political party. The modal Latino and Asian American is what we call "uncommitted" or a "non-identifier." We consider several different explanations for why it is that party politics has not become the “unmoved mover” that it is for most other Americans. We argue that, rather than painting a portrait of Latinos and Asian Americans as threats, political unknowns, or apolitical bystanders, their non-partisanship reflects an ongoing process of learning in a still unfamiliar and uncertain political milieu. That is, the relationship that Latinos and Asian Americans hold or fail to hold with political parties is reflective of the multiple processes by which immigrant-based groups become incorporated into life in the United States. In our account, in addition to considering basic elements of the straight-line assimilation model like time and class that others have investigated, we integrate a series of explicitly political factors related to a more contingent or segmented model of assimilation. Within this political account of immigrant incorporation we assess the roles played both by emerging institutional ties and by attitudinal incorporation. Specifically, in terms of attitudinal incorporation, we consider the importance of information acquisition, ideological leanings, and racial identities in fostering Latino and Asian

American partisanship. Near the end of this chapter we begin to empirically examine the relationship between different aspects of incorporation and partisanship and in the next chapter we test a full model of Latino and Asian American party identification.

Why Latinos and Asian Americans

One prefatory matter is on the two groups that headline this chapter. We focus here on the party identification of Latinos and Asian Americans. Much of our theoretical framing of *why* these two groups ought to be examined together is a story about party identification in the context of immigrant political incorporation. Clearly, not all Latinos and Asian Americans are foreign-born. Both Latinos and Asian Americans, however, are *immigration-based* communities. That is, most individuals described by these “pan-ethnic” categories were either born outside the U.S. or born to a foreign-born parent, and the experience of being “strangers from different shores” is widespread. Thus according to the most recent American Community Surveys, roughly two-thirds of Asians in the U.S. are first generation immigrants and roughly forty percent of Latinos are foreign-born. More than two-thirds of Latinos and 87 percent of Asian Americans are either first- or second-generation Americans. In this regard, while not everyone who self-identifies as “Latino” or as “Asian American” is an immigrant, both Latinos and Asian Americans, as groups, are newcomers to the American political scene.

There is, to be sure, a great deal of variation in immigration patterns and political histories between ethnic/national origin groups that comprise the Latino and Asian American communities. You need not dig farther down than the three most prominent Latino ethnic/national origin groups – Cubanos, Puertorriqueños, and Chicanos – to make

this case. Thus we do not mean to imply by our use of “Asian American” and “Latino” that the national origin/ethnic sub-groups that make-up these panethnic demographic groups are either homogeneous vis-à-vis one another or alike in their attachments to political parties. Furthermore, almost by definition (in designating “Latinos” and “Asian Americans” as two separate populations with separate demographic labels), there is more that differentiates Latinos from Asian Americans than is common to both groups. We do not mean to imply, therefore, that in combining our analysis of Latinos and Asian Americans in this chapter that the two groups are similar in some fundamental respect vis-à-vis their partisanship patterns. That matter is an empirical one.

We do combine both groups in our analysis, however, because our theoretical account of whether and why predominantly immigrant-based groups like Latinos and Asian Americans identify with a political party is a shared one. It is also a theoretical account that is discernibly distinct from the patterns of partisanship we propose and find evidence for among African Americans and whites. Finally, while our empirical results do show important points of departure between Latinos and Asian Americans vis-à-vis party identification, both groups share a great deal in common, including a common starting point – an aversion to party labels rooted in the institutional and individual-level processes of immigrant political incorporation.

Background: Immigrant Political Incorporation in America

How politically incorporated are Latinos and Asian Americans? A common approach is to figure out the present by looking to the past. As many accounts have it, the late 19th century and early 20th century in America represented a golden age of

immigration. These immigrants came from distant lands (predominantly European) and were absorbed into America's economic markets, assimilated into its social customs, and incorporated by its political institutions. This period is, at least in our collective memory, one that represents a model for the inclusion of newcomers into a pluralist political system, with local political parties playing the critical intermediary role in this process of incorporation. Scholars have documented how urban political machines actively mobilized immigrants into new citizens, wheedled favors and employ for them, enrolled them as newly registered voters, maneuvered their electoral choices, and, in due course, moved them up the rank-and-file of the party machine itself (Dahl 1961, Allswang 1977, Anderson 1979, Cornwell 1960, Archdeacon 1983, Sterne 2001). In this era of immigration, roughly a half million to a million newcomers disembarked at Ellis Island and other points of entry each year, a reserve army of potential partisans whose mobilization was, by some accounts, sufficient to tip the balance in the New Deal party realignment to the Democrats (Andersen 1979).

This rose-tinted view of our democratic history has come under considerably scrutiny in recent years. America, so the revisionist accounts now tell us, was never as welcoming of immigrants into the political system as our myths of a "nation of immigrants" would have it. At the very highest political offices, there was widespread disdain for the inclusion of new immigrants into the American political process. Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt, bitter rivals in the arena of politics, agreed on the question of immigration. In his 1902 text, *A History of the American People*, Wilson remarked grimly on the influx of "men of the lowest class from the south of Italy and mean of the meaner sort out of Hungary and Poland" and offered the view that these

Southern and Eastern European migrants had “neither the skill nor energy nor any initiative of quick intelligence.”¹⁰⁴ A somewhat less welcoming party structure is also reflected in more scholarly revisions of the epoch of machine politics (Erie 1988, Sterne 2001, Trounstein 2006). Scholars of urban politics have noted that not all immigrant groups from Europe were equally incorporated (see, e.g., Ignatiev 1995, Jacobson 1998), that the willingness of party machines to incorporate new immigrants varied across historical contexts (Mayhew 1986) and with the degree of party competition in a city (Wolfinger 1965, Erie 1988), and that nonparty organizations like neighborhood associations, unions, churches, and ethnic voluntary associations were vital in incorporating new immigrant groups (Oestreicher 1988, Sterne 2001). Moreover, even much celebrated groups like the Irish (with Tammany Hall in New York and Boss Curley in Boston) succeeded by claiming whiteness and explicitly positioning themselves against blacks, Mexicans, and Asians.

Among political scientists today, much of the burgeoning literature on contemporary immigrant political incorporation is anchored by careful theorizing and analysis on how today’s political parties compare with those of yesteryear (e.g., Jones-Correa 1998, Gerstle and Mollenkopf 2001, Kim 2006, Rogers 2006, Wong 2006). For the most part, the scholars behind these works conclude that today’s parties lack the organizational capacity, the cultural understanding, and perhaps even the political motivation to shepherd new immigrants into the political process and nurture secure attachments with a particular political party. As one study recounts the words of a community leader in East Los Angeles of Mexican American descent,

¹⁰⁴ Wilson was not excoriated for these views until 1912, when William Randolph Hearst, who opposed his presidential candidacy, brought them to light. Wilson eventually recanted his views on Southern and Eastern European immigrants.

“Stop anybody walking down the block, ask them, ‘Can you please tell me where is the local chapter or the local office of the Democratic Party in your neighborhood?’ Everybody will look at you with bewilderment: ‘What is this crazy guy talking about?’”(Wong 2006, 510).

The result of this underwhelming presence of political parties in the everyday lives of Latinos and Asian Americans is putatively reflected in the underwhelming rates of political participation among Latinos and Asian Americans and in the corresponding underrepresentation of Latinos and Asian Americans in elected and appointed political offices (see, e.g., Uhlaner, Cain, and Kiewiet 1989, Verba, Schlozman, Brady, and Nie 1993, DeSipio 1996, Leighley and Vedlitz 1999, Ramakrishnan 2005, Lien *et al* 2007). Table 5.1 shows the basic patterns of under-participation in terms of the three widely studied stages of formal political incorporation. The three key steps here are whether a newcomer to the United States has established citizenship, whether that citizen (if eligible) registers to vote, and whether that registered voter actually casts a vote come Election Day. The table compares levels of incorporation of whites, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans.

Table 5.1 From Citizenship to Voting, 2008					
	Whites	African Americans	Latinos	Asian Americans	TOTAL
% citizen	98	94	63	68	91
% registered	72	66	38	37	65
% voted	65	61	32	32	58
% registered citizen	74	70	59	55	71
% voted registered	90	93	84	86	90
Source: 2008 Current Population Survey. The “% registered” and “% voted” rows show the proportion of all adults in that group; the rows with “% registered citizen” and “% voted registered” show the proportion of citizens who registered and the proportion of registered voters who turned out to vote, respectively.					

The main point of this table is quite clear. Latinos and Asian Americans lag well behind both whites and African Americans at each step in this process of political incorporation. The citizenship numbers are not unexpected, as there is a substantially higher proportion of Latinos and Asian Americans who are foreign-born than there are immigrant whites and blacks. (According to 2008 American Community Survey data, 67 percent of Asian Americans and 38 percent of Latinos were foreign-born, while only 4 percent of non-Hispanic whites, and 8 percent of blacks were foreign-born.) Nativity, of course does not explain the patterns we see alone, since the citizenship rates of Asian Americans exceed that of Latinos, despite the significantly greater proportion of foreign-born Asian Americans.

Table 5.2 Minority Representation in Elected Office, 2006				
	African Americans	Latinos	Asian Americans	Native American
House	41 (9.4%)	25 (5.7%)	4 (0.9%)	1 (0.2%)
State Legislature	530 (7.2%)	229 (3.1%)	85 (1.1%)	47 (0.6%)

This underparticipation in politics is also mirrored by data on the levels of political representation across racial and ethnic groups. If representation is measured by matching the proportion of legislators in a group to the population proportion of that group, African Americans come the closest to parity in representation, with Latinos and Asian Americans lagging substantially behind. This under-representation is shown quite clearly in Table 5.2: according to the 2008 American Community Survey, Hispanics were more than 15 percent of the U.S. population, but only 5.7 percent of members of

Congress in the House of Representatives and 3.1 percent of state legislators in 2006; Asian Americans (even allowing for the more inclusive “alone or in combination” categorization) were just under 5 percent of the U.S. population, but roughly 1 percent of members of the House and of state legislatures.¹⁰⁵

Pattern and Disorder in Latino and Asian Party Identification

Thus while much has been made of the growing numbers of Latinos and Asians in the United States, these numbers have yet to readily translate into political power. Nor do they reflect levels of democratic inclusion and political incorporation that native-born whites and African Americans experience. Beyond these institutionally-rooted markers of incorporation, we examine what implications the less-than-complete commitments of political parties to the incorporation of immigrants has for how immigrants and their subsequent generations come to view political parties and the party system. If party identification is the bedrock of American democracy, what do we know about the party attachments of Asian Americans and Latinos?

The answer, it turns out, is a contingent one. One contingency is the availability of data. In general, there is substantially greater data on Latino partisanship than there is for Asian American partisanship. Simply on the basis of their relative proportions of the general population, the number of Latino respondents to a typical national survey like the General Social Survey (GSS) and the American National Election Study (ANES) allow for reasonably valid estimates of Latino party identification; the number of Asian American respondents do not. This relative effect also holds with most media polls,

¹⁰⁵ African Americans were roughly 13 percent of the U.S. population by the “alone or in combination” grouping (and 12.4 percent if counted as “Black or African American alone”). Native Americans were 1.4 percent of the population when counted “alone or in combination” and 0.8 percent “alone.”

where it is commonplace, if not *de rigueur*, to disaggregate survey results between white, African-American, and Latino respondents. Moreover, there are a number of surveys that focus exclusively on the opinions of Latino and Latina Americans in the realm of political science research, starting with the 1989-1990 Latino National Political Survey and followed by the *Washington Post*/ Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard University 1999 Latino Survey, the Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation 2002 National Survey of Latinos and 2004 National Survey of Latinos, three surveys by the Latino Policy Coalition in April, June, and October 2006, and the 2005-2006 Latino National Survey. By contrast, while there are now a few surveys with reasonably large samples of Asian American respondents, the number is substantially fewer than for Latinos and the quality of data is substantially poorer. To date, there have been only two serious attempts to systematically survey the opinions of Asian Americans: the 2001 Pilot National Asian American Political Survey and the 2008 National Asian American Survey.¹⁰⁶

A second important contingency is the representativeness of the sample. Some surveys poll likely voters, some only poll adults living in metropolitan areas with a high proportion of Asians or Latinos, some only poll Asians and Latinos with certain surnames, some only poll certain ethnic subgroups within these “pan-ethnic” groups, and so on. For example, many of the existing surveys of Asian Americans are geographically-specific samples that do not allow us to draw valid inferences for the national Asian population (e.g., academic surveys like the Los Angeles Study of Urban Inequality, the Immigrant Second Generation in Metropolitan New York project, the U-

¹⁰⁶ Worse yet, the validity and utility of inferences from these surveys are limited by small sample size for particular national groups, the disproportionate representation of foreign-born Asians and of respondents who selected a non-English language for interview, and the heavy reliance on Asian Americans living in large central cities.

Massachusetts-Boston Institute of Asian American Studies Polls and media polls like the *Los Angeles Times* surveys of the 1990s and the 2004 *San Jose Mercury News* survey). These surveys also do not reflect the significant suburbanization of the Asian and Latino populations or their dispersion from traditional “gateway” cities like New York, San Francisco, Chicago, and Los Angeles to “new destinations” in North Carolina, Georgia, Minnesota, and other less traditional targets of migration.

Finally, a third contingency is the quality of the data. Some surveys tolerate response rates as low as 25 percent for a telephone interview while others endeavor to reach much higher response rates and conduct face-to-face interviews. That is, in some surveys, three out of the four target respondents in a randomly drawn sampling frame refused to be interviewed. These non-responders are, importantly, not randomly distributed in the general population (Brehm 1993, Groves 2007, Groves *et al* 2007, Keeter *et al* 2007). Moreover, some surveys only conduct interviews only in English while others allow for non-English interview. The language in which an interview is conducted can have significant and sizeable effects on what we infer about a given outcome of interest. For instance, in a simple cross-tabulation of party identification by language-of-interview, Latinos interviewed in Spanish are almost 19 percent more likely to self-identify as Republican than their counterparts interviewed in English (Lee 2001).

These contingencies aside, we can say with significant confidence that Latinos lean more heavily to the Democratic Party in their partisan attachments than they do to the Republican Party (Alvarez and García Bedolla 2001, Uhlaner and Garcia 2002, de la Garza 2004). Over a 26-year time period of the ANES from 1978 to 2004, 46 percent of Latinos in the ANES self-identify as Democrats, 17 percent as Republicans, and 37

percent as Independents (without follow-up on the partisan leanings of self-reported Independents). This preference for the Democratic party is even more pronounced at the ballot box, with exit polls finding a consistently strong margin of preference among Latino voters for Democratic candidates over their Republican counterparts.

There is, we should note, some disagreement over whether or not there is a trend away from Democratic partisanship among Latinos. Gimpel and Kaufman (2001) pooled network exit polls of presidential elections from 1976 to 2000 and found that in the 1976 election between Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford, Latinos voted overwhelmingly Democratic over Republican, 82 percent to 18 percent. By the 2000 election between Al Gore and George W. Bush, this gap had slimmed to a margin of a 62 percent Democratic vote and a 35 percent Republican vote among Latinos. The real firestorm here was fueled by the striking contrast in exit poll data between the 2000 and the 2004 presidential elections. In 2004, the National Election Pool (the successor to the Voter News Service) exit polls initially reported that this 27-percentage points gap had been narrowed to nine, with a 53-to-44 split in the Latino vote share between the Democratic loser John Kerry and the Republican incumbent George W. Bush.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Even NALEO's most recent *2004 Latino Election Handbook* similarly observes an increasing trend toward registration with the Republican Party among California Latinos since the year 2000. Importantly, the 2004 NEP exit poll also found a closing of the gap in party identification among Latino respondents: in the 2000 VNS exit poll, Latinos favored the Democratic over the Republican party by a 55-to-24 percent split; in the 2004 NEP exit poll, this split had seemingly shifted to a 49-to-27 percent split. This seemingly sizeable shift in Latino voters' preferences led to controversy and objections from the National Council of La Raza, the William C. Velasquez Institute, the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project, and a number of scholars (Gimpel 2004; Fears 2004; Leal *et al* 2005; Suro, Fry, and Passel 2005). In response to several pertinent objections to the 2004 NEP exit poll methodology, the 2004 vote share results were "re-weighted" and revised to show a 39 percent Latino vote share for President Bush. There were two primary issues here. First, the NEP Election Day exit polls differed quite a bit from the expectations of pre-election polls, which suggested something closer to a 60-30 split in vote share (Leal *et al* 2005). Second, the sampling of precincts appeared to produce a non-representative sample of Latino voters, including a disproportionate number of Cuban voters in the Miami area, fewer young voters, fewer urban voters, fewer self-identified Democrats, fewer women, and fewer opponents of the War in Iraq, all correlates of a vote preference for Kerry over Bush (Suro, Fry, and Passel 2005).

Before bowing to the temptation to infer that Latinos are becoming more “white” as an electorate, or more attentive to their social conservatism as a guide to their partisanship, or more responsive to the strategic and aggressive efforts of the Republican party to woo Latino voters, it is important to note that yet other studies argue that Latino Americans are actually growing more Democratic. Barreto and Woods (2005), for example, find that the proportion of registered Latino Democrats to registered Latino Republicans in Southern California increased substantially between 1992 and 1998. Moreover, there is good evidence that California's divisive ballot initiatives (especially Propositions 187 and 209) have had a galvanizing and mobilizing effect in the Latino community, inducing non-citizens to naturalize, non-voters to mark their ballots, and non-partisans to identify with the Democratic Party (Bowler et al 2006, Segura, Falcon, and Pachon 1997, Pantoja, et al 2001, Ramírez 2002). And yet other studies suggest that Latino partisanship is sensitive to the party-specific issue positions and agendas (Alvarez and García Bedolla 2003, Nicholson and Segura 2004).

The point of this discussion is not to settle any scores on the question of whether there is a shift among Latino voters away from the Democratic Party. As a Pew Hispanic Center report on the 2004 Latino vote concludes, “whether the decline in the fortunes of the Democrats among Hispanic voters from 2000 to 2004 simply reflects the relative popularity of George Bush among Hispanic voters or a more permanent shift in Hispanic party loyalties remains an open question (Suro, Fry, and Passel 2005, 14).” It is, indeed, an open question, and one whose premises keep shifting. In the 2006 election cycle, the NEP exit poll data indicated another swing of the pendulum with a 69-30 split in the Latino vote share in favor of Democratic congressional candidates. And in the 2008

presidential elections, the pendulum remained arced towards the Democratic Party, with the NEP exit polls finding a 67-to-31 percentage points split favoring Barack Obama over John McCain.

Rather than settle this score, we aim here to make a few initial points. First, Latinos are, on net, more Democratic in their partisanship than they are Republican. Second, while the direction of Latinos' partisanship is unambiguous, the strength of that tendency is possibly in flux. Importantly, a key point of this chapter is that this potential ambiguity in how stalwartly Democratic Latinos are stems in part from the very large proportion of Latinos who do not identify with either party. The net result is a segment of the electorate whose partisan vote share may vary from presidential election to partisan election, subject to the contingencies of specific elections and candidates and to the dynamic political evolution and maturation of Latinos. These points aim towards yet another feature of party identification among Latino Americans and Asians – namely, the conspicuous absence of such institutional attachments for so many – that is at the heart of our analysis. Before we fully explore the conspicuously uncrystallized partisan attachments of so many Latino Americans, let us look at the case of Asian Americans.

This theme of discernible partisan patterns together with conspicuous ambiguities is also characteristic of the relationship that Asian Americans hold to political parties. As we suggested earlier in this chapter, speaking with any precision or predictive punch about how Asian Americans are likely to vote come November can be pretty dodgy. There are myriad reasons why this is so. Chief among these is the dearth (until only very recently) of systematic, reliable data on which to base our expectations. A large random sample of US adults – say in a pre-election survey or an exit poll – will contain only a

handful of persons of Asian descent, and most likely with a bias for those Asians who are more educated, well off, assimilated into life in the US, and proficient in English. The costs of obtaining a larger, unbiased sample, moreover, can be prohibitive: it is simply difficult to find a sample design for a population that is linguistically heterogeneous and geographically dispersed across ethnic subgroups yet locally concentrated within ethnic subgroups and remarkably diverse linguistically (e.g., see Lien, Conway, Lee, and Wong 2001). Simple random sampling methods like random digit dialing will be hugely inefficient; more selective and stratified sampling methods like cluster sampling on high density Asian population areas will yield an unrepresentative sample of Asian Americans nationally; interviews conducted only in English (the norm in survey practice today) will yield even more biased estimates of Asian American opinion and behavior.

As a result, the quality of data on Asian Americans is typically suspect. A powerful example here of how varied and suspect data quality is on Asian Americans is the striking “house” effects between two exit polls fielded in California following the 1996 general elections. The Voter New Services found Asian Americans to be more Republican than Democratic (48 percent to 32 percent), while the *Los Angeles Times* found the opposite – Asian American Democrats appeared, by this exit poll, to outweigh Asian Republicans (44 percent to 33 percent). Even the recent 2001 Pilot National Asian American Politics Survey and 2008 National Asian American Survey – the two most rigorous and systematic academic survey of Asian Americans to date – are perhaps closer to alchemic *coups de moment* than gold standards for the field.

Notwithstanding these seemingly intractable challenges to reliable, valid data on Asian American public opinion, a clear and emerging pattern is apparent. As with

Latinos, Asian Americans appear to favor the Democratic Party and this is a partisan pattern that has developed over the past few decades. In the first study of Asian American partisanship acquisition, Cain, Kiewiet, and Uhlaner (1991) found – using data from a 1984 survey of Asian Americans in California – a roughly even split in partisanship and that Asian Americans were far more Republican in their partisanship than Latinos. The authors argue that this effect resulted from the salience of foreign policy concerns among Chinese, Koreans, and Southeast Asians and that there was no discernible effect of being a racial/ethnic minority that pulled Asians toward the Democratic Party among their second and third generation respondents.

Yet according to one review of twelve national, state-level, and metropolitan-level surveys in the 1990s, the roughly even split in Asian American partisanship begins to take a discernibly Democratic turn by the 1998 off-year elections (Lien 2001). This leaning has become solid in recent years. In the post-election 2000-2001 Pilot National Asian American Politics Study (PNAAPS) – the first multi-city, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual academic survey of Asian Americans – Democratic identifiers outnumbered Republican identifiers by more than two-to-one, and across all ethnic subgroups except for Vietnamese Americans (who lean modestly toward the Republican Party).

Table 5.3. Exit Poll Data on Asian American Vote Choice, 2000-2008				
	2000	2004	2006	2008
Democrat	55	56	62	63
Republican	41	44	37	34
Source: Voter New Service and National Election Pool exit polls				

This partiality is mirrored too in how Asians vote, shown by exit poll data in Table 5.3.¹⁰⁸ According to VNS, a solid majority of Asian Americans voted for Al Gore over George W. Bush in 2000 (55 percent to 41). The partiality toward Democratic presidential candidates then rises steadily with successive elections, with the NEP finding a decisive 63 to 34 percentage points split in favor of Barack Obama over John McCain in the most recent 2008 presidential elections. This emerging pattern is also mirrored by voter registration studies in 2004 and 2006 by the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund in New York and Asian Pacific American Legal Center in Southern California, which found marked increases in the number of Asian American registered Democrats.

With both Asian Americans and Latinos, there are several critical caveats to these general facts about the direction of partisanship. Perhaps the most commonly raised qualification is that patterns of party identification vary substantially by ethnic/national origin groups. Among the primary Latino sub-groups it is Cubans and among the primary Asian sub-groups it is Vietnamese (and by some accounts, Koreans) who are the most likely to identify as Republicans (Cain, Kiewiet, and Uhlaner 1991, de la Garza et al 1992, Uhlaner and Garcia 2002, Lien et al 2004). Moreover, party identification varies by immigrant status (foreign-born and generation), the number of years lived in the US, and naturalization as citizens. Lastly, we also know that issues and interests matter – most obviously in the arena of foreign policy interests as an explanation for why Cubans,

¹⁰⁸ As with Latinos, there are strong reasons to use exit poll data on Asian Americans with precaution. The data are biased by reliance on sampling selective precincts, sampling based on past voting behavior, and interviewing only in English with a predominance of particular ethnic/national origin groups. In more local, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic polls in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York City the margins are even more decisive margins for Democratic candidates.

Vietnamese, and Koreans tend to identify as Republicans more often than do other Latino and Asian sub-groups.

We have thus far highlighted two defining features of Latino and Asian American partisanship: its contingency across time and data sources and, its partiality for the Democratic Party in the dyadic choice between identifying with the Republican or Democratic parties. But these features, important as they are, mask what we think is an even more central one – the tendency of members of both populations to remain outside the partisan scale.

Non-identifiers

While professors and pundits alike chomp at the bit to proclaim partisan colors, for many Americans, there is a critical prior question. Many Americans must first ponder what it means to be a partisan. The willingness to think in partisan terms – by which we mean the willingness to place oneself on a party identification spectrum at all – is, we believe, a separate and important prior factor to the specific self-placement on the spectrum from strong Democratic to Independent to strong Republican identification.

This decision is relatively inconsequential when we consider the white or African American populations. In the American National Election Study cumulative file from 1948 to 2004, less than seven percent of the black and white sample across years chose one of the following non-partisan responses – “no preference,” “none,” “neither,” “other,” “don’t know,” or otherwise refused to answer question. Thus, it is not surprising to find that most studies of partisanship simply dismiss this group as an anomaly, code them as missing, and drop them from analysis altogether.

Table 5.4. (Non-)Partisanship Among Latinos and Asian Americans		
	Latinos	Asian Americans
Democrats	34%	30%
Republicans	10	14
Independents	17	20
Non-identifiers	38	36
Source: 2006 Latino National Survey and 2008 National Asian American Survey		

For expository purposes, we refer interchangeably to Latinos and Asian Americans who opt for these “non-compliant” response categories – “no preference,” “none,” “neither,” “other,” “don’t know,” or some other mode of refusal to self-identify as “Democrat,” “Republican,” or “Independent” – as “non-identifiers.” While the phenomenon of non-identifiers may be rare enough among Whites and African Americans to treat as residual response category, for immigrant-laden groups like Latinos and Asian Americans placing oneself somewhere on the conventional partisan scale is an often difficult, if not impossible, task.¹⁰⁹ In fact, if we look at the 2006 Latino National Survey and the 2008 National Asian American Survey – the two most recent national scholarly surveys of Asian American and Latino politics – it is readily apparent that indecision is the modal response in these populations. As Table 5.4 shows, fully 38 percent of Latinos and 36 percent of Asian Americans are uncommitted to a partisan response category.

¹⁰⁹ To be more precise here, the phenomenon of refusing to answer the party identification question or indicating a “don’t know” response is quite rare (an incidence of 0.46% in the ANES from 1968 to 2004), as is indicating some preference other than Democrat, Republican, or Independent (an incidence of 0.58% over the same years). Indicating no preference, however, is decidedly more common (7.8%). In total, even in the representative U.S. population sample of the ANES, almost 9% of Americans would be classified as “non-identifiers” by our account. In the ANES, those indicating no preference or registering a “don’t know” response are asked the follow-up question given to Independents, about whether they in fact lean towards one party or the other. Thus in the conventional construction of a 7-point party identification scale in the ANES, only those respondents who simply refuse to answer the party identification question or the follow-up on partisan leaners are treated as truly missing data and deleted from subsequent analysis (an incidence rate of less than 1% between 1968 to 2004).

If we add Independents – i.e., those who are able to answer the root party identification question but then claim no attachment to either party – we arrive at the conclusion that a solid majority of Latinos and Asian Americans are non-partisans. In the both the 2006 LNS and the 2008 NAAS, only 44 percent of all respondents identify with one of the two major parties. For Latinos and Asian Americans the two categories that studies of partisanship largely concentrate on are only a minority of the population. The response categories that is usually treated as a residual and dropped from detailed analysis – which we pool together under the label “non-identifiers” is in fact the modal kind of response for these groups. This finding, importantly, is not limited to just these two surveys. Most previous surveys of Latinos and Asian Americans – e.g., the 2001 Pilot National Asian American Survey, the 1989 Latino National Political Survey, the Pew Hispanic Center *2002 National Survey of Latinos*, the Pew Hispanic Center *2004 National Survey of Latinos* – all find that a majority or near-majority of respondents are either non-identifiers or Independents.

Explaining the Partisan Choices of Latinos and Asian Americans

How can we explain the distribution of Asian American and Latino partisanship that we find? To answer this question, we briefly revisit explanations that emerge out of the traditional party identification literature. We then move on to consider the relevance of explanations that emerge out of what we think is a core process delimiting Latino and Asian American partisan choices – immigrant incorporation. Finally, we adopt key features of existing models of partisanship and our understanding of the process of immigrant incorporation to specify our own model of partisanship for these two groups.

The key to our account is a more nuanced and multidimensional story of how incorporation does (or does not) occur across different segments of the population. In particular, we apply our larger theoretical account of (non-) partisanship in America and our three elements of information, identity, and ideology to the specific case the immigrant-based Latino and Asian American populations.

Since traditional accounts of partisanship either overlook non-identifiers altogether or dismiss them as irrelevant to the political arena, it is not surprising to find that traditional theories offer little in the way of a direct explanation of this phenomenon. Nevertheless, one can extrapolate a story from these theories. A Downsian might infer that Americans with decidedly moderate views would be the most likely to remain nonpartisan or end up as non-identifiers. For these middle-of-the-road Americans, with few strong policy positions, there may not be sufficient motivation to make a partisan choice in the first place. An alternative extrapolation from Downsian theory might be to adopt A. O. Hirschman's critique of Hotelling (1929) and subsequent median voter accounts of duopolies. Specifically, Hirschman articulates "exit" and "voice" as alternatives to "loyalty" and thus alternatives to the view that "*the 'captive' consumer (or voter) who has 'nowhere else to go' is the epitome of powerlessness* (1970, 70 [emphasis in original])."

These possibilities do not take us very far. The view that non-identifiers are ideological moderates is easily rebutted. In both the 2006 LNS and the 2008 NAAS, there is a striking parallel between the high proportion of Latinos and Asian Americans who do not identify as a Democrat, Independent, or Republican and the proportion who do not identify as a liberal, moderate, or conservative. In the 2006 LNS, 21% of

respondents identify as conservatives, 13% as liberals, 17% as moderates, and fully 49% indicate that they either do not know how to place themselves in the traditional ideological spectrum or that they do not think in ideological terms. Fully 69% of Latinos who refuse to identify as Democrat, Independent, or Republican also refuse to identify as liberal, moderate, or conservative. Self-identified moderates make up only 9% of Latino non-identifiers. The companion figures in the 2008 NAAS are not quite as remarkable, but make a clear case nonetheless. The basic distribution of ideological views is 13% conservative, 21% liberal, 32% moderate, and 34% non-ideological identifiers. Fully 55% of Asian Americans uncommitted to a partisan identity are also uncommitted to an ideological identity; only 24% self-identify as moderates, with 12% and 9% identifying as liberal and conservative, respectively.

Hirschman's account of exit from non-competitive duopolies is more promising because it specifies a mechanism through which individuals can opt not to identify with either firm in the market – that is, it allows a dissatisfied consumer to exit from a market altogether. This view of non-identification as the exercise of an exit option, however, presumes pre-existing preferences over the commodities produced by political parties in a duopolistic marketplace. Most Asian Americans and Latinos – as foreign-born and second-generation Americans – are relative newcomers to this marketplace and the existence and stability of consumer preferences cannot easily be presumed.

Thus a missing element in the information and market-based approach to explaining party identification is a prior account of how newcomers form preferences over partisan goods. Here, the reliance on political socialization in the Michigan school of party identification would seem felicitous. From the standpoint of *The American*

Voter, one might think of non-identifiers as those who fail to identify with a party by virtue of their having been raised by parents who were also uncommitted and apolitical, or in social and institutional settings that fostered inattention to or disdain for party politics. This raises an interesting question about whether non-identification is a habit that is passed on from generation to generation – a question that is not explicitly raised by advocates of the Michigan school. But it still fails to account for non-identification among those foreign-born Latinos and Asian Americans. If the population in question is not politically socialized (especially in one's pre-adult years, as per *The American Voter*) in the United States, then socialization *per se* cannot explain the remarkably high proportion of non-identifiers among Latinos and Asian Americans.

What is obviously absent from these traditional models is a consideration of the immigrant experience and its aftermath. As we noted in Chapters One and Two, this is not *prima facie* the result of explicit omission on the part of Michigan and Downsian schools of thought, as these theories originated during a period of far lower rates of immigrant stocks and flows. If one's immigrant experience does have a bearing on one's status as uncommitted and unattached to either of the two parties, then we need to integrate key elements of this immigrant experience into any discussion of the party identification of Latinos and Asian Americans. More to the point, the argument we develop in this chapter is that the process of *immigrant political incorporation* is critical in understanding the partisan choices of immigrants and their offspring. In this next section, we begin the process of trying to understand what political incorporation is and in turn what it means for questions of party identification.

Immigrant Incorporation and Partisan Politics

We argue that the questions “what does it mean to be a partisan” and de Crevecoeur’s “what does it mean to be American” are deeply interconnected. What it means to be an American, politically, is to identify as a Democrat or Republican or Independent. For the modal Latino and Asian American, this institutional attachment with and incorporation into American political life remains unformed. The attachments that immigrant-based ethnic communities like Latinos and Asian Americans form, *or fail to form*, to a political party are an important and underexamined dimension of immigrant political incorporation.

We use the term “political incorporation” broadly to denote the process of successive stages of inclusion into arenas of democratic voice and choice – from the political freedoms conjured in the imaginary of a newcomer to America’s shores to a literal seat at the table of a governing political coalition. This definition covers traditional measures of legal membership (citizenship), formal political participation (registration, voting, campaigning), and informal participation (volunteerism, community problem solving). We also see it as covering direct inputs into decision-making and authorizing institutions (descriptive and substantive representation, legal recognition, bureaucratic capture).

Beyond the formal institutional dimensions of political incorporation, we are also keen to examine the extent to which political incorporation is reflected in an immigrant or second-generation American’s subjective sense of membership. This sense of belonging, agency, and voice is, we posit, fostered access to basic knowledge concerning the political process, recognition of and attachment to the key issues and core ideological

dimensions that delineate partisan politics in this nation, and the development of social and racial identities that can be linked to the available partisan options.

In explicitly defining a role for processes of institutional and attitudinal incorporation, we hope to expand upon the rich body of work – in large measure from sociologists –on the pathways that immigrants follow during their journey through successive lived experiences in their adopted nation. In general, in this corpus the main line dividing competing accounts is whether immigrants become fully absorbed and included into their receiving contexts, or whether they retain cherished aspects of their ethnic identities and cultural beliefs from their country of origin, or whether some hybrid of acculturation and ethnic resilience occurs. We briefly discuss each of these three primary theoretical variants on immigrant incorporation below.

Straight-Line Assimilation

The first of these is the “straight-line” assimilation model. This perspective envisions a process by which immigrants gradually and inexorably absorb the norms, values, and practices of the native society (Park 1926, Gordon 1964). In Robert Dahl’s oft-cited account of political incorporation, the process of incorporation begins with the incentives presented to elites by the salience of ethnic identity for most immigrants. Thus Dahl observes from his study of Irish- and Italian-Americans in New Haven that “the ‘ethnic’ ... found that his ethnic identification colored his life, his relations with others, his attitudes toward himself and the world ... Any political leader who could help members of an ethnic group to overcome the handicaps and humiliations associated with their identity, who could increase the power, prestige, and income of an ethnic or

religious out-group, automatically had an effective strategy for earning support and loyalty (1961, 33).”

Dahl further notes that the short-term benefits from recruiting or pandering to these identitarian concerns lead to long-term costs as subsequent generations enjoy the fruits of full social, civic, economic, and political inclusion. Thus Dahl concludes: “ethnic politics ... is clearly a transitional phenomenon. The very success of politicians who use the ethnic approach leads to the obsolescence of their strategy (1961, 34).” Under this view, the passage of time serves not only to lift the socioeconomic circumstances of new ethnic Americans, but also to “normalize” their political priors to those of native-born (white) citizens. One implication of this normalization, in the political arena, is that partisanship should be more salient with the passage of time. Another implication is that Latinos and Asian Americans will in the long run begin to look a lot like white Americans in their partisan proclivities. Although most current day scholars find this linear model problematic, its vestiges remain present in many existing empirical studies of the Latino and Asian American populations that tie partisanship acquisition and choice to time and generation in the United States (Cain et al 1991, Cho 1999, Wong 2000, Welch and Sigelman 1993, Uhlaner and Garcia 1998, de la Garza et al 1992).

A slightly more nuanced version of this assimilationist model identifies a specific mechanism through which ethnic interests become less effective as a means for party elites to recruit and mobilize electoral support. A close reading of *Who Governs* thus finds that, in Dahl’s view, it is the presumed homogeneity of class interests in the immigrant first generation that enables ethnicity to become a focal point for organizing and activating their politics. Once class interests within an ethnic community become

heterogeneous with the upward mobility of second and third generation immigrants, the salience of ethnicity will recede. This heterogeneity and upward mobility is the mechanism that is hypothesized in the sociological literature on how the ethnic identities of previous generations of immigrants have receded into the twilight (Alba 1985, Waters 1990). It is also the basis for more controversial debates over whether the rise of a black middle class in the Twentieth Century has led to a decline in the significance of race as a foundation for the politics of African Americans in the post-Civil Rights era (Wilson 1978, Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1998, Dawson 1994, Shelby 2005). Class too has found its way into recent empirical studies of the Latino and Asian Americans populations but here findings about its relationship to partisanship are more mixed (Welch and Sigelman 1993, Kosmin and Keysar 1995, Cain et al 1991, York 1999, Alvarez and Bedolla 2003).

Ethnic Resilience

A second, separate view on immigrant incorporation is that ethnicity does not fade in a linear way across generations. Rather it is a resilient and persistent factor in the lives and politics of newer immigrant-based groups like Latinos and Asian Americans. This “ethnic resilience” model (see, e.g., Portes and Bach 1985, de la Garza and De Sipio 1999) expects the awareness of discrimination and barriers to full inclusion to grow with third and subsequent generations, rather than melt away into a color-blind experience as unhyphenated Americans. Under this racialized or ethnic view of incorporation, the passage of time and the accretion of information and experiences serve to further “marginalize” new ethnic immigrant groups like Latinos and Asian Americans and

remind them of their station in American life.¹¹⁰ The effect of this continued “minority group status” will presumably be to align the political interests of Latinos and Asian Americans with Democrats to the extent that the Democratic Party is perceived to advocate more vigorously on behalf of racial and ethnic minorities.

Segmented Assimilation

A third variant sees the incorporation of immigrants as a contingent outcome. This “segmented assimilation” model maintains that the process of incorporation is a “bumpy” one with multiple pathways that depend on the specific opportunities and contexts that individual immigrants face (Zhou 1997, Gans 1992, Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Some immigrants will find avenues to economic advancement and will be given opportunities to obtain key markers of mainstream status. Other immigrants will find these pathways blocked and will come to view themselves as racialized minorities. The actual pathways that immigrants and their offspring travel are contingent on any number of different factors from spatial contexts (Massey 1995, Portes and Zhou 1993) to family socioeconomic origins (Portes 1995), or to social interaction and the degree of ethnic isolation that defines an immigrant’s surroundings (Zhou and Logan 1991).

Political Incorporation and the Dimensions of Information, Ideology, and Identity

In our analysis, we view each of these accounts as capturing relevant dimensions of the process of immigrant incorporation into American society and potentially in

¹¹⁰ In the case of Mexican Americans, competing accounts have emerged on whether the basis for the maintenance of ethnic identity is persistent anti-Latino discrimination and minority-group status into the third generation and beyond or whether it is the result of the replenishment of new immigrants and, as a result, the maintenance of social ties and networks across generations of Mexican Americans (Jimenez 2008, Telles and Ortiz 2008).

politics. What we hope to add is a deeper understanding of the factors that are particularly important in guiding *partisan* incorporation. The literature offers reasonably complete accounts of how and why immigrants and their offspring take different pathways in the economic and social spheres. We continue, however, to have much less of a sense of how and why different members of the Latino and Asian American populations travel at different paces to different destinations along the route from non-identifier status to full-fledged partisan loyalist and similarly sparse knowledge of why they choose one party over the other, if and when, they agree to establish a partisan attachment.

To understand the political arena, we first borrow from sociology. As we have already noted, the sociological literature is replete with studies that highlight different factors integral to immigrant incorporation. First among these are the “straight-line” assimilation factors of time in the US and socioeconomic advancement. In addition, sociologists have focused on the friendship networks, organizational ties, and various other modes of civic engagement. These modes of social interaction are likely to have an effect on one’s information environment, ideological assimilation, and identity formation.

Beyond these sociological factors, we also stress the centrality of more explicitly political factors that shape political incorporation. Here we see two key dimensions of incorporation and two key sets of measures of incorporation. The first is the degree to which newcomers are formally included or excluded by a receiving society’s social, economic, and political *institutions*. In the realm of political incorporation, the primary focus here would be on institutions, laws, and policies – among other things, naturalization laws, electoral rules, multicultural policies, and political markets

(especially the degree of local and national party competition).

The second dimension aims to capture the varying degrees of agency held by individuals in a political system. Even if institutions, laws, and policies opened their arms far and wide, Latinos and Asian Americans are not likely to be highly incorporated if they do not feel a sense of belonging in the political sphere. There are unequal degrees in the “socially authorized and encouraged sense of being entitled to be concerned with politics, authorized to talk politics (Bourdieu 1986, 409).” The spectrum here might be described in a range from a sense of alterity (or “otherness”) to feeling fully authorized to be political. For Latinos and Asian Americans, the degrees of social authorization are likely to vary with one's immigrant socialization and racial and ethnic minority status.¹¹¹ The point here is that, even if the Democratic and Republican parties were clamoring for the attention of Latinos and Asian Americans (and there is plenty of evidence that they are not), we are not likely to see a great deal of partisan activity without some sense of agency and authorship over one's political fates.

This is a realm of attitudinal acculturation in which we continue to believe that our two key indicators of political predispositions (ideology and identity) and the one additional key indicator of political awareness (information) will be crucial. To have a sense of voice and agency as a political actor in the American partisan system will require the tools to decipher how politics is discussed and defined in the United States.

¹¹¹ The two groups we examine in this chapter may be particularly given to a sense of political “otherness” that may explain their reluctance to self-identify with a party or with the two-party system. For Latinos, there is the history of conquest and colonization (for Latinos of Mexican and Puerto Rican descent) and the present reality of the public's exaggerated perceptions about the prevalence of illegal immigration and the degree to which undocumented entrants to the U.S. is an exclusively Latino phenomenon. For Asian Americans, there is a similarly long history of treatment as “perpetual foreigners” and a “Yellow peril” that extend into the present day with incidents like the 1996 campaign finance controversy, in which legal contributions from citizens and permanent residents of Asian background were framed in media coverage as influence-buying from foreign interests.

To this end, the ability to place oneself along the traditional American *ideological* spectrum from fervent liberals to ardent conservatives is likely to influence not only how political newcomers place themselves on issues, but also whether they deem politics to be a civic activity worth doing. As we have already intimated, a large proportion of Latinos and Asian Americans simply do not place themselves on this spectrum. Yet as we shall see, for those who do, this ideological predisposition will strongly shape the decision to identify with a partisan category or remain uncommitted and define the category to which Latinos and Asian Americans attach themselves.

We think, importantly, that there are two aspects to the effect of ideology. The direct effect acts on those Latinos and Asian Americans who are able to place themselves along the liberal-to-conservative spectrum. The indirect effect acts on those who fall outside this ideological spectrum. Immigrants and their offspring will often have distinct issue concerns that are apt to garner limited attention from either major party and mainstream media outlets. Issues like Puerto Rican statehood, regionalism in Mexico, Korean reunification, or the ongoing dialectics of China's ongoing conflicts with Taiwan might matter intensely to Latino and Asian American sub-groups but rarely find commensurate attention in partisan political discourse. To the extent immigrants and their offspring remain attached to these orthogonal issues, their incentive to identify with and invest in a partisan attachment will be limited.

As we noted earlier, we further believe that for racially and ethnically defined minorities, *identity* is another key predisposition that may help to shape partisan choices. Group consciousness as we see it is neither inevitable nor inevitably important. For some race will have little significance but for others, their personal experiences in America will

establish a link between one's own life chances and the status of the larger group, will awaken a strong racial identity. The presence of in-group solidarity, out-group differentiation, and inter-group conflicts should help to raise the salience of politics as a forum in which collective interests are pursued and inter-group conflicts might be mediated. Thus strong racial identification, we think, will potentially help define partisanship for Latinos and Asian Americans. Given that racial policy questions often delineate the two parties and given the Democratic Party's clear association with what is widely perceived to be a 'pro-minority' policy agenda, we further expect that experiences with racial discrimination, a strong sense of racially linked fates, and political commonality will all lead to greater Democratic allegiance and diminished nonpartisanship (Carmines and Stimson 1989, Lee 2002, Edsall and Edsall 1992).

Finally, predispositions – whether ideological or identitarian – are either crystallized or fade into insignificance depending on relevant *information* about the political arena and the partisan choices that are available to the American public. Immigrants are apt to arrive with the barest of knowledge of American political system. Until they are able to update their priors on what U.S. politics is, why it matters, and how parties represent (or fail to represent) their interests, there is little incentive to travel along the partisan pathway and many reasons to remain uncommitted to either party. Information is critical here because it clarifies choices, encourages efficacy (it is difficult to believe our choices matter until we have witnessed some measure of responsiveness from the system), enables trust (it is difficult to trust that which we do not know) and facilitates participation in a complex multi-level political system. Thus, we expect information to be a key factor in the partisanship patterns for Latinos and Asian

Americans. Latinos and Asian Americans who remain less familiar with U.S. parties and political system or who have not seen enough to trust the system will be more likely to remain non-identifiers.

Research Plan and Data Description

In the coming pages, we present evidence in support of our account of Latino and Asian American partisanship in several stages. In the remainder of this chapter, we present some basic tables that illustrate the first order relationships between Latino and Asian American partisanship on one hand and a range of different factors highlighted by the literature and our own account on the other. These simple, bivariate tests indicate that traditional explanations of partisanship only weakly predict Latino and Asian American partisanship, while factors related to political incorporation and in particular measures of information, identity, and ideology tend to be strongly linked to the partisan status of both populations. In the next chapter, we test these conclusions more systematically using a multivariate model that incorporates each of the different perspectives simultaneously.

This account of party identification is examined using data from the primary political surveys of the groups in question – the 2006 Latino National Survey (Fraga et al 2006) and the 2008 National Asian American Survey (Junn et al 2008). The 2006 Latino National Survey (LNS) completed 8,634 telephone interviews of self-identified Latinos/Hispanics between November 17, 2005 and August 4, 2006. Of this sample, 5,704 respondents were Mexican, 822 were Puerto Rican, 420 Cuban, 407 Salvadoran, 335 Dominican, 333 Central American, and the remaining 613 belonged to some other Latino

ancestry.¹¹² The 2008 National Asian American Survey (NAAS) completed 5,159 telephone interviews of self-identified Asian Americans between August 18 and October 29, 2009. Of this sample, 1,350 respondents were self-identified Chinese, 1,150 were Asian Indian, 719 Vietnamese, 614 Korean, 603 Filipino, 541 Japanese, and 182 identified with some other ethnic ancestry or national origin group.¹¹³

Descriptive Patterns of Party Identification

We first describe the general distribution of party identification across different subsets of the Latino and Asian American populations. Our aim here is see how well our expectations stand up to a rough cut at the data. Unadorned cross-tabulations, when carefully matched to sound reasoning and coherent theorizing, are often remarkably robust to fancier statistical modeling. So we check here to see if our data pushes us past this important first post. Specifically, we compare indicators of straight-line assimilation to alternative dimensions of political incorporation.

Our four categories of party identification are self-identification as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or non-identification with any of these conventional forms of identification. In the analysis, the non-identifiers category is a combination of residual non-partisan categories that includes “don’t care,” “don’t know,” or “other party” in the 2006 LNS and those who chose “do not think in these terms,” “not sure,” or refused to

¹¹² The stratified sample was drawn from 15 states and the District of Columbia metropolitan area and was designed to be fully representative of each state/metro area’s Latino population. The target population for the LNS covers 87.5% of the total U.S. Latino population. Fully 62% of respondents chose to be interviewed in Spanish.

¹¹³ The NAAS sample was drawn from an extensive ethnic name list (matched to first name and surname). There is an oversample of respondents from California, the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area, and metropolitan areas that represent “new destinations” for Asian American immigrants. Interviews were conducted in English and seven non-English languages (Cantonese, Mandarin, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Tagalog, and Vietnamese); 40 percent of our sample opted for a non-English language of interview.

answer the question in the 2008 NAAS. We start with key measures of social incorporation. Existing studies of Latinos and Asian Americans highlight the role that lived experience in the U.S. plays in structuring partisan attachments (Bowler et al 2006, DeSipio 1996; Cho 1999; Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2001; Wong 2002).

Table 5.5. Partisanship by Longevity and Generation in the U.S.						
2006 LNS	1-8 yrs	9-16 yrs	17-26 yrs	27 + yrs	For-born	2nd Gen
Republican	5.1%	6.5%	11.1%	15.4%	8.1%	13.7%
Democrat	17.3%	25.4%	32.3%	45.8%	26.1%	45.0%
Independent	21.5%	19.2%	18.5%	13.9%	19.1%	15.4%
Non-identifier	56.1%	49.0%	38.2%	25.0%	37.9%	26.0%
2008 NAAS	1-8 yrs	9-16 yrs	17-26 yrs	27 + yrs	For-born	2nd Gen
Republican	4.6%	13.2%	16.1%	18.5%	11.7%	14.7%
Democrat	23.8%	30.7%	26.9%	36.8%	28.7%	39.6%
Independent	21.2%	19.6%	23.2%	17.0%	20.3%	22.4%
Non-identifier	50.4%	36.5%	33.8%	27.8%	39.4%	23.3%
Cell entries are column percentages.						

Table 5.5 shows the distribution of the four partisanship categories by years lived in the US among immigrants and also between immigrants and second-generation Latinos and Asian Americans. The number of years in the US among immigrants are grouped into rough quartiles.¹¹⁴ This first table broadly supports the straight-line assimilation model. For both Latinos and Asian Americans, time in the U.S. translates into greater likelihood of holding partisan attachments. Latino immigrants who have lived here for 27 years or longer, for example, are more than half as likely to be uncommitted about their partisanship than are their counterparts who have lived here for

¹¹⁴ For the LNS, the quartiles are divided roughly into Latino immigrants who have lived in the U.S. for eight years or less, between 9-16 years, 17-26 years, and for 27 years and longer; for the NAAS, the quartiles split the sample between Asian immigrants who have lived in the U.S. for twelve years or less, between 13-20 years, 21-29 years, and for 30 years and longer.

8 years or less (25% vs 56%). The effect of longevity in the U.S. for Asian Americans is almost as pronounced: more than 50% of Asian Americans who have lived in the U.S. for 12 years or less do not identify as Republican, Democrat, or Independent; only about 28% of those who have lived in the U.S. for 30 years or longer are similarly uncommitted.¹¹⁵

Our initial analysis of partisanship by longevity and generation affirms the general expectation of a straight-line assimilationist account. We earlier also described a more nuanced version whereby immigrant incorporation would follow from class mobility. In Table 5.6, we begin to test this alternate version by focusing on the partisanship of high and low income and high and low education respondents.¹¹⁶

Table 5.6. Partisanship by Socioeconomic Status				
	<i>Low Income</i>	<i>High Income</i>	<i>Low Educ</i>	<i>High Educ</i>
2006 LNS				
Republican	6.1%	20.3%	5.7%	14.5%
Democrat	28.1%	46.5%	21.7%	48.3%
Independent	20.4%	18.5%	18.3%	18.7%
Non-identifier	45.5%	14.8%	54.2%	18.5%
2008 NAAS				
Republican	11.9%	20.2%	10.8%	9.4%
Democrat	30.3%	38.7%	25.8%	35.1%
Independent	18.4%	21.7%	11.4%	26.1%
Non-identifier	39.5%	19.4%	52.0%	29.3%
Cell entries are column percentages.				

¹¹⁵ Figure 5.5 also shows that for Latinos time in the US benefits the Democratic Party more than the Republican Party while for Asian Americans the gains are roughly equal.

¹¹⁶ For the 2006 LNS, the cut points for low and high income are respondents making a household income below \$15,000 a year and above \$65,000 a year; for low and high educational attainment, these cut offs are respondents with an eighth grade education or below and a graduate or professional degree. For the 2008 NAAS, the equivalent cut-offs are between respondents making a household income below \$20,000 and those above \$150,000; for low and high educational attainment, it is between respondents with only some high school education and those with an advanced graduate or professional degree.

The results suggest that class gains are related to partisan incorporation. For both Latinos and Asian Americans high-class status (in the form of either greater education or higher incomes) is associated with declines in being a non-identifier. Latinos at the highest levels of family income and education attainment are roughly three times less likely to remain uncommitted in partisan terms. For Asian Americans the ratio is closer to two-fold. As Table 5.6 shows, most of this decline is parlayed into a greater likelihood of identifying either as a Democrat or a Republican (and not identifying as an Independent, with the lone exception of an increase in self-identified Independents among the most highly educated Asian Americans).¹¹⁷

Tables 5.5 and 5.6 show that traditional markers of immigrant assimilation – length of time in one’s new host country and socioeconomic advancement – help to define whether Latinos and Asian Americans commit to a partisan category or remain as non-identifiers. What about the role of political factors? For many scholars of American politics, partisan choices are, at their heart, about issue positions and ideology. We choose the party closest to our views on the main liberal-conservative divide that separates the two parties. Thus, liberals should identify as Democrats, Republicans should end up with ties to the Republican Party, and moderates should choose Independence or perhaps remain uncommitted between conventional partisan categories. Is this account of American politics true for the two groups we examine in this chapter?

Table 5.7 examines this question by dividing Latinos and Asian Americans into four groups; those that self-identify as liberal, moderates, or conservatives and those who reject any of these conventional categories of ideological self-identification. The results

¹¹⁷ Importantly, as Figure 5.6 indicates, class gains do not appear to be associated with a clear shift to the Republican Party for either Latinos or Asian Americans. The two parties benefit roughly equally from class gains.

of the table show very mixed support for the claim that partisanship is anchored by ideology. For both Latinos and Asian Americans, roughly a majority of liberals self-identify as Democrats (51% in the LNS and 50% in the NAAS). Also, for both groups, a majority of those uncommitted to a partisan category also refuse to identify with an ideological category: 54% of the uncommitted are “ideological non-identifiers” in the LNS and this figure is 58% in the NAAS.

Table 5.7. Partisanship by Ideology				
2006 LNS	<i>Liberal</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Non-Identifier</i>
Republican	7.9%	11.5%	21.5%	6.1%
Democrat	51.2%	42.5%	34.4%	26.4%
Independent	23.1%	25.6%	17.1%	13.6%
Non-identifier	17.9%	20.4%	27.1%	54.0%
2008 NAAS				
Republican	9.7%	11.7%	31.2%	6.3%
Democrat	49.7%	32.8%	25.1%	20.2%
Independent	20.2%	28.0%	18.4%	15.4%
Non-identifier	20.3%	27.5%	25.4%	58.1%
Cell entries are column percentages.				

At the same time, identifying as a moderate or conservative has no clear bearing on one’s partisanship. The modal Latino and Asian American moderate self-identifies as a *Democrat* (43% in the LNS, 33% in the NAAS), not as an Independent or uncommitted. Similarly, self-identifying conservatives are not especially likely to ally with the Republican Party. Among Latino respondents in the LNS, only 22% of conservatives self-identify as Republicans, with 34% identifying as *Democrats* and the remaining 44% either identifying as Independents or remaining uncommitted in partisan terms. Similarly, among Asian Americans in the NAAS, 31% self-identify as Republicans,

while 25% identify as Democrats and an identical 44% identifying as Independents or uncommitted.¹¹⁸

So far, we can understand some of what is going on with Latino and Asian American partisanship using conventional markers of socioeconomic status, linear time in the US, and ideology. Beyond these factors, we are also interested in the extent to which other factors help to explain patterns of partisanship. Previously, we noted that scholars generally focus on the three key stages of formal political incorporation at the individual-level: whether they have naturalized as citizens of the United States, whether they have registered to vote, and whether they actually vote. We also already described the basic patterns of Latinos and Asian Americans on these measures based on the 2004 American Community Survey: compared to both whites and African Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans are both woefully “under-incorporated” at each stage of the process. Do patterns of partisanship then also change across these stages of political incorporation? The next table offers some revealing clues to this question.

First, citizenship itself does not appear to significantly change patterns of partisanship. We see this by comparing the distribution of partisanship for non-citizens to that for citizenship who are not registered to vote. For both Latino and Asian American respondents, the rank order is exactly the same between non-citizens and non-registered citizens: the greatest number are non-identifiers, followed by Democrats, Independents, and lastly Republicans. The one shift that is consistent between the two groups here is that the proportion of non-identifiers falls modestly between non-citizens

¹¹⁸ One final way to make this point is to treat partisanship and ideology in the conventional way – to treat uncommitteds and non-identifiers as non-valid responses – and create 7-point scales that can be correlated with one another. Even in this case, the pairwise correlation is positive, but relatively smaller (0.24 for the LNS and 0.23 for the NAAS). By comparison, in Figure 2.5 we saw that the correlation of partisanship and ideology in the NES is typically around 0.50.

and non-registered citizens (from 54% to 45% in the LNS; from 49% to 41% in the NAAS).

Table 5.8. Distribution of Partisanship by Citizenship and Registration Status				
2006 LNS	<i>Non-citizen</i>	<i>Citizen, not registered</i>	<i>Registered to vote</i>	<i>Voted in last election*</i>
Democratic	21.1%	27.8%	50.5%	53.1%
Republican	4.9%	9.7%	16.8%	18.0%
Independent	19.8%	17.2%	15.3%	14.0%
Non-identifier	54.2%	45.3%	23.5%	14.9%
2008 NAAS				
Democratic	26.3%	24.9%	36.0%	38.6%
Republican	5.6%	10.1%	17.1%	16.6%
Independent	19.5%	24.4%	20.9%	21.3%
Non-identifier	48.6%	40.6%	26.1%	23.7%
* figures represent self-reported voting behavior in the 2004 elections.				

The far more dramatic effect occurs with the act of registering to vote and voting itself. In the LNS, the proportion of non-identifiers drops from 45% among non-registered citizens to 24% among voter registered citizens; in the NAAS, this drop is from 41% to 26%. With both Latinos and Asians, there is a moderate increase in the proportion of self-identified Republicans (from 10% to 17% in both the LNS and the NAAS) and a relatively bigger increase in the proportion of self-identified Democrats (from 28% to 51% in the LNS and from 25% to 36% in the NAAS). This distribution in partisanship among those Latinos and Asian Americans registered to vote, moreover, looks very similar to that for voters themselves, as Table 5.8 shows.

One fair objection to inferring too much from these figures is that many states allow individuals to identify a party affiliation when they register to vote. Thus the close correspondence between partisanship and voter registration may reveal little more than a

tautology. Indeed, almost 80% of Latinos and Asian Americans in both surveys who are registered to vote indicated that they are registered as a Democrat, Republican, or Independent/non-partisan. Moreover, in the LNS, 86% of self-identified Democrats are registered as Democrats and 80% of self-identified Republicans are registered as Republicans. Similarly, in the NAAS, the proportion of respondents whose party identification matches their voter registration is 84% for Democrats and 81% for Republicans.

Whether or not partisanship is determined before one registers to vote and turns out on Election Day, these acts represent clear institutional moors that help tie-down Latinos and Asian Americans to political parties in the US. Beyond these formal electoral institutions, we also consider the role of other institutional influences (in particular, institutions within civil society like churches and community organizations) and the racial group identities that Latinos and Asian Americans form as additional influences on their partisanship. These factors appear to move only modestly with the distribution of party identification at the bi-variate level and, as we shall see in Chapter Six, yield mixed results in multivariate analysis.

One other factor that appears unambiguously to sharpen the partisan focus of Latinos and Asian Americans is information. As we argued earlier, because Latinos and Asian Americans are predominantly immigrants or their offspring, a common base of knowledge about and attentiveness to politics cannot be assumed. In the absence of familiarity with what parties have to offer, it is entirely reasonable for these groups to maintain a skeptical stance towards partisanship and withhold judgment. Table 5.9

shows this effect on two measures: (1) perception of differences between the two parties; (2) one's general level of political interest.¹¹⁹

Table 5.9. Distribution of Partisanship by Political Information				
	<i>Perceived Party Differences</i>		<i>General Pol Attentiveness</i>	
	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>
2006 LNS				
Democratic	22.0%	46.1%	22.2%	46.6%
Republican	4.6%	22.1%	7.1%	17.6%
Independent	16.9%	18.5%	13.6%	15.9%
Non-identifier	56.5%	13.2%	57.2%	20.0%
2008 NAAS				
Democratic	23.9%	38.8%	19.1%	38.2%
Republican	8.7%	15.2%	8.5%	15.7%
Independent	18.7%	23.5%	17.0%	26.5%
Non-identifier	48.7%	22.5%	55.4%	19.6%

The results here are unambiguous: with both attentiveness and perceived differences between the parties, respondents' likelihood of identifying as a Democrat or Republican increases sharply while their likelihood of remaining uncommitted fall equally dramatically. Roughly one in two Latinos and Asian Americans who fail to see differences between the parties, fail to possess basic knowledge about the parties, or are generally inattentive to politics are non-identifiers in partisan terms. Among those with high levels of information and attentiveness, this proportion diminishes to roughly one in five. Among the highly informed and attentive, the proportion who identify as a Democrat or Republican roughly doubles, with the highest preponderance of self-

¹¹⁹ The measures of political interest in the LNS and NAAS are identical, but we use different measures to look into perceptions of party differences. In the LNS, this perception is measured indirectly by asking respondents about their basic knowledge about party politics – specifically, which party was in control at the time in the House of Representatives and which presidential candidate in 2004 garnered the most votes in the respondent's state in 2004.

identified Democrats (between 38% and 47%, depending on the measure and the group in question).

Finally, our account also details the role of identity. Although we do not expect all members of these two groups to become racialized, we argue that recognizing the importance of race and developing a strong racial or pan-ethnic identity should create the motivation for party ties (primarily Democratic ones) among subsets of the Latino and Asian American population. A preliminary look at the role that racial identity plays in altering the contours of both groups' partisan positions is displayed in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10. Distribution of Partisanship by Racial Identity				
	<i>Experienced Discrimination</i>		<i>Pan Ethnic Linked Fate</i>	
	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
2006 LNS				
Democratic	21.6%	47.3%	39.9%	47.3%
Republican	51.6%	23.1%	27.1%	23.1%
Independent	10.1%	11.3%	14.4%	11.3%
Non-identifier	16.7%	18.3%	18.6%	18.3%
2008 NAAS				
Democratic	31.0%	47.0%	30.5%	47.0%
Republican	14.5%	18.2%	13.6%	18.2%
Independent	13.3%	10.6%	12.4%	10.6%
Non-identifier	41.2%	24.2%	43.5%	24.2%

The main conclusion to draw from the table is that identity does help to shape Latino and Asian American partisan choices. Perceiving discrimination and feeling a sense of linked fate with other members of one's pan-ethnic group both affect partisan status to one degree or another. The strength of the pattern varies from question to question and from group to group but generally speaking a stronger sense of racial identity is linked to diminished non-identification and greater attachment to the

Democratic Party. For example, those who perceive a lot of discrimination against Latinos are more than twice as likely to identify as Democrats than those who perceive little discrimination (50 percent vs 22 percent). Among Asian Americans, the strongest relationship is with the linked fate question. Among Asians who feel little sense of linked fate, non-identifiers (44 percent) greatly outnumber those who have ties to the Democratic Party (31 percent). By contrast, among Asian Americans who believe that their own well-being is connected to the fate of the larger Asian American population the reverse is true – Democrats greatly outnumber non-identifiers (47% versus 24 percent). For these two groups, partisanship is not simply about class or ideology or even institutions and information. It is also very much about race and identity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have begun to dissect in earnest the theoretical and empirical implications of the growing diversity of the American body politic due to immigrants and their offspring for partisanship. This investigation has entailed extended discussions of the existing data (or the insufficiencies thereof) on Latinos and Asian Americans and the existing literatures on immigrant political incorporation and on the partisanship of Latinos and Asian Americans. We have advanced a position that the question of Latino and Asian-American partisanship be viewed together with the question of Latino and Asian-American political incorporation, and vice-versa. In short, we view the question “What does it mean to be partisan?” and de Crevecoeur’s “What does it mean to be an American?” as close cousins. To understand whether and why Latinos and Asian Americans come to hold a view of political parties in the U.S. is to understand whether and why Latinos and Asian Americans come to feel included, at the institutional-level,

and authorized, at the individual-level to do the work of politics. We spend some time in this chapter detailing the implications of this view vis-à-vis our general argument about the role of identity, ideology, and information in shaping (non)partisanship.

We then concluded the chapter by examining, descriptively, the rough fit between our general discussion of Latino and Asian American partisanship and the best available data. We find, for example, that longevity in the US, generation, socioeconomic status all covary quite noticeably with the patterns of partisanship for Latinos and Asian Americans. These results, taken together, present a portrait of Latino and Asian American partisanship that is broadly consistent with past research on “straight-line” and “segmented” immigrant assimilation. This should come as no surprise given the dominance and durability of these accounts.

There are a few additions and qualifications that we believe are less common but crucial nonetheless. First, to the immigrant assimilation literature, we add the important role that political institutions and political information play in forming partisan attachments. Partisanship is not just a new social norm or civic practice that immigrants acquire independent of politics itself. Second, to the party identification literature, we add the critical importance of understanding the absence of any partisan commitments in its own right, rather than treating non-identifiers as a residual outcome. We also add the potentially mixed influence of ideology on partisanship. Finally, to the often disconnected literatures on Asian American and Latino politics, we add the timely reminder that the process by which these groups come to acquire partisan habits may share in common more than they hold distinct. In a surprising number of instances, the

distribution of partisanship across key factors for Latinos and Asian Americans bears a striking resemblance to one another.

These claims are, of course, only propositional given the preliminary nature of our analysis thus far. To further refine and more rigorously test our views on Latino and Asian American party identification, we turn to a multivariate analysis of our sequential account of party identification in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER SIX

THE SEQUENTIAL LOGIC OF LATINO AND ASIAN AMERICAN PARTISANSHIP

[T]he Chinese do not desire to become citizens of this country, and have no knowledge or appreciation of our institutions ... To admit these vast numbers of aliens to citizenship and the ballot would practically destroy republican institutions on the Pacific coast, for the Chinese have no comprehension of any form of government but despotism, and have not the words in their own language to describe intelligibly the principles of our representative system.

1877 Report of the Joint Special Committee to Investigate
Chinese Immigration (from Volpp 2001, 63)

Yes, it's true. Because most of our compatriots have the same experience ... that the state has been inefficient and irresponsible, and it hasn't responded to the demands of its people ... So they come here and they say "I'm not going to get involved in politics [*no voy a vivir lo politico*—literally, "I'm not going to live the political"]

Anonymous (in Jones-Correa 1998, 129)

As we learned in the last chapter, the partisan choices of Latinos and Asian Americans are in important ways different from those of Whites and Blacks in America. Latinos and Asian Americans are not only particularly unlikely to identify with the Democratic or Republican parties, they are also especially prone to express uncertainty and ambivalence about all of the available partisan options. The prevalence of uncommitted "non-identifiers" in both groups sets them apart. Conventional explanations of party identification do help to account for at least some of these patterns. But the accounting is far from complete. Our initial foray into Latino and Asian American partisan choices also pointed to the important role played by incorporation. The partisan patterns that we saw in Chapter Five appear to reflect the role of information acquisition, racial identity formation, and other factors related to the contingent process of immigrant adaptation. In this chapter we investigate, in a more systematic way, how each of these different elements effects the party identification of Latinos and Asian Americans. Our goal is to develop and test a more complete model of partisanship that simultaneously considers each of these different possible explanations.

From Non-Partisan Thinking to Partisan Choice: Modeling Party Identification

How then do Latinos and Asian Americans choose different partisan and nonpartisan options? In Chapter Five, we noted that the modal response among these Americans to the standard party identification question is non-identification. We believe that the widespread preference for this residual category implies a sequential process to partisan choice. We suggest that the process of partisanship acquisition follows two steps: one in which a political newcomer comes to see the triad of Democrat-Independent-Republican as a meaningful choice; a second in which one of these categories is actively chosen.

This sequential logic is ignored in most statistical approaches to modeling party identification. The most common approach, as we mentioned earlier in Chapter One, is to simply place the different categories of party identification side-by-side in a spectrum that ranges from strong identification with the Democratic Party on one pole with Independents in the middle and then strong identification with the Republican Party on the other pole. Under this common practice, the “residual” category of nonpartisanship that we have been considering in the context of Latino and Asian American partisanship – “don’t know,” “not sure,” “refused,” and so on – are treated as missing values and excluded from the statistical analyses. Multivariate tests then usually deploy least squares regression or an ordered, polychotomous choice (probit or logit) regression.

These types of estimators, however, all assume that partisan choices are neatly ordered along a singular continuum – an assumption that we have repeatedly questioned. Are, for example, all those who claim to be Independent really ‘in-the-middle’ between

Democrats and Republicans? A more recent and more careful line of scholarship has begun to model partisanship in an unordered fashion (Alvarez and García Bedolla 2001, Uhlaner and Garcia 2002, Lien et al 2004). The estimator that most of these scholars use and that we employ in other analysis in this book is multinomial logit. This type of estimator allows analysts to capture the effect of each independent variable on each pairwise combination among possible party identification categories without assuming any ordering to the choices (see Aldrich and Nelson 1984, Greene 2000).

But the problem with even this latter option is that respondents who opt not to identify with a partisan category – by indicating that they “don’t know,” are “not sure,” they “do not think” in partisan terms, or simply refuse to answer the question – are treated as missing values. There is a long and contested methodological debate over how to deal with “missing data.” A typical approach is to simply exclude these respondents from the statistical analyses, but the wisdom of this depends on whether the cases are “missing completely at random,” “missing at random,” or “missing not at random.” The fact that these omitted cases represent the plurality of the Asian American and Latino populations in itself indicates non-randomness in these missing observations. Moreover, simply imputing answers where they were not given – whether by mean, deterministic regression, hot deck, or multiple imputation – is unlikely to render empirical verisimilitude to such a high incidence phenomenon.

As we noted earlier, in the case of party identification for immigration-based groups like Latinos and Asian Americans, we believe that the choice not to self-identify as Democrat, Republican, or Independent is meaningful and not random. Specifically, for these immigrant-based groups, we posit that these “non-compliant” responses

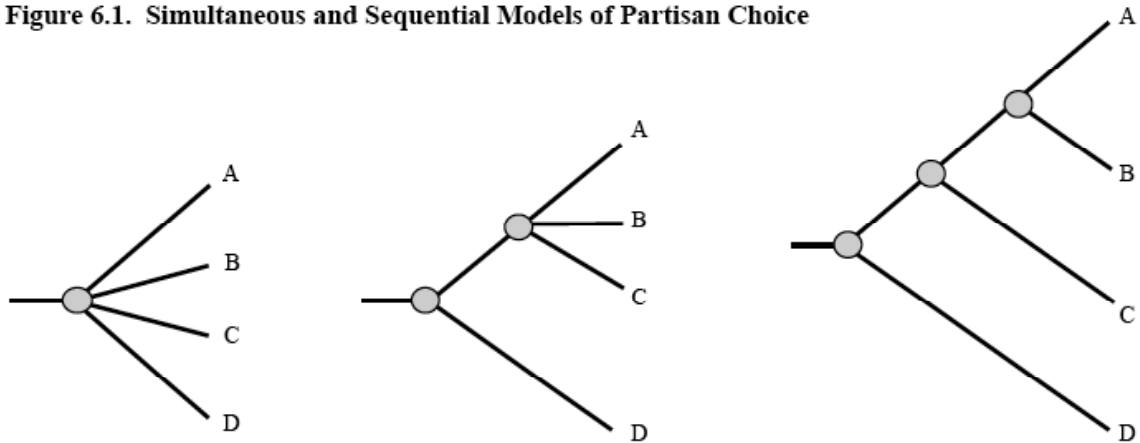
represent choice in the first of a two-stage process of coming to terms with two-party competition in the United States. Before they can place themselves at a point somewhere along the traditional partisan spectrum, political actors must begin to see meaning, content, or value to the partisan options that are typically offered. Only after passing through this stage can individuals engage the second stage where they choose between the three unordered options of Independent, Democrat, and Republican. This sequential logic is ignored in most statistical approaches to modeling party identification.

To help understand these distinctions, we present the four partisan choices graphically in Figure 6.1 above. Schematically, there are three possible ways that the choice of partisanship might be represented. The first decision tree, 6.1a, presents all four categories of partisanship as a simultaneous choice. This model mirrors most of the existing studies of the party identification of Latinos and Asian Americans (and of party identification writ large) and implicitly adopts a limited case of this model in which two conditions are met: (1) the branch leading to residual categories of non-partisanship are truncated as “missing values” for the purposes of analysis; (2) the remaining three categories are ordered in a linear fashion from “Democrat” on one end of the spectrum to “Republican” on the other, and “Independent” in the middle. An alternative rendering of the simultaneous model would be one where all four categories are taken together, but the idea of simultaneously choosing between six pair-wise trade-offs, including odd couplings like choosing to refuse to answer the question or identify as a Republican, independent of all other alternatives, makes this an unattractive approach to modeling Latinos’ and Asian Americans’ partisan choice.¹²⁰ This representation, we suggest,

¹²⁰ Another reason it is unwise to simply add residual categories of non-partisanship together with the choice between “Democrat,” “Independent,” and “Republican,” in a conventional multinomial logit model

misses the sequenced nature of partisan choice, where the partisan thinking and, more broadly, the sense of authorization and authorship over the political realm is prior to the actual choice of identifying with a major party or identifying as an Independent.

Figure 6.1. Simultaneous and Sequential Models of Partisan Choice



a. simultaneous choice

b. two-stage sequential choice

c. three-stage sequential choice

A = “Democrat,” B = “Republican,” C = “Independent,” and D = “apartisanship”

That is, we think the actual process by which Latinos and Asian Americans come to terms with their partisanship in the U.S. context is better represented by Figures 6.1b and 6.1c. The second decision tree, 6.1b, depicts a first stage where individuals either think in partisan terms or do not. Those who do not think in partisan terms opt to remain uncommitted. Among those who are able to make a meaningful choice between the three primary response categories, the second stage is represented as an unordered choice (with pair-wise trade-offs between “Democrat,” “Independent,” and “Republican”). Finally, a third decision tree is to represent partisan choice in the three stages shown in Figure 6.1c. The first step, as in Figure 6.1b, is deciding whether the triad of choice categories is

with a combination of eight pair-wise choices is that it presumes what is called the “independent of irrelevant alternatives” (IIA). It is, however, quite possible that the distribution of Independents, Democrats, and Republicans within the Latino and Asian American populations will differ depending on whether or not the category of nonidentification is an available option.

meaningful or not. Next, respondents decide either to identify with a major party or not. Finally, in Figure 6.1c, respondents then choose either to identify as a Democrat or as a Republican.

Figure 6.1, if you will, presents us with three different ways to think about our dependent variable – each of which comes with a very specific implication about what kind of statistical estimation is appropriate. We are firm in our view that partisan choice for Latinos and Asian Americans is not simultaneous, as shown in Figure 6.1a, but more agnostic between the two sequential models shown in Figures 6.1b and 6.1c since on conceptual grounds, a simultaneous choice between “Democrat,” “Republican,” and “Independent” strikes us as similarly plausible to a further sequential choice between “Independent / partisan” and “Democrat / Republican.” In the models that follow we employ the decision tree depicted in Figure 6.1b but it is worth noting that our results are strikingly similar whether we model a two-stage or three-stage sequence. Critically, the results for the first stage of choice – a key to our argument, given that non-identification at this stage of choice is commonly dropped out of the analysis as “missing observations” – are quite distinct from the results for any other stages regardless of how many stages we model.

Having discussed in some depth how we should think about the “dependent variable” of party identification, our next task is to specify the factors we believe will explain how individuals make decisions about partisan choice. Each of the factors that we outline in some way reflects a process of incorporation into the American political arena and the partisan choices that that arena offers. We start with factors central to classical assimilation theory: time, generation, and socioeconomic attainment. In line

with this straight-line assimilation model, we consider whether party identification varies by nativity (whether foreign-born or born in the United States), the number of years one has lived in the U.S. as an immigrant, third generation (or higher) status, educational level, and family income. Our expectations here are straightforward: Latinos and Asian Americans who are more deeply rooted in American soil by virtue of having lived in the U.S. longer, being wealthier, or being better educated are all more likely to hold stronger partisan commitments and, at least in the case of class gains, to be more prone to identify with the Republican Party.

Beyond this traditional account we test for four additional clusters of variables that we view as associated with a more contingent view of incorporation: ideology, information, identity, and institutions. In terms of ideology, we focus on the role played by assimilation into the basic liberal-conservative divide that separates the two parties. To assess the relevance of both the strength and direction of one's views on this central ideological dimension, we measure liberal-conservative ideological leaning with a series of dummy variables for strong liberalism, weak liberalism, strong conservatism, and weak conservatism - with ideological moderates as the baseline for comparison. As we saw in Chapter Five, with both Latinos and Asian Americans, non-identification with ideological terms that are familiar in the US context – “liberal,” “conservative,” and “moderate” – is very commonplace. In the NAAS, 28% of respondents did not identify with any of these categories; in the LNS, the figure was a whopping 48% of all respondents. Accordingly, we also add a dummy variable for ideological non-identifiers.

The second cluster of variables relates to information and other attributes that individuals acquire through political incorporation. As we have noted, we believe that

direct experience with and knowledge of a political system that is unfamiliar to immigrants and their offspring is a vital precursor to partisan attachments. With political information, we test for party-specific effects as well as one's general interest in politics. In the 2008 NAAS, our measure of party-specific information is whether or not respondents perceive important differences between the two major political parties on an issue of special importance to them. In the 2006 LNS, the measure is an index of two political knowledge items: which party (Democratic or Republican) is more conservative at the national level and which party holds the majority of the seats in the House of Representatives.

Third, we consider the extent to which the identity formation of Latinos and Asian Americans shapes their partisanship. Here our main focus is on racial identity. As with most of the extant political science research on racial identity, our model specification is heavily informed by the concepts of social group identity (Tajfel 1981, Turner et al 1987) and racial linked fate (Dawson 1994). Social group identity theory posits three key, interrelated factors: in-group favoritism, out-group differentiation, and inter-group competition. Linked fate theory posits the key role of a racial group heuristic in the cognitive calculus of well-differentiated social groups like African Americans.

To test for these possible effects of identity formation in this chapter, we specify five variables: (1) pan-ethnic linked fate, (2) perceptions of in-group political commonality, (3) perceptions of out-group political commonality, and (4) the personal experience of being discriminated against. Pan-ethnic linked fate and the belief that Asian Americans share common political interests are two group-specific and context-specific indicia of in-group solidarity. The belief that Asian Americans share common

political interests with non-Asians is our context-specific measure of out-group differentiation.¹²¹ The experience of discrimination is used to tap into the experiential bases of inter-group competition. "Group-ness" here is presumed to be pan-ethnic (i.e., vis-a-vis the umbrella categories of Asian American and Latino), but obviously, the same factors could be salient at the level of group-ness defined by ethnic/national origin.

Finally, we also recognize that ideology, information, and identities are not prefigured factors for immigrant-based populations like Latinos and Asian Americans. As we described these factors in Chapter Five, ideology and identity reflect underlying political predispositions and information reflects the role of political information – cognitive psychological determinants of party identification. As elements in our full account of party identification as political incorporation, these individual-level factors act together with institutionally-located factors. Specifically, we also test for the influence of five institutional measures. Two are within the realm of formal institutional politics: one's voter registration status and one's degree of trust in government.¹²² Voter registration is a critical point of entry into formal political participation for Latinos and Asian Americans (deSipio 1996, Alvarez and Ansolabehere 2002, Nakanishi and Ong 1996). Trust is a foundation of the principal-agent relationship that forms of the core dyad of representative government and also the basis for deciding which sources of political information to rely on and which to discount (Lupia and McCubbins 1998).

¹²¹ This variable is measured as an additive index of three items: perceived political commonality with Whites, African Americans, and Latinos.

¹²² Citizenship is another key institutional marker of political incorporation. Both citizenship and voter registration are potentially important factors in forming partisan attachments. We focus on voter registration for several reasons. First, statistically, the two factors are too closely correlated to allow for both to be profitably specified in the same model. Second, people choose to become a citizen of the United States for manifold reasons—economic, social, cultural, and political—but voter registration is almost singularly political. So much so that the worry about including voter registration into our analysis is that it may be conceptually unclear whether identifying with a party (or thinking in partisan terms) may induce someone to register to vote or whether being registered to vote propels someone to be a partisan.

The remaining institutionally-based measures we test for are within the realm of civil society: membership in civic organizations, ethnic media use, and religiosity. As we noted in Chapter Five, in the absence of responsive and responsible parties, one place that many scholars have recently turned to is the institutional influence of organizations within civil society – community organizations, religious institutions, independent media, labor unions, voluntary associations, and the like. From political philosophers like Carole Pateman (1970) to empirical political scientists like Sidney Verba, Kay Scholzman, and Henry Brady (1995), civic engagement is seen to develop key civic skills like political communication and organizing and in nurturing a sense of psychological engagement and efficacy in the realm of public affairs. These are skills that likely heighten, vis-à-vis our earlier discussion, an immigrant's sense of authorization to become informed and involved in politics and consequently, we posit, to develop a sense of partisanship. These institutional markers, important in their own right, are also potentially key mediators of identity and ideological belief formation and fonts of information.

Taken together, these dimensions of immigrant incorporation – ideology, information, identity, and institutions – allow for a fuller consideration of the contingent and segmented process of immigrant acculturation. Our expectations here vary across the two stages of party identification we examine. In the first stage of thinking in partisan terms, the expectations are straightforward. Latinos and Asian Americans who are more incorporated – whether in terms of ideology, information, identity, or institutions – are more likely to have developed some partisan attachments. In the second stage, we expect incorporation to recede somewhat in importance, while other more conventional partisan

factors emerge as significant. We also expect our results to diverge slightly between respondents who are considering Independence and those that engaged in a comparison of the Democratic and Republican Parties. In the former case, we believe that different aspects of incorporation will be more central.¹²³ In contrast, in the final pair-wise decision between Democratic and Republican Party affiliation, we expect our results to roughly mirror the basis of partisan choice for the general population and say less about immigrant incorporation per se. For instance, to the extent that racialized minorities in America are generally more likely to self-identify with the Democratic Party, we might expect the same for Latinos and Asian Americans. Similarly, to the extent that the Republican Party has "captured" the interests of highly religious Americans, we might expect the same for Latinos and Asian Americans. Finally, to the extent that liberals are more likely to identify as Democrats and conservatives are tied to the Republican Party, we should expect similar links within the Latino and Asian American population.

Finally, we also include background demographic factors that are important statistical control factors – gender, age, and ethnic/national origin, given their salience in racial politics and political behavior research. For Latinos, we test for the independent effects of being Mexican, Cuban, or Puerto Rican, with a mix of Salvadorans, Dominicans, Central Americans, and Hispanics from elsewhere in Latin America as the baseline ethnic/national origin group. For Asian Americans, we include dummy variables for Asian Indians, Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, and Vietnamese, with Japanese Americans as the baseline ethnic/national origin group.

¹²³ To further complicate matters, we also expect that Latinos and Asian Americans may also identify as Independents for some of the same reasons as the extant literature suggests to us that Whites do – out of apathy, a sense of alienation, an inability to differentiate between the two major parties – or identify as Independents for the same reasons that our chapter on African Americans suggests – because their view of politics is not as deeply racialized as that of partisans themselves.

Results and Discussion

Our results are displayed in two tables that sketch the relationships between all of these different factors and partisan choice in the two partisan stages that we have outlined. Each table is derived from a logistic regressions and a multinomial logit regression.¹²⁴ The first stage logistic regression distinguishes between respondents who do not think in partisan terms (i.e., our “residual” uncommitted category) and everyone else (i.e. all those that are willing to offer a response that indicates at least a minimal sense of partisan thinking). The second stage multinomial logit models the three unordered pair-wise choices of Independent, Republican, and Democrat. Unlike most presentations of multinomial logit regressions, we present estimates for every pair-wise combination of the three categories.¹²⁵ For each variable in a regression, we present the parameter estimate and standard error. To help the reader more easily understand the relative impact of each variable, Figures 6.2 and 6.3 show the strength of statistically significant relationships graphically. These figures show "min-max" predicted probabilities: the difference in the relationship to the dependent variable between respondents at the maximum value and minimum value of the explanatory variable.

[TABLES 6.1 and 6.2 and FIGURES 6.1 and 6.2 HERE]

¹²⁴ One concern with these regressions is the possibility of reciprocal causation. Particularly in the case of our identity and institutional variables it is possible that party identification may impact rather than be impacted by the independent variables. Unfortunately, as other scholars have noted, “it is virtually impossible to sort out the precise causal mechanisms that govern relationships” between party identification and other factors (Niemi and Jennings 1991:973). See also Miller and Shanks (1996) on this point. What we can do and have done is re-run the analysis dropping different sets of potentially endogenous variables to show that other relationships in the model are largely unaffected. 6

¹²⁵ 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 pair-wise choice is significant. Hence Tables 6.1 and 6.2 show the results from two separate estimates – first, with “Independent” and then with “Democrat” as the base category.

Incorporation and Partisanship

Rather than summarizing the effect of each of the different independent variables in each stage for each pan-ethnic group, we begin by highlighting the main conclusions that emerge from this analysis. Perhaps the clearest and most obvious finding is that Latino and Asian American partisan choices are intricately linked to range of process related to immigration incorporation. The two tables and figures indicate that in each of the stages, a myriad of factors measuring different elements of acculturation are strongly and significantly associated with partisan attachments.

This is first manifest in the robust role that the traditional straight-line assimilation model plays in shaping the attachments of both Latinos and Asian Americans. As expected, time in the U.S takes on a central role – particularly in the initial stage where respondents choose whether or not to opt into any form of partisan or nonpartisan attachment. Latinos who were born in the United States are 8 percent less likely than their foreign-born counterparts to remain as non-identifiers (see Figure 6.2).¹²⁶ The effect for Asian Americans is very similar at 7% (see Figure 6.2). Similarly, immigrant Latinos who have lived in the U.S. for the longest period of time are 10% less likely to be uncommitted than immigrant Latinos who have lived in the U.S. for only a year. For Asian Americans, the magnitude of this effect is somewhat higher at 14%. For Latinos, the effect of nativity plays a similar role in the second stage in the choice between remaining Independent and electing to identify with one of the two major

¹²⁶ Predicted probabilities are calculated using the SPOST bundle of post-estimation commands in Stata (Long and Freese 2006). The command `prchange`, specifically, calculates the effect of each independent variable on the probabilities of identifying as a Democrat, Republican, or Independent, holding all other specific explanatory variables at their mean values.

parties; foreign-born Latinos are more likely to be non-identifiers than identifiers, and more likely to be Independents than partisans. For Asian Americans the effect of nativity is isolated to the first stage.

Findings regarding the socioeconomic attainment as a measure of the classic assimilation model were largely absent in the first stage.¹²⁷ In the second stage choice between traditional categories of party identification, these factors had a more pronounced effect. For both Latinos and Asian Americans, higher income levels were significantly associated with greater Republican identification than Democratic identification and greater attachments as Independents than as Democrats. With Latinos, there is a further effect of higher education leading to greater support for the Democratic Party (than either identifying as Republican or Independent). For Asian Americans, by contrast, higher educational gains were actually associated with greater likelihood of identifying as an Independent than either a Democrat or a Republican.

The role of incorporation was, importantly, not solely tied to a classic assimilation model. A range of factors relating to more contingent elements of incorporation also played a critical role in shaping Latino and Asian American partisan preferences. To begin with, ideology mattered for both stages of the model. As Figure 6.1 and 6.2 show, for both Latinos and Asian Americans, not placing oneself on a liberal-conservative scale is among the strongest predictors of not identifying with a partisan category in the first stage. Latino ideological non-identifiers were 19% more likely than moderates to be a partisan non-identifier; the parallel figure for Asian American ideological non-identifiers

¹²⁷ In some ways, this conclusion understates the role of class. Further analysis reveals that education and income play an important indirect role for both Latinos and Asian Americans. When we dropped all of the contingent incorporation factors from the model, class gains emerged as significant in the first stage with members of both groups who had attained higher educational outcomes and higher incomes being less likely to remain as non-identifiers.

is 18%. In addition, for Asian Americans, strong ideological identification – whether as a liberal or conservative – leads one towards identifying as a Democrat, Republican, or Independent. For Latinos in this first stage, the only other ideological marker of consequence is identifying as a weak conservative, which is significantly associated with partisan non-identifiers.

In the second stage of partisanship, the general pattern of self-placement as a liberal being associated with Democratic partisanship and self-placement as a conservative aligning with Republican partisanship holds for both groups. With both groups, however, there is a discernible imbalance between the two ideological antipodes: self-identification as a conservative is more forcefully aligned with partisan choices in the second stage than is identification as a liberal. The average impact of strong conservatism on Asian American partisanship, holding all other variables constant at their mean, is 19% while the average impact of strong liberalism is 10%; for Latinos, the parallel figures are 16% and 6%, respectively. While these effects of ideological self-placement may not be that surprising, what is somewhat surprising is that ideological non-identification continues to have an effect on partisanship even in the second stage. Specifically, Latino non-identifiers are significantly less likely to identify as an Independent than a partisan (and also less likely to identify as a Democrat than a Republican); for Asians, this effect only holds between the pair-wise choice of identifying as an Independent or Democrat. These effects, however, are far smaller – the average impact of ideological non-identification on the three-way partisan choice is 5% for Asian Americans and 4% for Latinos.

Beyond the ideological self-placement measure we consider here, we would have

liked to test for the partisan effects of a range of orthogonal issue concerns that are particularly prominent in the Latino and Asian American immigrant communities. Deep-seated concerns like Puerto Rican statehood or North-South relations in Korea that are particularly relevant for sub-groups of the Latino and Asian American population but nevertheless downplayed by the two major parties in America could, we believe, impact the strength and extent of partisan attachments. Unfortunately, neither of the surveys we employ allows for a rigorous assessment of these alternate issue dimensions. However, as part of a preliminary investigation into the role played by these kinds of sub-groups concerns, we performed analyses on the 1989 Latino National Politics Survey that incorporated views on Puerto Rican autonomy, Mexican corruption, and preferences for Latin American immigration - several issue dimensions of distinct relevance to members of the Latino community. Given that the two parties either ignore these issues or stake out moderate and largely indistinguishable positions on them, we expected that strong views on each policy dimension would lead away from attachment to either of the two major parties. That is exactly what we found. In particular, Mexican Americans who believe that economic problems in Mexico are related to governmental corruption, Puerto Ricans who favor Independence for the island, and Latinos who believe Latin American immigrants should be given preferential treatment are all especially unlikely to identify as Democrats or Republicans (analysis not shown). These results imply that Latinos whose views and core concerns do not fit well into either party are unwilling to identify with a partisan option that does little to further their policy interests. Much more work needs to be done on these orthogonal issue concerns, but if these findings are confirmed, it may well be that Democrats and Republicans are both losing support by downplaying policy

dimensions that core segments of the Latino and Asian American populations care deeply about.

The importance of contingent incorporation was also evident in our measures of information. Here, partisan information cues are especially key. The effects are partisan, but in opposite directions. Latinos who can accurately distinguish between the Republican and Democratic parties in Congress are, on average, 11% more likely to identify as a Republican and 4% less likely to identify as a Democrat. For Asian Americans, by contrast, the perception of party differences on an issue of personal salience increases one's likelihood of identifying as a Democrat by 8% and decreases the chances of identifying as a Republican by 3%. For Latinos, there is a further effect of being generally attentive to political matters of increasing one's likelihood of identifying as a Republican. While the data do not allow us to delve more deeply into this result, we speculate that the fact that ideological influences on partisanship are stronger for conservatives and the fact that information cues (at least for Latinos) tip the scales in favor of Republican self-identification signify the degree to which the Republican Party, at least prior to this last year's election, have been successful in defining the terms of polarized political discourse in recent American history. The fact that information cues work in the opposite direction for Asian Americans may hint that the difference in survey years (2006 for the LNS, 2008 for the NAAS) and the relative success of the Democratic Party in the 2008 election in framing partisan messages to the electorate.

Our third cluster of variables that we examine as part of our account of contingent incorporation is Latino and Asian American identity. Here there is a stark difference between Latinos and Asian Americans. For Latinos, a panethnic linked fate orientation is

an important factor in party identification, drawing Latinos toward Democratic partisanship by an average effect of 7%; for Asian Americans, linked fate does not appear to be significant. What is significant for Asian Americans, by contrast, is perceptions of shared political interests with non-Asian racial/ethnic groups. This sense of political commonality leads Asian Americans to be less likely to identify as a Republican by an average effect of 8%. For both groups, the sense of political commonality with other ingroup members is significant and leads to a greater likelihood of being partisan (both Democrat and Republican) rather than Independent. The predicted decrease in one's likelihood of being Independent is 8% for Asian Americans and 9% for Latinos. Finally, for both groups, the personal experience of being discriminated against is also key and pushes both groups away from identifying with the Republican Party. For Asian Americans, this average effect is 8% while for Latinos it is a far more modest 3%. These results as whole show that for *both* Latinos and Asian Americans, racial considerations are significant to their partisan choices. The particular considerations that are brought to bear, however, are in important ways different between the two groups.

We also posited the influence of key institutional markers of contingent incorporation. These factors do turn out to matter and, perhaps unsurprisingly, the markers of incorporation vis-à-vis formal political institutions are more consistent and strong. What is especially notable here is that the effect of trust in government and voter registration is the same for both groups. Latinos and Asian Americans who are registered to vote are both less likely to identify as Independents and also more likely to identify as Republicans. The average effect of voter registration status on decreasing identification as an Independent is exactly the same for both groups at 7%. Similarly, Latinos and

Asian Americans who trust government are both more likely to identify as a Republican. The average effect for Latinos on identifying as a Republican is 9% while for Asian Americans it is 15%.

The effect of the civil society-based institutional measures is somewhat more mixed. For Latinos, ethnic media consumption increases Democratic partisanship by a predicted probability of 5%; the effect of membership in non-religious community organizations is weak and limited to the pair-wise choice between identifying as a Republican or Independent. For Asian Americans, neither ethnic media nor civic participation appear to influence the three-way partisan choice we examine. The influence of ethnic media for Latinos again reinforces our earlier conclusion of the distinctive way in which racial/ethnic status influences partisanship. For both groups, however, religiosity increases the likelihood of identifying as a Republican: for Latinos, the predicted effect is 5% and for Asian Americans, it is 6%. Here again – as before with our discussion of the asymmetric influence of ideological extremism and of partisan informational cues on Republican partisan – we speculate that this one-way partisan relationship of religiosity is probably hitched up to the dominance of the Republican Party in recent years in framing politics in terms of moral and religious considerations.

Of the remaining background controls, there is not much that is surprising. Cubans are the most distinctive Latino group in terms of partisanship, with a predicted probability of 29% less likely to identify as a Democrat than the baseline Latino groups. Vietnamese are similarly most distinctive between Asian American ethnic/national origin groups, being less likely to identify as a Democrat by a predicted probability of 34%.

Overall, these results serve both to affirm the significance of the incorporation

process and to highlight the contingent and multifaceted nature of that process. For immigrant-based groups like Latinos and Asian Americans, understanding party identification is, in many ways, understanding the nature and shape of incorporation into the American political arena. Moreover, some relationships may strike some readers as nearly tautological. For instance, many states allow or require individuals who register to align with a political party and partisan campaigns are often the vehicles through which Americans come to be registered to vote. Similarly, it is hard to imagine why one would choose to identify as an Independent if one sees a meaningful choice between the two parties. These relationships, nonetheless, are important because (as we noted earlier in Chapter Five), political parties and campaigns often view Latinos and Asian Americans as too apathetic or unknowledgeable or distrustful of politics in the U.S. to merit their voter mobilization efforts.

More generally, the importance of the incorporation process for Asian American and Latino politics may seem admittedly simple – perhaps to the point of being too obvious to merit the level of scrutiny we have given in this chapter. Indeed, we are far from the first to recognize the central nature of immigrant assimilation in the politics of these two communities. Other scholars have already highlighted the relevance of incorporation for the politics of the Latino and Asian American communities (Cain et al 1991, Jones-Correa 1998, Cho 1999, Lien et al 2004, Uhlaner and Garcia 2005, Wong 2006). Nevertheless, we believe that this analysis is a significant step forward in that it delineates more clearly the key ingredients of this incorporation process. Our goal is not simply to underscore the role of incorporation but rather to identify exactly which aspects of that process are critical. Incorporation and partisanship acquisition does not simply

happen as a result time in the United States, and the attendant class mobility that allegedly obtains over time and generation according to classic accounts of immigrant assimilation. This analysis in this chapter demonstrates convincingly that there is a crucial informational, ideological, identitarian, and institutional bases to the process of immigrant political incorporation. Whether individual Asian Americans and Latinos choose to join the partisan fray at all and, if they do engage the party structure, which party they choose depends greatly on the extent of their knowledge, trust, and familiarity with the political apparatus of the nation, with their familiarity of and attachment to the basic ideological divide separating the parties, and with the strength of their sense of racial place in the nation.

A Sequential Process

The second major conclusion from our arguments and analysis is that Latino and Asian American partisanship follows a multi-stage, sequential process. In our view, the key in this sequential process is the process of coming to identify with the terms of partisan competition in the United States. Non-identification is a distinctive, yet unexamined aspect of immigrant political incorporation. Given that few studies even acknowledge their existence and fewer still incorporate them in their analysis, our first and primary goal is to better understand non-identifiers and to specify the conditions under which Latinos and Asian Americans come to understand and attach themselves to the conventional partisan categories of Democrat, Republican, and Independent.

So just what are the factors that underlie a reluctance to place oneself on the conventional partisan spectrum? The results suggest that non-identifiers are distinct

along several dimensions. Non-identifiers are apt to be newer Americans – foreign born and recently arrived immigrants. Non-identifiers are also political neophytes – they are less apt to hold strong (if any) ideological views, less likely to be informed about partisan differences or to be generally attentive to politics, and, institutionally, less prone to trust government or to have registered to vote. Non-identifiers are also less disposed to a racialized view of their identity and its relation to politics. The differences are often quite substantial. Not being able to place oneself along a liberal-to-conservative ideological continuum, for instance, increases the chances of being a partisan non-identifier by 19% for Latinos and 18% for Asian Americans. Knowing nothing about which party in Congress holds power or perceiving no differences between the parties on key policy issues further increases the odds of being a non-identifier by 21% for Latinos and 10% for Asian Americans. Latinos who see no common political ground with non-Latinos are 12% more likely to be a non-identifier than their counterparts to who a great deal of commonality; with Asian Americans, this predicted probability is an 8% difference.

These results – and the fact that almost 38 percent of Latinos and 36 percent of Asian Americans can be labeled as non-identifiers – indicate that for immigrant based groups choosing one of the conventional partisan categories that other Americans seem to reflexively associate themselves with is neither effortless nor intuitive. Before Asians and Latinos choose even to express views about the mainstream world of American partisan politics, they first have to decide whether they possess enough knowledge, trust, and understanding of where the parties stand and where they themselves stand. If not, they are likely (as large numbers do) to indicate no preference or settle on a non-compliant response (refusal, “not sure,” or “don’t know”).

Whereas the first stage stands out for almost exclusively reflecting a process of incorporation, the results in Tables 6.1 and 6.2 indicate that second stage is more of a hybrid – reflecting both elements of immigrant political incorporation and also elements of a more mainstream partisan politics. In the second stage, Independents are partly differentiated by markers of immigrant incorporation – like the effect of foreign-born status for Latinos or the status of being registered to vote for both groups. But it is also clear that identification as an Independent is distinct from partisan non-identification. In the first stage, contra expectations from straight-line assimilation theory, education has no effect on partisan identification. In the second stage, education actually has the opposite effect for Asian American from what assimilation theory would predict: Asian Americans who are more well educated are actually *more* likely to identify as Independents, not less.

The differentiation between non-identifiers and Independents is more pronounced when we consider the relationship between ideology and partisanship. In the first stage, no factor is as decisive in discriminating between identifiers and non-identifiers as ideological non-identification, which goes hand-in-hand with partisan non-identification. In the second stage, ideological non-identifiers are actually more likely to be *partisans* than Independents. This opposite and significant relationship suggests a more complex notion of either ideological or partisan identification: it may be that some ideological non-identifiers are low-information partisans; it may also be that Asian American and Latino Independents are ideologically sophisticated, but that a liberal-conservative continuum does not layer over a Democrat-Republican continuum for these populations as trimly as it does for Whites; or it may be that some other aspect of the way Asians and

Latinos understand ideological terms, including non-random measurement error resulting from the way that terms like "liberal," "moderate," "conservative," and "ideology" are translated into Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, and other non-English languages.

The second stage of partisanship shown in Tables 6.1 and 6.2 also demonstrates well-behaving patterns of party identification among Whites. The determinants of the pair-wise choice between identifying as a Republican or a Democrat in particular mirror the established findings on the effect of factors like education, family income, self-placement as a liberal or a conservative, and religiosity. At the same time, there are relationships that are somewhat less expected. The fact that racial considerations are also an influence on partisanship may not be surprising for the two racial minority groups in question, but there are some crucial differences in how identity influences partisanship for Latinos and Asian Americans. For Asian Americans, the effect of identity is rarely found for linked fate and most crucial in pair-wise choices between identifying as a Democrat or Independent and Republican or Independent. For Latinos, the effect of race on partisanship is more pervasive (including ethnic media consumption) and a greater direct effect of linked fate on the pair-wise decision between Democrat and Republican. Also, at a superficial level, we might expect such defining democratic elements as registering to vote or system legitimacy (as measured by political trust) to be neutral with respect to the choice between identifying as a Republican or Democrat. Yet these factors all significantly increase Latinos' and Asian Americans' likelihood of identifying as a Republican. As we noted earlier, however, we think these partisan effects may well emblemize differences in party control, partisan electoral mobilization, and partisan framing of political messages between the Democratic and Republican parties.

A Comparison of Latinos and Asian Americans

Our analysis helps us not only to examine the degree to which competing accounts of how immigrants adapt to a new society come to form (or fail to form) a relationship to the party system and to specific political parties in the United States, it also helps us to consider the degree to which Latinos and Asian Americans are alike and different in fashioning their party identification. It is important to note here, however, that because we are using separate datasets to test our model of party identification for Latinos and for Asian Americans, there is not a perfect correspondence in this comparison. The two surveys employ somewhat distinct sample designs (state-level samples in the LNS; geographically weighted list-based samples in the NAAS), were fielded in distinct years (in an off-election year in the LNS; at the height of the 2008 presidential election in the NAAS), present different question ordering and wording, and so on. With the exception of a difference in our measures of political information, however, the questions that we use to estimate the determinants of party identification for Latinos and Asian Americans are almost identical.

The most striking finding to emerge out of our comparison of the two pan-ethnic groups relates to the often remarkable parallels that underlie the partisan decision making of Latinos and Asian Americans. Especially in the first stage of the model, members of both groups rely on an almost identical list of factors. For both groups the choice of whether or not to remain as non-identifiers is shaped by time, ideology, information, and identity. Moreover, the critical variables for both groups are almost indistinguishable in this initial stage. The plurality of Latinos and Asian Americans who end up as non-

identifiers are likely to be foreign born, to have spent fewer years in the U.S., to hold no clear liberal-conservative views, to have low levels of partisan knowledge, to not be registered to vote, and to have a fairly limited sense of racial identity. Parallels are also present for some aspects of the second stage. Voter registration and political trust increase the odds of identifying as a Republican rather than a Democrat for both groups; experiencing discrimination increases the odds of *not* identifying as a Republican for both groups.

It is primarily in the choice between Democratic and Republican identification that the two groups start to diverge. Here, in the terra cognita of competitive party politics, class is a significant marker for Latinos but not for Asian Americans and racial identity strongly shapes Latino choices while having a less salient effect on Asian American partisanship. Also, we find evidence that information cues have opposite effects for Latinos (drawing them to Republican partisanship) and Asians (beckoning them to Democratic partisanship).

Concerns and Remnants

These findings make a strong case that partisanship acquisition is indeed sequential and that there are multiple dimensions of incorporation that shape whether Latinos and Asian Americans think in partisan terms, and which partisan categories they identify with if they do so. There are a number of aspects of our analysis that remain incomplete, however. Three remainders in particular merit our attention in this concluding section.

First, we noted earlier in this chapter that there are two possibilities in terms of the

sequence of partisanship acquisition. One possibility is to think of party identification in two stages, the possibility we have been pursuing thus far. Another is to model partisanship in three stages: one in which a political newcomer sees little meaning, content, or value to the partisan options that are typically offered; a second in which a rational skeptic comes to see the option of Independent as a reasonable entry point into the partisan world; and a third in which the political actor comes to view the distinction between Democrat and Republican as meaningful one and actively engages the partisan world. A second remainder is that our central theoretical arguments have been about party acquisition as steps toward immigrant political incorporation. We have chosen to take Latinos and Asian Americans as a group, but could also have proceeded by disaggregating our analysis between foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinos and Asian Americans. Third, as De Sipio (1998), Uhlaner and Garcia (2005), Lien *et al* (2004) and others have shown, the political choices that members of different national origin groups make often differ. It may also be that the factors that drive partisanship differ across the groups, and that we should have disaggregated our analysis by ethnic/national origin. In this last section, we briefly consider each of these three remainders in turn.

Party Identification in Three Stages

One important question that we are frankly uncertain about is where to put Independents and third party supporters in the sequence of partisan choice. One possibility is to think of Independence itself an end station and on par with support for the Democratic and Republican Parties. This leads to party identification in two stages, the model we have been examining thus far. We opt for this route in large measure because

the root question in surveys like the American National Election Study present the choices of identifying as a Democrat, Republican, and Independent together. We also opt for this route to be consistent with our approach to modeling partisanship in the remaining chapters (using multinomial logit).

As we noted earlier in this chapter, however, another way is to view think of nonpartisans as an interim way station on the road from non-identification to full-fledged partisan. This latter conceptualization leads to a three stage process – a first stage in which individuals choose whether or not to remain outside the party identification scale altogether, a second stage where they choose to jump into the fray of partisan politics or remain as a nonpartisan spectator, and a final stage, where they choose between the two major parties. While we are convinced of the value of recognizing non-identifiers and placing them alone in the first stage of the sequence, we are open to the possibility that there might be empirical verisimilitude in modeling partisanship as a three-stage sequence. There is no clear empirical test that can definitively rule in favor of one or the other model.

Nevertheless, it is instructive to consider the results of an alternate three-stage model. Table 6.A.1 and 6.A.2 in the online Appendix present that model. To a certain extent, the results indicate that the modeling choice is inconsequential. The two tables show that for both Latinos and Asian Americans there is very little substantive difference between a two-stage model and a three-stage model. One noticeable difference is in the way identity works. Our measures of racial identity are most consequential for Asian Americans in the second stage of identifying as a partisan or Independent, with in-group political commonality pushing toward partisanship and both out-group commonality and

the experience of discrimination pushing toward Independence. For Latinos, identity appears more defining in the end stage choice between identifying as a Democrat and a Republican. Another smaller difference is that civic participation now also appears significant in predicting Republican partisanship for Latinos.

Comparing Foreign-born to U.S.-born

Given the centrality of incorporation in our model of Latino and Asian American partisanship, we also thought it important to repeat our analysis on native-born and foreign-born separately. The results of this analysis are displayed in the online Appendix in Tables 6.A.3- 6.A.6. There are a few differences worthy of note. In the first stage choice between identifiers and non-identifiers, identity is a significant factor for both foreign-born Latinos and foreign-born Asian Americans, but not for their US-born counterparts. In the choice between Democrat and Republican in the second stage, identity is a significant factor for US-born Latinos, but less so for foreign-born Latinos. There is no parallel effect for Asian Americans.

At the same time, US-born Asian Americans look distinct from foreign-born Asian Americans in several ways in the second stage of partisanship. First, class issues come to the fore: for the US-born, greater family income leads to greater Republican partisanship. Second, voter registration has a differential effect by nativity: for foreign-born Asians, voter registration is associated with Republican partisanship; for US-born Asians, it is associated with Democratic partisanship. Third, religiosity is not significant for US-born Asians, but civic participation does emerge as a significant predictor of moving Asians away from Republican partisanship. While these differences teasingly

hint at potential divergences by nativity, it is important to keep in mind that in the NAAS, the US-born sample sizes are quite small, and it is difficult to ascertain whether differences are substantively meaningful or simply a function of sample size. For the most part, a comparison of the foreign-born and native-born tells one simple story. The tables indicate that the processes driving partisanship among the native-born are strikingly similar to the processes driving partisanship among the foreign-born.

Comparing Across Ethnic Groups

Our final remainder is the potentially distinct partisan experiences of different ethnic/national origin groups. In lumping together the constituent groups that make-up the pan-ethnic categories of “Latino” and “Asian American” we have made our analysis much easier. But these efforts at parsimony create concerns of their own. Observers with little more than a modicum of knowledge about these different national origin groups are well aware that they do not constitute a single, coherent whole. Underneath each panethnic umbrella stand a diverse array of national origin groups with varying socioeconomic standing, assorted languages and religions, divergent cultural practices, and perhaps most importantly different politics. As such, it is far from clear that the dimensions underlying partisan choice will be identical for members of each national origin group.

To test this proposition and to see how similar or dissimilar the process of partisanship is for these different groups, we repeated the analysis in Tables 6.1 and 6.2 separately for twelve identifiable sub-groups. The results are found in a series of tables in our online appendix. The LNS allows sub-group analysis for respondents of Mexican,

Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadoran, Dominican, and Central American origin. The NAAS allows sub-group analysis for Asian Indians, Filipinos, Japanese, Koreans, Vietnamese, and Chinese. The same caveats regarding smaller sample sizes apply in general for these sub-group regressions, although we note that the number of Mexicans in the LNS, even after taking account of missing data, is almost 4,000.

Although some important differences do emerge, the main insight from this analysis is that there is fairly consistent story. For the most part these rather different groups choose to align themselves with parties in rather similar fashion. This is especially so in the first stage of partisan choice. Where ideology, information, and identity mattered before with the panethnic group as a whole, they continue to matter for each ethnic/national origin sub-group. Ideological non-identifiers are, across the board, less likely to be partisan identifiers; perceived party differences and voter registration, pretty much across the board, increase one's odds of identifying with a partisan category; where perceived out-group commonality is significant, it always draws Latinos and Asian Americans toward being partisan identifiers. And so on.

In the second stage of partisan choice, we see a similar pattern in the pair-wise choice between identifying as a Democrat or Republican. Ideological self-placement is a predictable guide to this choice, and much more consistently and strongly so for self-identified conservatives than for self-identified liberals. When family income, trust in government, and religiosity are significant it pulls any ethnic/national origin group toward Republican partisanship. And so on. This general pattern also holds for the two other pair-wise choices (Republican-Independent, Democrat-Independent), but the parallels across sub-groups are not as consistent or pronounced.

Conclusion

These findings, *in toto*, present a pretty compelling case that partisan choice among Latinos and Asian Americans is a process of sequential choice: first between thinking in terms of America's two-party system or not; second between remaining an Independent and aligning with either the Democratic or Republican parties. 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 the game of partisan politics. If not, they are likely (as many do) to indicate no preference or settle on a non-compliant response (refusal, "not sure," or "don't know"). Once they gain a toe-hold in the political realm and have sufficient familiarity with the system, they must choose between the two halves of America's party system, or choose to remain an Independent.

These findings also make the case that acculturation in its various forms is a key factor in each stage of this sequential choice. Understanding Latino and Asian American party identification is, in many ways, understanding the nature and shape of Latino and Asian American incorporation into the political arena. Latinos and Asian Americans move along the partisan pathway not only as they spend more time in the U.S. but also in response to their divergent experiences in the U.S. and from the information that is gleaned from those experiences. As Latinos and Asian Americans learn more about the politics of the nation and begin to trust its institutions, they are much more apt to develop ties to one of the parties. Similarly, when they come to understand their own racial positioning in the terrain of American politics and society, they are apt to develop stronger and more Democratic partisan ties. And all of this is cemented within a mix of

formal and informal institutions that Latinos and Asian Americans do or do not encounter. Learning what it means to be an American and learning what it means to be a partisan are deeply interconnected.

As this process of contingent incorporation and partisan learning continues into the future, the potential to impact the partisan balance of power in this nation is enormous. Right now, despite the fact that a large majority of Latinos and Asian Americans, according to exit poll data, appear to favor the Democratic candidate in federal elections, it remains the case that a larger plurality of both Latinos and Asian Americans are choosing to remain on the sidelines without attaching their political colors to either party. As a result, both parties stand to gain potentially great electoral resources from within these immigrant-based populations. To the extent that Latino and Asian American communities continue to become racialized or to the extent that economic inequalities deepen and grow, the prospects for the Republican Party look bleak. To the extent that electoral politics continue to be framed as a debate about patriotism, trust, moral standing, those prospects turn from bleak to brimming for the Republican Party. Yet still, either party can reap vast electoral rewards by controlling their ideological self-definition – what it means to be conservative and Republican, what it means to be liberal and Democratic – and communicating that self-definition in ethnically and culturally sensitive and meaningful way to Latinos and Asian Americans. Either party could, in effect, be the winner of this incorporation process. That is the essence of contingent incorporation. There is not a single clear path and no clear end line of assimilation. Where we go and where the parties end up depends a lot on how they and the rest of American treat these newcomers.

Table 6.1. Determinants of Latino Party Identification: Two-Stage Model ¹²⁸				
	STAGE ONE	STAGE TWO		
	Identifier or Non-Identifier	Democrat or Independent	Republican or Independent	Republican or Democrat
STRAIGHT LINE ASSIMILATION				
Foreign-born	-.44 (.13)**	-.73 (.14)**	-.46 (.19)*	<i>n.s.</i>
Years in US if immigrant	.008 (.004)*	.009 (.004)*	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Educational level	<i>n.s.</i>	.07 (.04)^	<i>n.s.</i>	-.10 (.04)*
Family income	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	.08 (.03)**
CONTINGENT INCORPORATION				
Ideology				
Strong conservative	<i>n.s.</i>	.26 (.14)^	1.63 (.17)**	1.37 (.14)**
Weak conservative	-.52 (.13)**	<i>n.s.</i>	.77 (.18)**	.66 (.16)**
Weak liberal	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Strong liberal	<i>n.s.</i>	.30 (.15)*	<i>n.s.</i>	-.54 (.22)**
Ideological non-identifier	-1.03 (.10)**	.26 (.10)**	.49 (.15)**	.24 (.14)^
Information				
Perceived party differences	.63 (.05)**	.11 (.05)^	.51 (.07)**	.43 (.07)**
General political attentiveness	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	.07 (.03)*	.08 (.03)**
Identity				
Panethnic linked fate	.07 (.03)*	.08 (.04)*	<i>n.s.</i>	-.13 (.04)**
Political commonality, in-group	<i>n.s.</i>	.16 (.04)**	.10 (.06)^	<i>n.s.</i>
Political commonality, out-gp	.08 (.02)**	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Experienced discrimination	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	-.26 (.12)*	-.26 (.11)*
Institutions				
Trust in government	.10 (.04)**	<i>n.s.</i>	.54 (.07)**	.34 (.05)**
Registered to vote	.87 (.09)**	.33 (.10)**	.59 (.15)**	.26 (.13)*
Ethnic media consumption	-.09 (.05)^	<i>n.s.</i>	-.17 (.08)*	-.13 (.07)^
Civic participation	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	.09 (.05)^	<i>n.s.</i>
Religiosity	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	.18 (.04)**	.15 (.04)**
BACKGROUND CONTROLS				
Age in years	.013 (.003)**	.021 (.003)**	.010 (.004)*	-.010 (.004)**
Female	-.26 (.07)**	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	-.22 (.09)*
Cuban	<i>n.s.</i>	-1.03 (.21)**	.40 (.23)^	1.43 (.20)**
Puerto Rican	<i>n.s.</i>	-.50 (.18)**	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Mexican	<i>n.s.</i>	-.40 (.10)**	-.42 (.14)**	<i>n.s.</i>
Constant	-.51 (.34)	-.54 (.39)	-3.19 (.53)	-3.05 (.48)
Number of observations	5894	4156		
Log likelihood	-2860.32	-3636.62		
Pseudo-R-squared	0.20	0.11		

¹²⁸ Cell entries are parameter estimates and their corresponding standard errors. ^ = p<.10 / * = p<.05 / ** = p<.01.

Table 6.2. Determinants of Asian American Party Identification: Two Stage Model ¹²⁹				
	STAGE ONE	STAGE TWO		
	Identifier or Non-Identifier	Democrat or Independent	Republican or Independent	Republican or Democrat
STRAIGHT LINE ASSIMILATION				
Foreign-born	-.44 (.21)**	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Years in US if immigrant	.012 (.005)*	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Educational level	<i>n.s.</i>	-.11 (.05)*	-.17 (.06)**	<i>n.s.</i>
Family income	<i>n.s.</i>	-.07 (.03)*	<i>n.s.</i>	.08 (.04)*
CONTINGENT INCORPORATION				
Ideology				
Strong conservative	.65 (.25)**	<i>n.s.</i>	1.22 (.23)**	1.54 (.23)**
Weak conservative	<i>n.s.</i>	-.38 (.20)*	.72 (.20)**	1.10 (.20)**
Weak liberal	<i>n.s.</i>	.65 (.16)**	<i>n.s.</i>	-.81 (.23)**
Strong liberal	.56 (.19)**	.77 (.18)**	<i>n.s.</i>	-.42 (.20)*
Ideological non-identifier	-.93 (.12)**	.33 (.16)*		<i>n.s.</i>
Information				
Perceived party differences	.58 (.10)**	.34 (.12)**	<i>n.s.</i>	-.30 (.14)*
General political attentiveness	.13 (.07)^	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Identity				
Panethnic linked fate	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Political commonality, in-group	.10 (.06)*	.19 (.06)**	.14 (.07)*	<i>n.s.</i>
Political commonality, out-gp	.04 (.01)**	<i>n.s.</i>	-.06 (.02)**	-.03 (.02)^
Experienced discrimination	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	-.16 (.07)*	<i>n.s.</i>
Institutions				
Trust in government	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	.23 (.05)**	.24 (.05)**
Registered to vote	.74 (.10)**	.25 (.13)*	.55 (.17)**	.30 (.16)^
Ethnic media consumption	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Civic participation	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Religiosity	<i>n.s.</i>	.05 (.03)^	.11 (.03)**	.08 (.03)*
BACKGROUND CONTROLS				
Age in years	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Female	-.17 (.10)^	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
South Asian	.44 (.21)*	<i>n.s.</i>	-1.33(.31)**	-1.03 (.29)**
Chinese	<i>n.s.</i>	-1.11(.24)**	-1.38(.32)**	<i>n.s.</i>
Filipino	<i>n.s.</i>	-.53 (.26)*	.54 (.32)^	<i>n.s.</i>
Korean	<i>n.s.</i>	.48 (.29)^	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Vietnamese	.68 (.24)**	-1.57(.28)**	<i>n.s.</i>	1.47 (.30)**
Constant	.04 (.39)	.87 (.45)	1.48 (.58)	-2.35 (.55)
Number of observations	2890	2139		
Log likelihood	-1422.98	-1951.06		
Pseudo-R-squared	0.14	0.14		

¹²⁹ Cell entries are parameter estimates and their corresponding standard errors. ^ = $p < .10$ / * = $p < .05$ / ** = $p < .01$.

Figure 6.2. Stage One: Identifier or Non-Identifier (LNS)

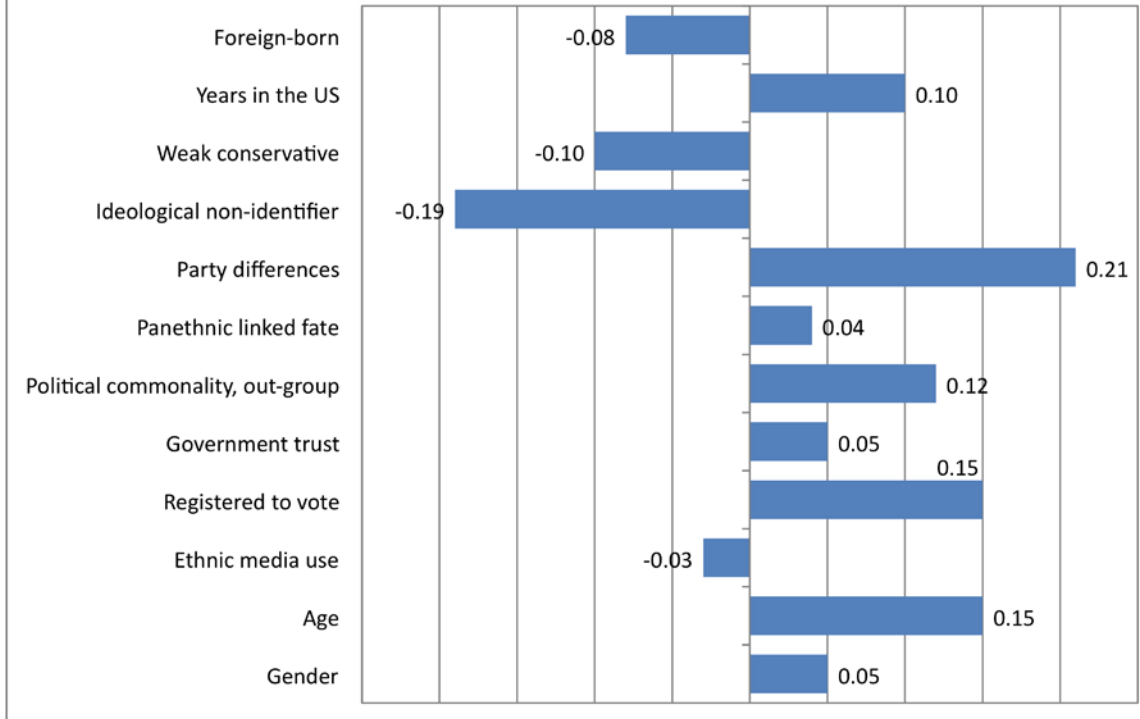
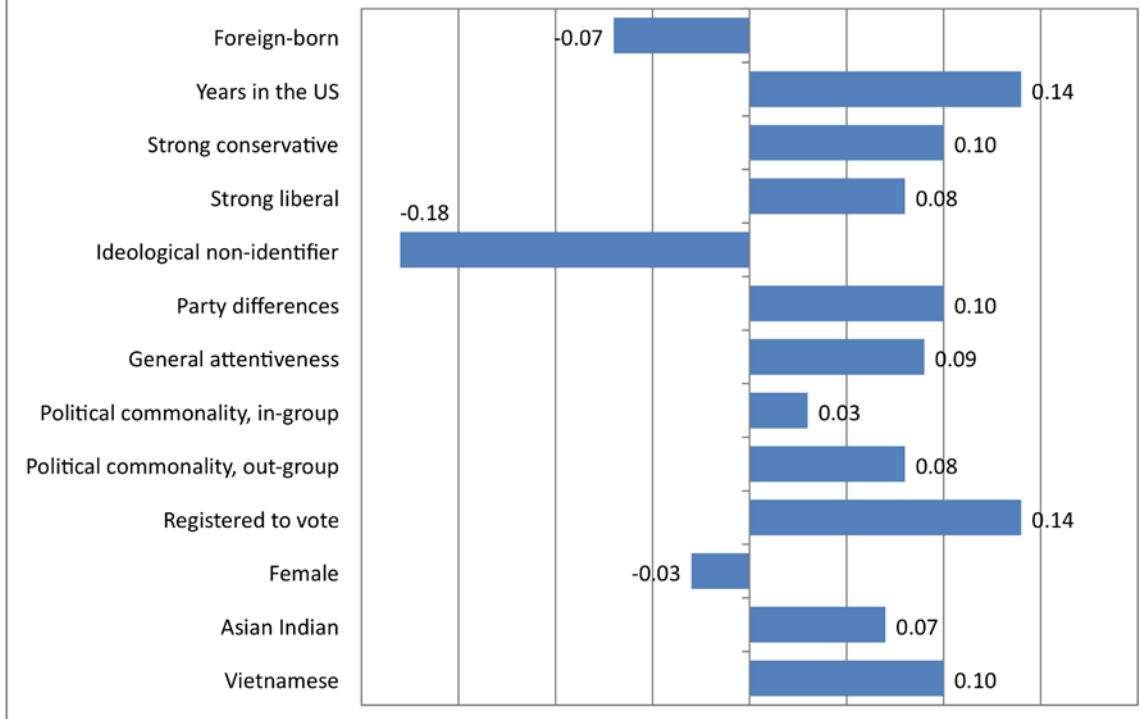


Figure 6.3. Stage One: Identifier or Non-Identifier (NAAS)



CHAPTER SEVEN

BEYOND THE MIDDLE: AMBIVALENCE, EXTREMISM, AND WHITE NON-PARTISANS

I am a man who believes with all fervor and intensity in moderate progress. Too often men who believe in moderation believe in it only moderately and tepidly and leave fervor to the extremists of the two sides.

Theodore Roosevelt (19XX)

The core of America is not racist. It is not hostile to women. It is increasingly offended by gay bashing. Yet it abhors government waste. It believes strongly in fiscal responsibility such as balanced budgets. It is pro-economic growth. It is concerned about the environment. It is intolerant of people on welfare who disdain the notion of work. But it wants poor kids to have school lunches and it wants to spend money to have good schools. In sum, most Americans are sensible, good-hearted, and prudent. The issue, then, is whether there is a political party that can welcome them home.

Senator Paul Tsongas (1995, 90-91)

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 nonpartisanship: 1) ambivalence and 2) extremism. First, nonpartisanship 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, nonpartisanship 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 nonpartisan 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 nonpartisanship 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 Nonpartisanship

From these two basic facts about the American political system, we derive expectations about alternate routes to nonpartisanship. We present what we hope is a deeper account of nonpartisanship that focuses on the ideological underpinnings of Independence. Specifically, we suggest that there are two routes outside of ideological moderation that lead to Independence¹³⁰ among white Americans: 1) extremism, and 2) ambivalence.¹³¹

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

¹³⁰ Since so few white Americans are categorized as uncommitted nonpartisan, in this chapter we focus specifically on those respondents who label themselves Independent.

¹³¹ 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.

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.¹³²

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 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. Alternatively, 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

¹³² 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).

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 (Keel and Wolak 2006).¹³³ 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. 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 hold strong views on an issue that are not well represented by either Party. Americans who have deep seated concerns about a particular issue and who hold views that are strongly liberal or strongly conservative on that issue are unlikely to fit all that well into a two party system where both parties often maintain fairly centrist policy agendas and sometimes ignore issues that could harm their electoral standing (Castles and Mair 1984, Downs 1957). For these ‘issue publics’ either on the left or on the right, there may be

¹³³ Several researchers have already examined the implications of ambivalence on vote choice and other political evaluations (Basinger and Lavine 2005, Greene 2005). The authors of the American Voter (1960) were among the first to show that individuals with what they called ‘conflicted’ issue attitudes were less likely to consistently vote for the same party. Keele and Wolak (2006) present some of the first research to look at the implications of competing values on partisanship. Their analysis suggests that ambivalence can lead to instability in partisanship. We extend their analysis to see how ambivalence affects the direction of partisan choice.

little to draw them to either party. The divide between their views and the approach taken by both parties can be 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.¹³⁴

Hypothesis 2: Individuals who hold strongly liberal or strongly 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 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

¹³⁴ 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.

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 Choice

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 have been 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).¹³⁵ Because these issues define the parties and

¹³⁵ 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

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.

In recent years, two other policy areas, immigration and the war and terrorism, have clearly grown in importance. Evidence as to how strongly views on immigration shape the partisanship of the American public is still limited but it is clear from exit polls in 2004 and 2008 that terrorism and foreign policy both rank very high among the concerns of Americans. It is also clear that the two parties have diverged on matters of national defense. Unfortunately, limited data availability for more recent contests precludes an analysis of mixed views on these two emerging issue arenas.

Mixed views on the three issues arenas that we can examine should 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

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).

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 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, Rasmussen 2007). 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).¹³⁶

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 conservative¹³⁷ and about 14 percent can be considered fiscal liberals who are morally conservative.¹³⁸ In short, non-trivial segments of the American population individually hold views that conflict with each other on these dimensions.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ 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 clear, however, how firmly either of these groups stands behind the Republican Party.

¹³⁷ 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.

¹³⁸ 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

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.

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.¹⁴⁰ 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,

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.

¹³⁹ We could find no other grouping of conflictual views that was held by equally large shares of the public across the three policy areas of race, economics, and social morality.

¹⁴⁰ 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.

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 certainly regularly address both issues but neither 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 fundamentalists 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 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 in most years it incorporates questions that directly assess conventional models of party choice. The principle disadvantage of the NES is that it only contains basic questions on policy. This 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).¹⁴¹ 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

¹⁴¹ 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).

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. 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 party).¹⁴² 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.¹⁴³

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

¹⁴² 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 8, 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.

¹⁴³ 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.

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 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.¹⁴⁴

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 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. These measures are problematic in that they do not allow us to isolate those with truly extremist views. They are, however, the only available policy measures in the NES.

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

¹⁴⁴ In the GSS, the only regularly available measure of political apathy is whether or not the respondent reported voting in the last presidential election.

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. To see if strong pro-environment 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.¹⁴⁵ In each case, we test the robustness of our findings by replacing the scales with dummy variables that isolate those respondents with the most extreme views. These tests generally confirm the results that we present below.

In all of our measures of extremism we explicitly focus on issue publics on one end of the political spectrum. If we thought that extremists on either side of an issue were equally prone to identify as nonpartisan, we would have 'folded' answers to each issue around the midpoint to get a measure of the intensity of preferences. However, since these three social movements are clearly identified with one side of the political spectrum, we did not do so. Those who care deeply enough about the environment to vote almost exclusively on the issue are almost all on the left. Likewise, the women's movement emerged from the left and the religious right is obviously located on the other pole.

Finally, to see if individuals with strong but divergent views and identities are more likely than others to choose Independence, we focus on the partisan choices of two

¹⁴⁵ 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.

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.¹⁴⁶ 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.¹⁴⁷ The exact

¹⁴⁶ Six percent of white respondents fit these criteria.

¹⁴⁷ Since similar measures are not available across most years of the GSS, we cannot test this particular mix of views using the GSS.

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

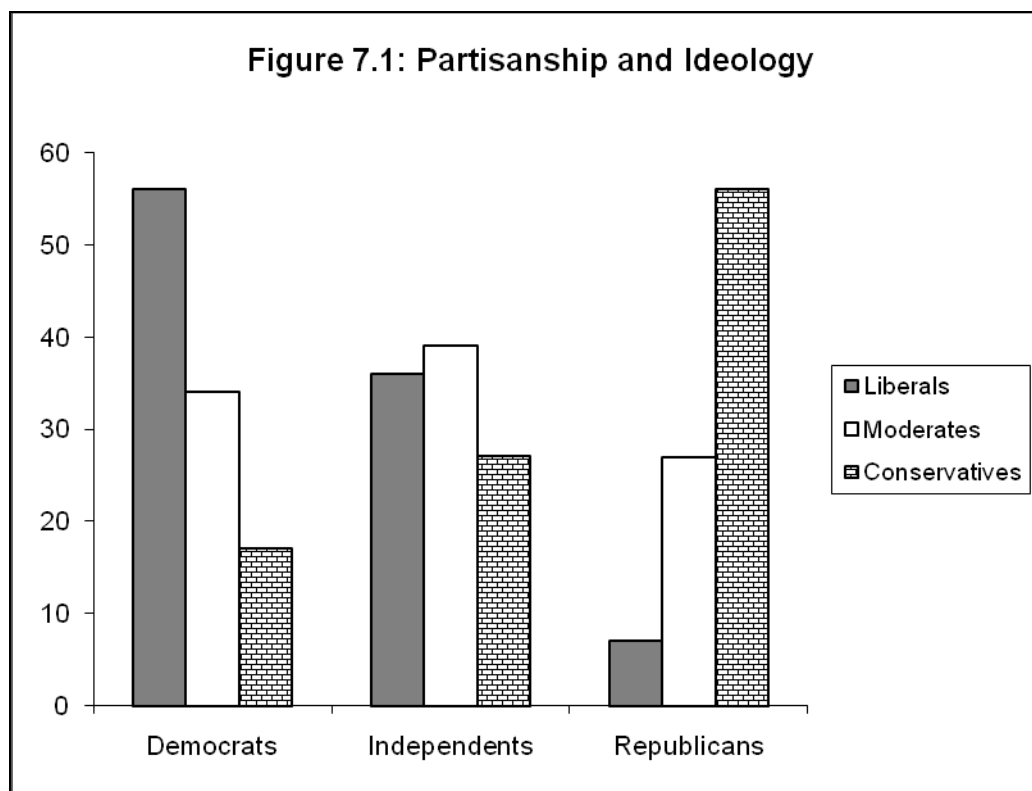


Figure 7.1, which shows the breakdown of partisanship among different ideological groups, leads to several provisional conclusions about the link between

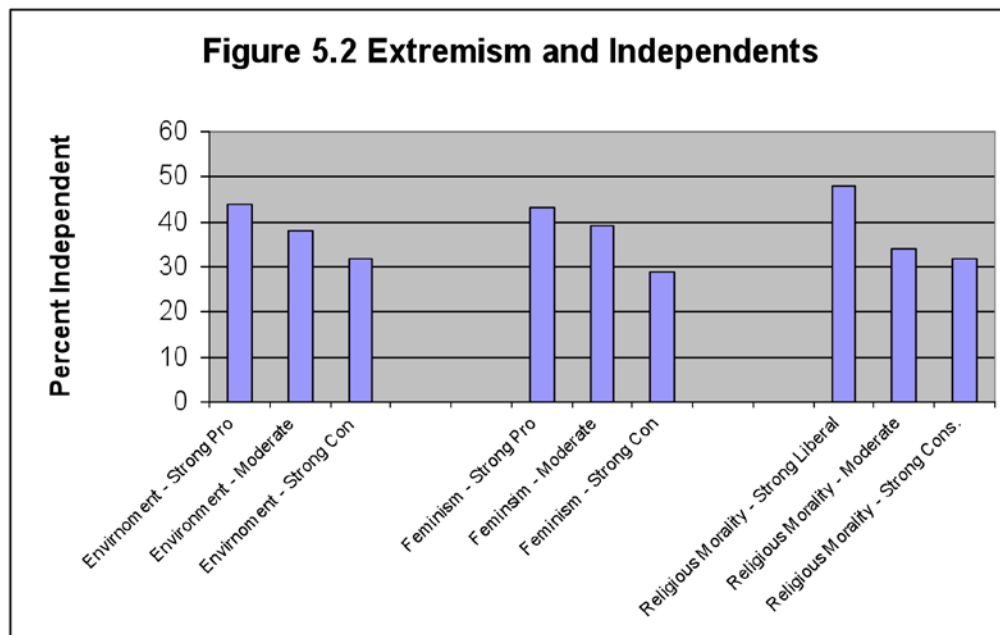
ideology and partisanship. First, the figure provides strong support for the conventional notion that partisanship is based at least in part upon a linear liberal-conservative ideological dimension. As the figure shows, those who identify as liberals are also much more apt than other ideological groups 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.

However, it is also clear from Figure 7.1 that the relationship between ideology and partisanship is far from perfect. The correlation between the two measures is only 0.31. This figure is fairly high for a public opinion survey but certainly not an indication that partisanship and ideology are one and the same. This leads to two slightly less obvious but nevertheless important observations about Figure 7.1 and ultimately about partisanship. First, as can be seen in the figure, Independents are an extremely ideologically 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. Whereas 34 percent of all liberals identify themselves as Independents or non-partisans, only 27 percent of all 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

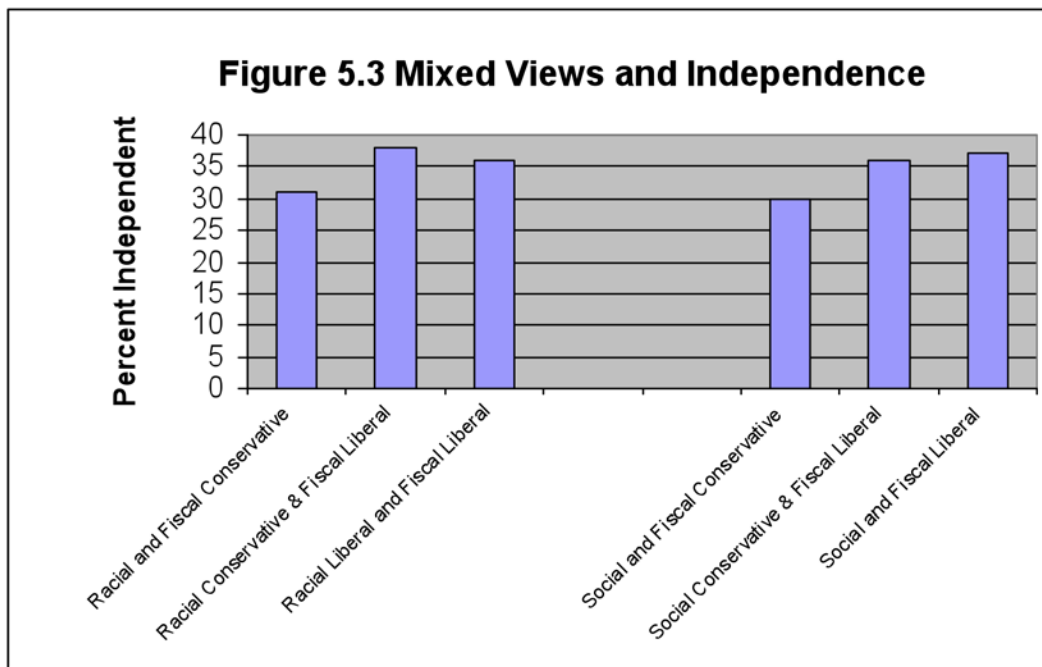
on either pole the difference is even starker. Fully 44 percent of strong liberals identify as Independent. By contrast, only 26 of strong conservatives do so. This suggests – but certainly does not prove – that those on the far left are more apt to abandon the Democratic Party for Independence than those on the right are to abandon the Republican Party for Independence. Ultimately, Figure 7.1 illustrates 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 7.2 and 7.3, 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 groups of individuals end up identifying as Independent.



In the first figure, we look at the relationship between extremism and Independence. Specifically, we 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 Independent¹⁴⁸ – 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 appears to matter and, at least at first glance, it appears to be hurting the Democratic Party on the left.

In Figure 7.3, we perform a similar analysis of the relationship between mixed views and Independence. Here we attempt to see whether two different groups 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 fiscally 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

¹⁴⁸ Significant difference in a pair-wise T-test at $p < .01$.

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 7.3 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 clearer. 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 7.1 we attempt to offer a more complete account of Independence that incorporates both conventional accounts and 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 7.1 ABOUT HERE]

The first and most obvious conclusion to be derived from Table 7.1 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.¹⁴⁹ 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 identify as nonpartisan or Independent.

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

¹⁴⁹ 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 7.1.

Independent or nonpartisan.¹⁵⁰ In each case the magnitude of the effect 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 who 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.

In Table 7.1 we also looked at how views on religious or moral issues affected partisanship. Since many 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 7.1 are informative (if not fully conclusive). What is clear from Table 7.1 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

¹⁵⁰ If one simply singles out those with the most liberal views on the environment or the most liberal views on women's rights (rather than using the scales in Table 5.1), the conclusion is the same. Individuals with strongly liberal views are significantly more likely than all others to be Independents.

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 analysis of other more in depth measures of moral liberalism.

The third conclusion demonstrated by Table 7.1 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 7.1 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 should not spend more to improve the condition of blacks.¹⁵¹ 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 Table 7.1 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 7.1 reveals, those who simultaneously oppose abortion and who seek more government spending and services are not especially apt to identify as Independents.¹⁵² 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

¹⁵¹ 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.

¹⁵² In alternate tests, we also singled out those who are both socially liberal and fiscally conservative but again found no link to Independence.

fiscal liberals might seem themselves as liberal and identify with the Democratic Party regardless of their social policy views.¹⁵³

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 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 7.1 (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 noticeable 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.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ 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 but see Goren 2005). 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.

¹⁵⁴ 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

Finally, to try to further understand both these ambiguity effects and how extremism leads to independence, we re-ran the analysis in Table 7.1 using a multinomial logistic regression. This additional analysis 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 (analysis not shown).

Alternate Specifications: The GSS

The results to this point strongly suggest that there are multiple routes to Independence. Using quite 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 7.1 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 7.2 in the form of a logistic regression modeling

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.

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.¹⁵⁵ Again, question wording, coding, and descriptive statistics for these measures are detailed in the online 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 7.2 reconfirms the tie between 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.¹⁵⁶

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

¹⁵⁵ The principal disadvantage of the GSS as is visible from the model in Table 7.2 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.

¹⁵⁶ 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.

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.¹⁵⁷ 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 chapter.

Table 7.2 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

¹⁵⁷ Alternate tests similarly indicate that Evangelicals and those who identify themselves as religious fundamentalists are especially unlikely to identify as Independents.

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 7.2 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 7.2, we obtained similar results. The results in the online 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.

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 2000.¹⁵⁸ 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 do believe that these results are telling us that neither the ambivalence story nor the extremism story is confined to a particular time or place. These two dimensions likely 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 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 augmented.

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

¹⁵⁸ Similarly, with the GSS we can only go back to 1972.

abandoning the Democratic Party in large numbers, Americans on the right appear to maintain their allegiances to the Republican Party. In Table 7.3, 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 the online appendix illustrates, those with

views on the far left are not retaining some sort of allegiance to the Democratic Party while choosing to identify themselves as Independent . Strong liberals are especially apt to identify as pure Independents as well. 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 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.¹⁵⁹ 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 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

¹⁵⁹ 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.

ideological continuum, strong liberals place the two parties significantly closer together on a range of basic policy issues than do strong conservatives.¹⁶⁰ 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.¹⁶¹ In short, strong liberals are less apt to see large partisan differences and more apt to feel ideologically distant 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.¹⁶²

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 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 7.3, the interaction term is

¹⁶⁰ 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.

¹⁶¹ 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.

¹⁶² All of this is ultimately reflected in 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.

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.¹⁶³ 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 particularly likely to identify as Independent in 2000 – the year the Ralph Nader ran a third party campaign that was primarily 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 future electoral contests.

Discussion

¹⁶³ 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.

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. Past research on political participation suggests that such efforts will be ineffective. 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. We have identified what we think are the most important sources of partisan ambivalence but issue based partisan ambivalence could certainly be more extensive than what we have shown here. The authors of the *New American Voter* have shown that even in an age of heightened party polarization and greater issue alignment, only 15 percent of Americans hold consistently liberal or consistently conservative issue positions (1996:354).¹⁶⁴ 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.

¹⁶⁴ Similarly, Rasmussen reports that only 33 percent of Americans claim either to be both fiscally and socially conservative or both fiscally and socially liberal but the survey asked no specific policy questions (2007).

**Table 7.1: The Different Dimensions of Independence (NES)
(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 7.2: The Different Dimensions of Independence (GSS)
(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 7.3: 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

CHAPTER EIGHT

NON-PARTISANSHIP AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

The perverse and unorthodox argument of this little book is that voters are not fools. To be sure, many individual voters act in odd ways indeed; yet in the large the electorate behaves about as rationally and responsibly as we should expect, given the clarity of the alternatives presented to it and the character of the information available to it.

V. O. Key (1966, 7)

[T]he inference that the 'captive' consumer (or voter) has 'nowhere else to go' is the epitome of powerlessness

A. O. Hirschman (1970, 70)

Throughout this book, we have sought to understand the roots of non-partisanship. In this chapter, we shift from the roots of nonpartisanship to its behavioral consequences. We do so for two reasons. First, in a democratic polity where votes count and who wins and who loses depends critically on choices in the voting booth, we are likely to care more about non-partisanship if it can be linked to particular patterns of behavior. Identity matters but actions may matter more. If one of our goals is to assess the significance of nonpartisanship, we need to see how an identity as independent or nonpartisan affects electoral choices across different contexts.

The second reason to focus on behavior is a wide-ranging suspicion that many, if not most, Independent identifiers are not independent at all but are, in fact, closet partisans. In light of this suspicion, it is important to determine just how regularly nonpartisans remain loyal to one party and to assess the ways through which nonpartisans might express reservations about the two major parties.

Over the course of this chapter we will examine the entire range of choices that are available to nonpartisans in electoral contests. A key to understanding the behavioral implications of nonpartisanship, we believe, is to look not just at the degree to which

nonpartisans act like partisans by voting for the party that they lean towards but rather to focus on the degree to which nonpartisans seek out other alternatives. If, as we have suggested throughout the book, nonpartisans often do not fit neatly into the partisan divide and are not particularly attracted to either major party, then logically we would expect many nonpartisans to be searching for alternative courses of action. To consider these alternatives, we adapt Albert Hirschman's *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (1970) to the case of electoral competition in a party duopoly. In our adaptation, nonpartisans have three options. They can exercise an exit option and abstain entirely from involvement in a given electoral contest.¹⁶⁵ Nonpartisans can also choose to actively voice opposition to the party they lean toward. There are two possible forms this voice can take.

Nonpartisans can vote for a third party candidate – an action that might be viewed as a sign of dissatisfaction with the party duopoly.¹⁶⁶ Alternatively, nonpartisans can use voice to support a candidate from the major party that they are not normally associated with – an action that might be attractive to voters who are unhappy with 'their' party's current practices. Finally, nonpartisans can – given some kind of party affiliation – choose to remain loyal by voting down party lines. Only after examining the degree to which nonpartisans choose each of these options, will we know the full behavioral implications of not having a party to call one's own.

Showing that nonpartisans, as a group, are more or less apt than partisans to choose exit, voice, or loyalty is, however, only the first step in the process of evaluating

¹⁶⁵ This is likely to be an especially attractive alternative for members of the public who are uncertain about the choices that are available to them and who do not yet trust actors in the political system to represent their interests.

¹⁶⁶ For nonpartisans who are ambivalent about what the parties are offering or who have strong concerns about issues that are not being addressed by either party, this is likely to be an especially appealing option.

the implications of nonpartisanship. As we have tried to show in the previous chapters, nonpartisans come in all kinds of different stripes. The road to nonpartisanship is wide and carries a range of different travelers. These nonpartisan travelers emerge from different racial and ethnic backgrounds and often have different motivations for choosing nonpartisanship. We believe that these different backgrounds and motivations should not all lead to the same behavioral outcomes. Thus, in this chapter, we break down the nonpartisan population into different groups to see how the consequences of nonpartisanship vary within different segments of the population.

We choose to break down the population along three different dimensions: 1) by self-identified type, 2) by context, and 3) by race/ethnicity. We choose these three dimensions, not merely to complicate the analysis but rather because there are logical reasons to expect distinct behavioral patterns to emerge in each case.

To distinguish between different types of nonpartisans, we begin by simply looking at how individuals identify themselves. Typically, in surveys nonpartisans can choose to identify themselves as pure Independents who profess no leaning toward either party, as independent leaners who claim independence but who later admit a preference to one party, or as unwilling or unable to state a partisan preference. We call these three groups pure Independents, Independent leaners, and non-identifiers. Assessing the behavioral implications of these first two groups of nonpartisans is particularly important in light of Wolfinger et al's assertions about the partisan proclivities of Independent leaners. In *The Myth of the Independent Voter*, these authors assert that leaners are really partisans in disguise. If true, we should be cautious about lumping leaners in with pure independents who may be much less prone to remain tied to one party.

Isolating and considering the behavior of non-identifiers may be equally important. We believe that refusing to use the term Independent and instead offering responses like no preference or don't know may, in and of itself, be a signal of a unique set of motivations and behaviors. If we are right and non-identifiers are signaling a lack of trust in the American party system and/or uncertainty about the choices that they have to make, then there is reason to believe that this group of nonpartisans will be particularly likely to abstain from voting altogether and particularly unlikely to vote consistently for a single party when they do participate. Although this non-identifier category has often been ignored in conventional studies of party identification, individuals who so identify represent a reasonably large segment of the nonpartisan population and, as such, warrant more attention.

We also expect that the behavioral implications of nonpartisanship will vary considerably across different contexts. How loyal or disloyal a given individual will be to a given party will surely depend on that individual's overall attachment to that party but it will also just as surely depend on the attractiveness of the candidates in a particular contest and the kinds of options that are available to that individual in that contest. All elections are far from equal in terms of the options that they offer nonpartisans. Most American elections do not, for example, give nonpartisans a chance to voice their grievances by voting for a third party. But that is not always the case. In some contests, a third party candidate is present and in more exceptional cases that third party candidate is not simply present but also attractive enough to have real chance of winning. Moreover, it is not just the presence and attractiveness of the third party option that will

vary. The attractiveness of the two major party candidates to different segments of the nonpartisan community will also vary across different electoral contexts.

In all cases, the pattern of exit, voice, and loyalty will depend greatly on the availability and appeal of each these different alternatives. This means that if we want to understand what nonpartisanship means for behavior we have to expand upon the limited number of contexts that have been examined in past studies to also include elections that offer nonpartisans more diverse choices. This also means that existing studies like *The Myth of the Independent Voter* which assess the partisan proclivities of nonpartisans by focusing exclusively on electoral contests where the two parties are dominant and where partisan defections are highly unlikely may reach inaccurate conclusions. Thus, in this chapter, we examine the behavior of nonpartisans and partisans in a wider range of elections and in particular include contests where third party candidates are present or where the cast of candidates is more diverse than the typical two-party contest.

Race is also a critical variable in all of this. As we have repeatedly noted, the story that has been told of nonpartisans in the past has largely been the story of white Independents. That is also true of the story that has been told of the behavioral implications of Independence. What we know of the actions of Independents is derived almost exclusively from the behavior of white Independents. But if white independents identify as nonpartisan for different reasons than non-white Americans, we should not expect nonpartisanship to mean the same thing for America's different racial and ethnic groups and we should not expect America's different racial and ethnic groups to make the same choices when faced with the alternatives of exit, voice, and loyalty. If we truly

want to understand how nonpartisanship works to effect political behavior, we need to consider and analyze each racial group separately.

As we will see in the rest of this chapter, each of these distinctions is important in the choices citizens make. Not only will we find clear evidence that nonpartisanship matters in terms of behavior but we will also find ample indication that different kinds of nonpartisans make different choices in different contexts. What's more, most of these patterns will vary dramatically across racial and ethnic groups. Thus, the story of nonpartisanship needs to be told not from a single (white) perspective in the context of a single type of election but rather with information that takes into account different partisan categories, different contexts, and different racial and ethnic groups. Only then, do we get a complete picture of the significance of choosing not to identify with either major party.

Nonpartisans vs Partisans

We begin this empirical investigation into the consequences of nonpartisanship by looking at the simplest of possible comparisons between the actions of nonpartisans and those of partisans. Our question is: are nonpartisans different? Does failing to identify with either major party signal a detachment from both parties and a willingness to pursue other electoral alternatives?

In Table 8.1, we look at each of the three options – exit, voice, and loyalty – available to citizens in any electoral contest. Exit in this case is the proportion of adult citizens who choose not to vote.¹⁶⁷ Voice measures the proportion of voters that favor a

¹⁶⁷ Most of the voting data reported in this chapter are based on self-reports. There is a fair degree of error or bias in these self-reports. Validated vote tests suggest that roughly 10 percent of the population falsely

third party candidate.¹⁶⁸ Both of these measures are based on data from the cumulative file of the NES and both focus on behavior in presidential contests. Our measure for loyalty is slightly more complex. To gauge loyalty, we measure support for the same party across several elections. Specifically, to qualify as loyal, an individual has to vote for the same party across three different contests in the same election year.¹⁶⁹ We focus on consistent voting across Presidential, Senatorial, and House elections since those are the three contests that the NES regularly queries respondents about.¹⁷⁰

This differs from work by Keith et al (1992) and other studies of Independents in which loyalty is typically assessed by focusing on the vote in a single contest. If in one election you vote for the party that you are attached to, you are considered loyal or partisan. There are, however, real concerns with assessing loyalty by focusing on a single contest. Logically, it seems a stretch to label someone as loyal (or even as partisan) if they vote for a particular party once. Rather, an assessment of the consistency with which an individual supports the same party over a series of elections seems a much more appropriate gauge of loyalty. Equally importantly, by focusing on only one electoral

indicates that they voted in a typical electoral contest (Anderson and Silver 1986). This means that the numbers of voters will generally be inflated in our tables. Moreover, there is evidence that certain groups in the population are more prone to over-report voting. Abramson and Clagget (1984) and Shaw et al (2000), for example, have shown that racial and ethnic minorities over report voting more regularly than whites. But none of this tells us whether the patterns of exit, voice, and loyalty across partisanship would change if we were able to report validated voting records. Sigelman's (1992) research suggests that the substantive factors that drive non-voting are largely unaffected by the use of the validated vote but, more work needs to be done before we can conclude that over reporting does not affect any of the relative participation rates that we present here.

¹⁶⁸ Another form that voice can take in these elections is voting against one's own party by supporting the other major party. Such crossover voting is not included in Table 1 because it is impossible to measure for nonpartisans who claim no allegiance to either party.

¹⁶⁹ The loyalty figures in Table 8.1 are calculated only for those respondents who vote in all three contests. Thus, any respondents who choose to exit from one of the contests and respondents from states that do not have a senatorial contest in the year of the survey are dropped from the loyalty analysis.

¹⁷⁰ We get similar results if we drop Senatorial contests or add Gubernatorial contests which are asked about in fewer years of the survey.

contest, there is a danger that any correlation between the vote and partisanship will be spurious. If voters switch their partisanship to match their vote in a particular contest, then there may be a close empirical link between partisan leaning and the vote without any causal chain from partisanship to the vote.¹⁷¹ By looking at loyalty across more than one election, we begin to address this issue of endogenous partisanship.¹⁷²

We divide the population into three groups: Democrats, Nonpartisans, and Republicans. As we have done throughout the book, we include Independent leaners within the nonpartisan category. In subsequent analysis, we will look at leaners in isolation but for now, we simply assess the degree to which self-identified nonpartisans as a whole differ from their partisan neighbors.

Table 8.1. The Implications of Nonpartisanship: Exit, Voice, and Loyalty			
	<u>Exit</u> Non-Voters	<u>Voice</u> Third Party Voters	<u>Loyalty</u> Consistent Party Voters
Democrats	26%	2%	64%
Nonpartisans	47	7	51
Republicans	19	3	68

The pattern in Table 8.1 is clear. Across each of the alternatives, there are large differences between nonpartisans and partisans. In terms of exit, nonpartisans are roughly twice as likely as Democratic and Republican identifiers not to participate in the typical presidential contest.¹⁷³ The same pattern is evident if we were to focus on midterm

¹⁷¹ Moreover, if nonpartisans or subsets of the nonpartisan population are particularly apt to change their partisanship to align with their vote, then comparisons of the loyalty of nonpartisans and partisans will be skewed.

¹⁷² Later we will focus on over time change for the same individual to more fully assess the extent to which nonpartisans switch their partisanship from one election to another and the effect that this may have on assessing loyalty.

¹⁷³ How we should interpret this non-participation is up for debate. For some, this high rate of exit among nonpartisans is reason enough to label nonpartisans as apolitical and to dismiss them from further analysis.

elections where fully 63 percent of nonpartisans choose to exit compared to only 39 percent of Democrats and 33 percent of Republicans.¹⁷⁴

Nonpartisans are also more likely than partisans to voice opposition to the two major parties. Although the overall numbers exercising the voice option are small, nonpartisans are two or three times more likely than partisans to support a third party candidate in presidential elections. Among nonpartisans 7 percent vote for a 3rd party candidate on average, compared to 2 percent of Democrats and 3 percent of Republicans. Moreover, these figures may be understating the desire of nonpartisans to voice support for an alternative party or candidate. In most of these contests, there is no third party candidate on the ballot in most states and in none of these elections does the third party candidate have a real chance of winning the contest. As we will see, when more viable non-major party options are offered, the number of nonpartisans willing to exercise voice surges.

Finally, there is a wide gap between nonpartisans and partisans in terms of loyalty. About two third of partisans (64 percent of Democrats and 68 percent of Republicans) support the same party across presidential, senatorial, and house contests in the same year. By contrast, only about half (51 percent) of all nonpartisans do so. The difference is just as stark if we examine the consistency of an individual's voting patterns

We offer an alternate interpretation. Many nonpartisans may be opting out of the election not because they don't care about politics generally but rather because they don't care much about the particular alternatives that are being offered in the current contest. The evidence for at least some racial groups seems to fit this latter interpretation. Our analysis of the LNPS indicates that among Latinos, nonpartisans are just as active as partisans across a wide range of political activities that do not involve direct contact with a political party. This includes attending a meeting, protesting, signing a petition, working to solve a problem, and participation in local politics. Latino non-partisans are not, generally speaking, apolitical.

¹⁷⁴ If we look at the consistency of an individual's participation over time, it is once again clear that nonpartisans opt to exit much more regularly than partisans. NES panel data indicate that across a four year period, on average 35 percent of nonpartisans do not vote in any presidential or congressional elections. Only half as many partisans exit in all of these contests (18 percent).

over time. Using NES panel data from the 1950s, 1970s, and 1990s, we found that most partisans remained loyal, while most nonpartisans did not. Across two presidential and two congressional votes over a four-year time span, we found that most partisans (61 percent) voted consistently for the same party, whereas most nonpartisans did not (44 percent voted consistently). In short, when loyalty is assessed by measuring support for the same party across more than one election, there is a clear divide between partisans and non-partisans.

If we ask respondents about their partisan voting histories over a longer time frame, we get even starker differences in the degree partisans and nonpartisans remain loyal to one of the major parties. When asked if they have “always voted for the same party for president in past,” nonpartisans generally contend that they are not consistent party supporters.¹⁷⁵ Only 20 percent claim to have always supported the same party. Republicans and Democrats are two and three times more likely to claim to have been loyal (63 and 51 percent respectively claim to be consistent party supporters). Similarly, when the NES asked respondents whether or not they had voted a straight party ticket in the most recent state elections, the gap between partisans and nonpartisans was substantial. Some 59 percent of Democrats and another 55 percent of Republicans indicated that they had voted along party lines at the state level, while only 32 percent of nonpartisans indicated that they had done so. Judged by loyalty over time or across context, the vast majority of nonpartisans are not loyal, while the clear majority of partisans are. This is no small divide.

¹⁷⁵ It should be noted that valid concerns have been raised about the accuracy of such retrospective data (see Brody 1991 and Wolfinger et al 1992). For that reason, we rely primarily on actual voting histories. However, since panel data only cover a four year period, it is important to at least try to gauge behavior and consistency over a longer time frame.

Combined, these three patterns suggest that nonpartisans are behaviorally very different from partisans. It would be hard to label as partisan a group that tends not to vote at all and that when it does vote is especially inclined to vote for third party candidates and often switches support back and forth between the two parties. Put succinctly, nonpartisanship is not only important when we consider identity, but it also matters when we consider behavior. The fact that nonpartisans, as a whole, are quite different from partisans is often lost in discussions of how different subsets of the nonpartisan population vote, but it is one that is well worth noting.¹⁷⁶

Distinctions among Nonpartisans

It is clear that nonpartisans are, as whole, very different from nonpartisans. What we cannot yet tell is whether these overall figures mask important differences between various groups within the nonpartisan population. Given fairly widespread concerns that certain members of the nonpartisan population are not as independent of partisan attachments as they claim to be, an important next step is to break down the nonpartisan population into sub-populations that we might expect to be more or less partisan in their behavior. In light of past research, the most important group to assess is Independent leaners – those who profess to be Independent but then admit to favoring one party over the other. If Wolfinger and others are correct, these leaners should behave just like partisans and quite unlike pure Independents. Leaners are not, however, the only subset of nonpartisans that warrants attention. Those respondents who are unwilling or unable

¹⁷⁶ This overall pattern is important in light of the fact that independent leaners, the group who are supposed to act like dyed-in-the-wool partisans, make up the bulk of the non-partisan population. If leaners really are partisans, the overall differences between nonpartisans and partisans would likely be more limited.

to label themselves with any of the conventional categories and who instead other difficult to code responses like “other”, or “no preference” are, in our view, equally worthy of investigation. If these non-identifiers represent individuals who are uncertain about the partisan environment and who lack the knowledge or the level of trust to place themselves as partisans or even as Independents, we should expect them to especially prone to exit and particularly unlikely to consistently support the same party when they do vote. As such, they may represent one of the more interesting and impressionable segments of the American population.

Breaking down the nonpartisan population into these three categories leads to one familiar observation and at least one surprise. The familiar observation is that leaners represent the bulk of the nonpartisan population. At least when we aggregate across all racial groups and employ the NES sample, independent leaners make up the majority of the nonpartisan population.¹⁷⁷ Of all those who qualify as non-partisans – that is everyone who does not immediately admit a preference to either major party – some 57 percent identify themselves as leaners. Leaners are therefore a critically important piece of the nonpartisan story.

But leaners are by no means the entire story. The surprise comes when we consider non-identifiers, a category that includes those respondents who neither claim to identify with a major party nor label themselves as Independents. In spite of the fact that this group has generally been ignored by studies of nonpartisans, its members make up a

¹⁷⁷ Since it is impossible to derive the number of non-identifiers from the questions available in the NES cumulative file, the figures for the proportion of nonpartisans who identify as non-identifiers, independent leaners, and pure Independents are based on the total population of three available NES panel surveys from the 1950s, 1970s, and 1990s. Figures describing the behavior of non-identifiers are based on the same panel data. Data on the behavior of other types of nonpartisans and the two partisan categories that are displayed in subsequent tables are, however, based on data from the entire NES cumulative file.

sizeable portion of the nonpartisan population. In the NES, which for a variety of reasons understates the size of this population, this group still represents 20 percent of all nonpartisans.¹⁷⁸ Since there is reason to suspect that their behavior may be different, we investigate their partisan choices as well.

In Table 8.2, we assess the actions of these different segments of the nonpartisan population across the same three alternatives of exit, voice, and loyalty in presidential elections. For comparison purposes we also include the behavior of strong and weak partisans in the table. The measures are identical to those in Table 8.1.

Table 8.2. Exit, Voice, and Loyalty across Different Types of Non-partisans			
	<u>Exit</u> Nonvoters	<u>Voice</u> Third Party Voters	<u>Loyalty</u> Consistent Party Voters
<u>Partisans</u>			
Strong Partisans	15	1	81
Weak Partisans	27	4	65
<u>Nonpartisans</u>			
Independent Leaners	27	7	62
Pure Independents	39	8	51
Non-identifiers	52	7	40

The first point to note about Table 8.2 is that different subsets of nonpartisans are far from identical in their behavior. The degree to which different segments of the nonpartisan population choose exit, voice, or loyalty does vary – and sometimes dramatically. The gap in terms of exit is the most pronounced. Here the major divide is between leaners and non-identifiers. While the vast majority of leaners choose to vote (only 27 percent fail to vote in presidential elections), most non-identifiers opt to exit (52

¹⁷⁸ This figure does not include those who volunteer no answer to the party identification question – a group of respondents who we suspect should be included with non-identifiers. If this group were to be included, non-identifiers would likely grow to about a quarter of the nonpartisan population. Those who provide no answer to the party identification question represent between one and two percent of the entire respondent population. As we will see, both question wording and the nature of the survey sample, greatly affect the proportion of nonpartisans who end up as non-identifiers.

percent choose not to vote). Nonpartisans also vary substantially in how consistently they support one party. Once again, the biggest gap is between leaners and non-identifiers. Most non-identifiers cross partisan lines while voting for President, the Senate, and the House. Only 40 percent remain loyal across the three elections. In contrast, a clear majority of leaners (62 percent) remain loyal and consistently support the same party.¹⁷⁹ Although the behavior of each of these three nonpartisans groups in terms of voice appears, at first glance, to be quite similar, we will see that even for third party support there are substantial behavior differences that can emerge. The implications of nonpartisanship do vary across different types of nonpartisans.

The other obvious conclusion that emerges from Table 8.2 is the unique behavior of nonidentifiers. Despite the limited attention that this group has received in the past, their behavior is in many ways remarkable.¹⁸⁰ Non-identifiers stand out both for their propensity to exit the electoral arena and for their inconsistent voting patterns when they do enter the electoral arena. Non-identifiers are, in fact, the only group to exit more often than they vote in presidential contests. No other group comes close.¹⁸¹ The tendency for non-identifiers to exit is even more pronounced in midterm elections. Here a whopping 79 percent of the members of this group fail to vote. Non-identifiers are also by far and away the group most likely to exit in local contests. Data from the American Citizen Participation Survey, indicate that non-identifiers are twice as likely as leaners and pure

¹⁷⁹ A similarly large divide emerges when respondents are asked about their voting histories. Only 19 percent of pure independents claim to have loyally supported the same party for president in the past. By contrast, about a third of leaners and non-identifiers indicate that they have always voted for the same party for president.

¹⁸⁰ Typically, in the ANES coding, non-identifiers are coded as apolitical (if they do not vote and show little in interest in politics) or as leaners (if they admit a partisan preference when pushed).

¹⁸¹ The next least active group, pure independents, votes 61 percent of the time in these contests.

independents to opt out of local contests (52 percent vs 26 and 25 percent respectively).¹⁸² We don't know if this nonparticipation is due to a lack of interest in politics or to a lack of attraction to the major party options that are on offer in the typical contest but we do know that for this one subset of the nonpartisan population, by far the most attractive alternative is exit.

Non-identifiers are also especially unlikely to remain loyal to one party when they do vote. In any given year, only 40 percent of non-identifiers end up voting for the same party in Presidential, Congressional and Senatorial contests. That contrasts with a 51 percent party line voting among pure Independents, 62 percent among leaners, 65 percent among weak partisans, and 81 percent among strong partisans. More than other any group, partisan or nonpartisan, the vote of non-identifiers appears to be more volatile and at least potentially more up for grabs. This is a fact well worth noting for parties and candidates interested in acquiring more votes.

These are important patterns to recognize in light of the fact that non-identifiers are 20 percent of the population of nonpartisans. What's more, these NES figures may in some sense underplay the significance of this group. As we will see, among immigrants and the non-white population non-identifiers make up a much larger share of the population. Acknowledging the existence of this group and understanding the motivations and choices of its members should be a central component of any story of nonpartisanship.

Uncovering Differences between Leaners and Partisans

¹⁸² The ACPS is a nationally representative sample of about 2000 respondents. These figures reflect answers to a question about voting in the last local election. The same pattern emerges if we instead focus on a question that asked respondents how regularly they vote in local elections.

Table 8.2 allows us to begin to consider one other critical question related to the behavior of nonpartisans. Namely, are leaners really different from weak partisans? If Wolfinger and the other authors of *The Myth of the Independent Voter* are correct, we should see leaners behaving much like weak partisans. At first glance, the evidence in support of this view is impressive. There is a small and potentially meaningful divide between leaners and weak partisans in terms of third party support but little else to suggest that leaners are not partisans. Leaners are no more likely than weak partisans to choose to exit the electoral arena.¹⁸³ More importantly, leaners, like partisans, tend to consistently support the same party across elections in the same year. Sixty-two percent of leaners vote for the same party for president, the Senate, and the House in a typical year. The figure for weak partisans is only marginally higher at 65 percent. And if judged by their behavior in a single electoral contest, leaners are often even more partisan than weak partisans in their preferences. As Table 3.3 in Chapter Three already demonstrated, a strong majority of leaners (69 in presidential elections and 73 percent in House elections) typically votes for the candidate of the party that they lean towards. On this measure leaners are as apt or even more apt to vote along partisan lines than are weak partisans.¹⁸⁴ The bottom line is that relatively few leaners are crossing over to support the opposition. All of which seems to suggest that the authors of the *Myth* are right in

¹⁸³ This is true for presidential contests as shown here or in midterm Congressional elections as alternate tests reveal. In midterm contests, 43 percent of leaners choose exit. An almost identical 42 percent of weak partisans choose exit in these contests.

¹⁸⁴ The comparable figures for weak partisans are 64 in Presidential elections and 77 percent in House elections. In certain elections, leaners are also not much more likely than weak partisans to cross-over and support the party they lean against. In presidential elections, leaners are slightly less apt to voice opposition by supporting the other major party than are weak partisans. Only 16 percent of leaners choose to cross over whereas 23 of weak partisans choose to do so. However, for other types of elections the opposite is true. In house elections, for example, the relationship is reversed and the gap is reasonably large. Fully 37 percent of leaners cross over in House contests compared to only 24 percent of weak partisans.

concluding: “Leaners are partisans, not neutrals in the contest between parties” (1992:37).

These signs of partisan loyalty may, however, be somewhat misleading. It may very well be, as several scholars have suggested, that leaners regularly vote for the party they lean towards simply because they change their partisanship whenever their voting preferences change (Shively 1980, Wattenberg 1996, Bartels 2000). If true, consistency between partisan leaning and individual voting may be less a sign of partisan loyalty or partisan attachment and more of a sign that leaners more regularly alter their partisanship.

In order to address this kind of concern we cannot look only at a single election year in isolation as we have largely done to this point. Instead, we have to assess change in partisanship and changes in voting patterns *over time*. Does the same individual change her partisanship over time? And does that partisan change account for the perceived loyalty of leaners?

Table 8.3. Partisan Change by Partisan Type			
	Ever Switch Parties	Consistent Partisanship Last Two Years	Switched Allegiance Last Two Years
<u>Partisans</u>			
Strong Partisans	12	65	1
Weak Partisans	20	57	12
<u>Nonpartisans</u>			
Independent Leaners	34	38	26
Pure Independents	34	46	--

To begin to address these questions, in Table 8.3 we look at patterns of individual partisan change over time across different types of partisans. The figures in column one are based on a single NES question asking respondents to retrospectively evaluate whether they have ever changed their partisanship in the past. The second two columns

are based on confirmed individual over time change using three sets of NES panel data – specifically the 1956-1960 panel, the 1972-1960 panel, and the 1990-1992 panel.

The figures here are clear on one point. Leaners regularly change their partisanship. As the first column of Table 8.3 shows, 34 percent of leaners admit to having changed their partisan allegiance at some point in the past. Since these retrospective evaluations are not always accurate, we also follow patterns of partisan change for a single individual as they occur over time. When we use panel data to look at the same individual over a short period, we see considerable evidence of partisan mobility. As evidenced by the second column of the table, when asked two years later about their partisanship, on average almost 40 percent of leaners end up offering a different answer to the standard NES seven point scale.¹⁸⁵ And many of those changes are across partisan lines. Fully 26 percent of all leaners end up expressing allegiance to the other party or neither party only two years later.¹⁸⁶ This is not the stable partisan attachment that the authors of *The American Voter* envisioned in the American public.

Leaners are not only quite likely to switch their partisanship over time, they are also considerably more likely than weak partisans to do so. Only 20 percent of weak partisans profess to having changed their partisan loyalty at any time in the past, while 34 percent of leaners admit to doing so. The gap between leaners and weak partisans is just

¹⁸⁵ Surely some of this is due to measurement error. As Green and his colleagues (1990, 2002) have demonstrated, correcting for that error can reduce partisan instability considerably. However, measurement error cannot explain why certain subsets of the nonpartisan population are more prone to change their partisanship over time. In particular, measurement error cannot explain the fact that leaners are much more apt than weak partisans to switch from one partisan category to another or to altogether switch from one party to another.

¹⁸⁶ We viewed leaners as members of the party that they leaned towards for this measure. Thus, we counted as a partisan switch any movement from leaning towards one party to pure Independence or leaning towards the other party. If we count only those who move from one party to the other party, the same pattern holds. Three percent of strong partisans, 7 percent of weak partisans, and fully 14 percent of leaners switch party allegiance over a two year period.

as large if we look at documented changes in partisanship rather than at retrospectively reported change. Most weak partisans (57 percent) place themselves on the same point on the NES partisan scale two years later. By contrast, a clear majority (62 percent) of leaners are not consistent over that two year period. Finally, leaners are more than twice as likely as weak partisans to have shifted across partisan lines in the last two years. All of this suggests that a good portion of the perceived partisan loyalty of leaners revealed in studies of a single election could be spurious.

This suspicion is confirmed when we look at the voting patterns of leaners and non-leaners over time. When we measure partisanship not at the time of a vote but instead at a point in time before the vote, we get a substantially modified view of the partisan loyalty of leaners. Recall, that in the average presidential contest, fully 69 percent of leaners vote for the party that they lean towards – fairly strong evidence of partisan allegiance. But if we look at loyalty over time using one’s party identification measured during the first time period in a time series, we find that most leaners do not consistently support the party they originally leaned towards. To assess loyalty over time, we looked to see whether or not an individual voted consistently for the same party across four elections - the President and the House in one year and the President and the House four years later. Using the three NES panel studies, we found that only 43 percent of leaners consistently voted for the party that they originally leaned towards.¹⁸⁷ This figure tells us two things. It suggests that over at least a four year period, many leaners are strong partisan supporters. For this minority of the leaning population, there is little doubt that the authors of *The Myth of the Independent Voter* got it right. But the same

¹⁸⁷ To obtain these figures, we took partisanship during the first year of the panel and determined whether individuals subsequently always voted for the party they originally expressed allegiance to.

figure also indicates that the majority of leaners switch sides. Over the course of just four years some 57 percent of leaners opt to vote for the party they originally opposed.

Leaners are not all unattached Independents who flow back and forth with the current electoral tides but they are also not all staunch partisans who remain loyal to one side.

No longer can we say, as Wolfinger and his colleagues loudly proclaimed, “Leaners are never neutral” (1992:70).

More formally, we can test the endogeneity of partisanship and the extent to which leaners consistently vote for the same party by comparing estimates of the impact of partisanship on the vote using endogenous or contemporaneous partisanship on one hand with estimates using exogenous or lagged partisanship on the other. When one does this, as Bartels (2000) has, it is clear that much of the perceived loyalty of leaners is illusory. The results of Bartels’ analysis are displayed in Table 8.4. The table presents the results of six separate regressions where the dependent variable is support for the presidential candidate from the party that one identifies with. The data are from the same NES panel studies that we used in Table 8.3. What the table illustrates is that, for leaners, lagged partisanship has a much smaller effect on vote choice than does contemporaneous or endogenous partisanship. Across the three panel studies, Bartels finds that on average a little under half of the presumed partisan consistency of leaners (45%) is due to the endogeneity of their partisanship. As Bartels notes, one clear implication of this result is that “work in this area –and especially Keith et al’s (1992) work on voting loyalty among partisan “leaners” – may overstate the strength of the relationship between long-term partisan attachments and presidential voting behavior”(2000:48).

Table 8.4. Leaners vs Weak Partisans: Lagged vs Endogenous Party Identification and Party Loyalty		
Election Year	Independent Leaners	Weak Partisans
1960		
Endogenous	1.1 (.14)	.87 (.07)
Lagged	.55 (.12)	.80 (.07)
1976		
Endogenous	.78 (.11)	.68 (.08)
Lagged	.55 (.10)	.71 (.08)
1992		
Endogenous	1.1 (.12)	.95 (.10)
Lagged	.53 (.11)	.76 (.09)
Adapted from Bartels (2000). Probit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Regression includes dummies for strong identifiers as well as Republican bias. Analysis includes major party voters only.		

Perhaps just as importantly, these results indicate that endogeneity is much less of a factor for weak partisans. By Bartels' account only 8 percent of the presumed partisan consistency of weak partisans is due to party switching. The result, as the lagged rows in Table 8.4 indicate, is that after taking into account endogeneity, partisanship has less of an impact on the votes of leaners than it does on the votes of weak partisans. Judged by a single vote at one point in time, leaners are as partisan or even more partisan than weak partisans. But judged by a single vote in the future, leaners are much less partisan than many have claimed.

Context and the Implications of Nonpartisanship

To fully understand the implications of nonpartisanship and in particular the behavior of different types of nonpartisans, we need to look further. The choices that nonpartisans make depend not only on their overall sense of attachment to a particular party but also just as critically on the number and type of options that are available in a given electoral context. In American politics, these options vary greatly. Often the

choice is severely limited. Voters must choose one of two parties or opt out of the contest altogether. But in some elections, the choices are more varied. In addition to the two major party candidates, there may be a third party candidate. On rare occasion, that third party candidate may even represent an electorally viable alternative. Alternatively, as is often the case in local politics, there may be multiple candidates with little or no partisan connection. The availability or unavailability of these options is critical. Especially for those Americans who do not fit squarely within the confines of one of the two major parties, whether or not these additional options are available should strongly shape the choice between exit, voice, and loyalty.

Table 8.5. The Presidential Vote and the Presence of Third Party Candidates		
	Vote for the Third Party Candidate	
	Elections With a Third	
	<u>All Elections</u>	<u>Party Candidate</u>
<u>Partisans</u>		
Strong Partisans	1	4
Weak Partisans	4	13
<u>Independents</u>		
Independent Leaners	7	19
Pure Independents	8	25

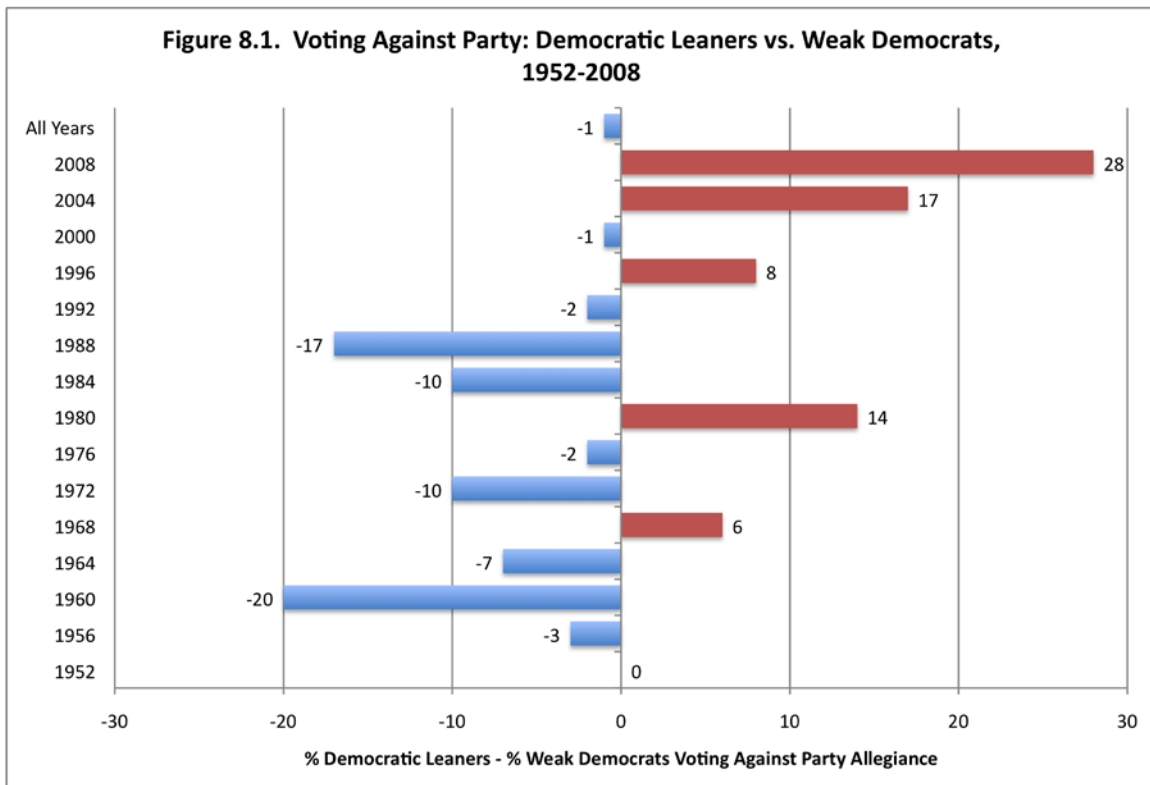
Thus, before we can really judge the behavior and the partisan loyalty of different types of nonpartisans, we need to assess a wider range of electoral contexts where the options available to voters are more varied. Most obviously, we need to consider behavior in contests where a third party candidate is actually on the ballot. In Table 8.5, we begin to do so by focusing on presidential elections. For presidential elections we make a distinction between presidential elections in which there is a national third party option – cases where the same candidate appears on more than half of the state ballots – and other elections where no third party option is available.

As the table shows, in the typical presidential contest, voice, or at least voice in the form of a vote for third party candidates, is relatively rare. Partisans and nonpartisans alike are very unlikely to abandon both major parties to support a third party candidate. But this assessment of third party support ignores the fact that most presidential contests do not offer voters a real third party option. If we focus our attention on elections where a third party candidate is present, it is evident that many nonpartisans are eager to voice their opposition to the two-party duopoly. When the option exists, one in four pure Independents votes for third parties and one in five independent leaners does so. Given that none of the third party candidates in any of the presidential elections that are included in the NES study years had a chance of winning, this level of support among nonpartisans might be viewed as very strong.

Distinguishing between contests with and without a third party option also makes the distinction between weak partisans and independent leaners somewhat clearer. As one might expect, when voters are given a way to voice their opposition to the two parties, independent leaners more regularly exercise that option and the gap in behavior between leaners and weak partisans begins to grow. When a third party option is available, 19 percent of leaners opt to support the third party compared to only 13 percent among weak partisans.¹⁸⁸ It may be true, as past studies have shown, that when Independent leaners vote for one of two main parties, leaners are very likely to vote for the party that they lean towards. But it is also true that leaners do not always choose to vote for either the Democrats or the Republicans in the first place. When an opportunity

¹⁸⁸ The figures for the GSS (which covers a shorter and more recent time frame) are slightly more dramatic. Here, when a third party candidate is on the ballot, almost a quarter of all Independent leaners (24 percent) opt not to vote for either the Democratic or Republican candidates. By contrast, only 14 percent of weak partisans follow suite.

presents itself, Independent leaners do vote in reasonably large numbers for Independent candidates. By dropping all of these third party votes from past analyses, researchers have overlooked some important behavioral differences between nonpartisans and partisans. The comparisons presented here do not reveal a dramatic difference between leaners and weak partisans but they do demonstrate that as the options available to voters are more varied, the tendency of leaners to act like died-in-the-wool partisan diminishes.



We can further assess the willingness of leaners to oppose their own party and at the same time gauge the distinction between leaners and weak partisans by looking at individual election years. In Figures 8.1 and 8.2, we begin this process by focusing on individual Presidential contests over time. In particular, we look at the extent to which Independent leaners and weak partisans choose to voice opposition to their favored party

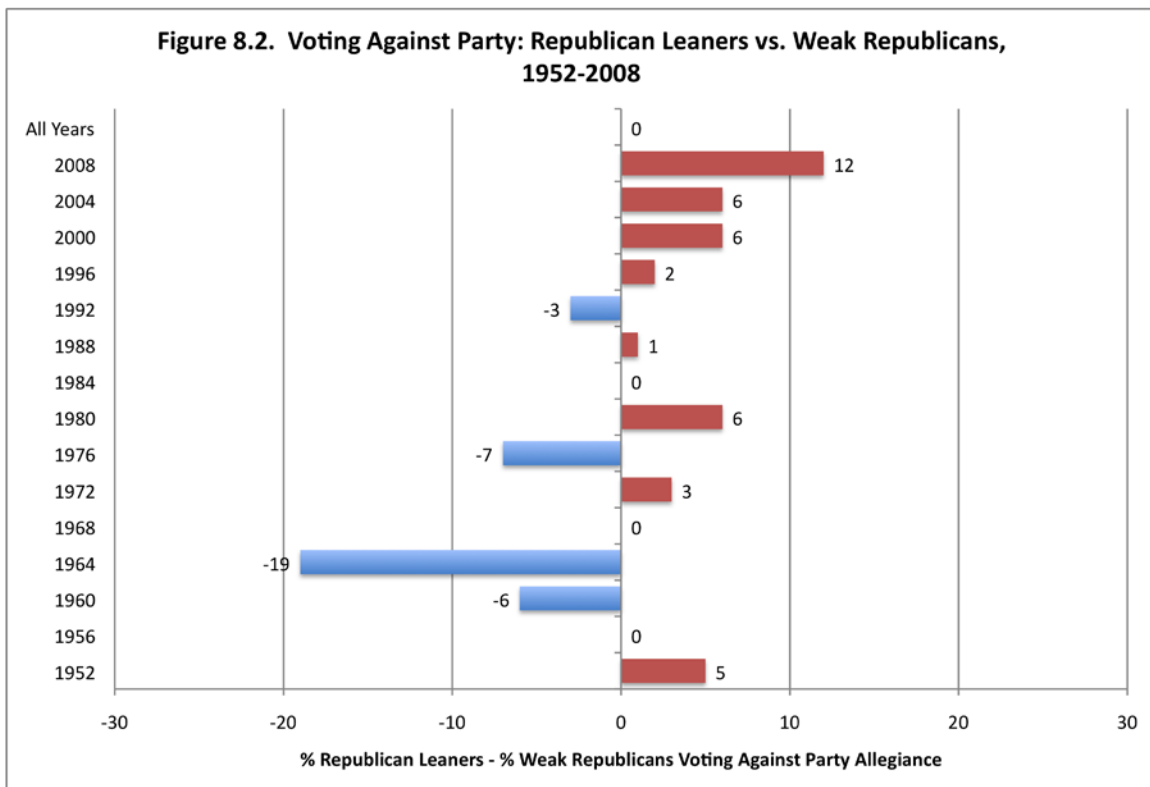
by supporting the other major party or a third party candidate. Both figures show the difference between the proportion of Independents who lean toward one party and the proportion of weak identifiers of that party who crossover and vote for either the other major party or a third party candidate. Red bars indicate Independent leaners greater willingness than weak partisans to exit from their party allegiance; blue bars indicate a greater such willingness among weak partisans.

If we simply average across all of the elections as is typically done in studies of nonpartisanship, there is essentially no difference between leaners and weak partisans. In line with the independents as closet partisans story, only 28 percent of Democratic leaners vote against their party, a figure that is nearly identical to the 29 percent of weak Democrats that vote against their party. Similarly, on the Republican side and identical 18 percent of Independent leaners and weak partisans are willing to choose the voice option.

Our point, however, is that this overall assessment hides substantial and meaningful variation that highlights the differences between leaners and weak partisans and that suggests that leaners only act like partisans when they have no real choice. Across the years, the percentage of independents expressing loyalty with their party varies dramatically. For Democratic leaners the proportion who defect in presidential contests, varies from a high of 48 percent in 1968 to a low of 9 percent in 1964. For Republican leaners, the range is from a high of 36 percent in 1992 to a low of 6 percent in 1956 and 1984.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ If we look at more than one election in each year, we get equally large variation in partisan loyalty among leaners. Over the same years, we find that the proportion of Democratic leaners who in elections for President, Congress, and the Senate crossover and give most of their votes to the Republican Party varies from a high of 44 percent in 1968 to a low of 6 percent in 1988. Similarly, the proportion of

Importantly, whether leaners are more partisan or less partisan than weak partisans varies across these elections. For Democrats, leaners are more partisan in their votes than weak partisans but in 5 out of the 14 cases (the years highlighted in red bars), leaners are less consistent in their votes than weak partisans. What's more, this variation is meaningfully patterned in two ways. First, Democratic leaners are far likelier to be less partisan than weak Democrats when there is a serious third party candidate in the race (1968, 1980, and 1996). Second, there is a discernible trend in the most recent elections (1996, 2004, 2008) towards Democratic leaners being less partisan than weak Democrats.



Republican leaners who primarily vote Democratic across the three elections varies from a high of 32 percent in 1992 to a low of 8 percent in 1965. The extent to which leaners are loyal varies dramatically.

The patterning between Republican leaners and weak Republicans, shown in Figure 8.2, is similar in some respects and distinct in others. On the whole, the divergences between Republican leaners and weak Republicans is not as great as it is for Democrats. Also, Republican leaners appear to contravene their party ties more often vis-à-vis weak Republicans than their Democratic counterparts. At the same time, both Republicans and Democrats share a common trend in the last few elections: Republican leaners have been likelier than weak Republicans in each of the last four presidential elections to vote against their party allegiance. Moreover, with both Republican and Democratic leaners, the most sizeable break from their party leanings has been in the 2008 election.

One additional finding of note is that independent leaners often appear partisan because they may have no attractive alternative to choose. Leaners may be voting like partisans more by default than out of loyalty. This suspicion is confirmed when we look at cases where there is a third party option on the ballot. When a third party option exists - regardless of whether that option is on the left, right, or middle - we find that leaners are *less* rather than more partisan than weak partisans. Overall, when a third party is on the ballot, Democratic leaners are 7 percent less apt to vote Democratic than weak Democrats. Similarly, in these cases, Republican leaners are 3 percent less apt to vote Republican than weak Republicans. Combining the two patterns, we see that when going from elections without a third party option to elections with a third party, Democratic leaners go from being 9 percent more loyal to being 7 percent less loyal. This 16 points shift is quite large when one considers that the average defection rate for Democrat leaners is 28 percent. Again, none of this means that all leaners are without strong

partisan proclivities but it does suggest that a lot of the supposed partisan tendencies of leaners is due to a paucity of choices.

Importantly, even by focusing on elections with a third party candidate on the ballot, we are, in many ways, underestimating the willingness of nonpartisans to voice discontent with the two party duopoly. In addition to considering the *number* of options available to voters, we should also consider the *quality* of those options. In all of the presidential contests we looked at, the third party candidate never had a legitimate shot of winning.¹⁹⁰ The most successful 3rd party candidate garnered only 18 percent of the vote and the average third party candidate garnered only 11 percent of the vote. Thus, the quality or viability of all of these third party options was low. If the extent to which nonpartisans choose exit, voice, or loyalty depends as much or more on the attractiveness of each of the options than simply on the number of options, we should see even more defections toward third party candidates when those candidates become viable.

When we turn our attention to contests, where 3rd party candidates win or come close to winning, it is clear that much larger segments of nonpartisan populations are willing to defect to a third party candidate.¹⁹¹ Jesse Ventura, for example, in his bid to become the governor of Minnesota in 1998 won over half of the nonpartisan vote (52%).

¹⁹⁰ Even in contests with just two major party candidates, the quality and the attractiveness of the candidates to different segments of the nonpartisan and partisan populations will vary. At times, the party that one leans toward may put forward an agenda and a candidate that is particularly attractive and worth supporting. During such times, loyalty is a perfectly reasonable option. But at other times, one's partisan proclivities may clash with the candidates and issues of the day. At these times voice and exit are especially likely.

¹⁹¹ The attractiveness of the candidates can also have substantial effects on exit. We see, for example, that nonpartisans are less eager to exit in local elections where the options are often more varied and therefore often more attractive to minorities and other groups who are particularly apt to end up as nonpartisans. Using the ACPS, we find that in local elections Independent leaners and pure Independents exit less than weak partisans (26 percent, 25 percent, and 38 percent exit, respectively). This contrasts sharply with national contests where pure Independents are twice as likely as leaners to drop out – again suggesting that the options available in these national contests are relatively unattractive to nonpartisans.

By contrast, he was much less successful among partisan voters winning only 33 percent of the Democratic vote and 29 percent of the Republican vote (CNN exit poll). More recently, in the 2006 Gubernatorial election in Texas, the two Independent candidates, Kinky Friedman and Carole Keeton Strayhorn, combined to take 48 percent of the nonpartisan vote compared to only 22 percent and 23 percent of the Republican and Democratic votes respectively. In the same year, Senators Joe Lieberman in Connecticut and Bernard Sanders in Vermont won the lion share of the Independent vote (54% and 74% respectively) when they ran as Independents. Although the number of cases is small and not necessarily representative, these examples do suggest that if there is a quality 3rd party option, nonpartisans will tend to flock to that option in large numbers and they will often do so in larger numbers than partisans.¹⁹² Under the right circumstances, nonpartisanship has real consequences.¹⁹³

Nonpartisanship by Race and Ethnicity

The analysis of nonpartisan behavior that we have offered to this point has, perhaps surprisingly, completely ignored race and the possibility that different patterns of behavior could be occurring across different racial and ethnic groups. We have deliberately ignored race because we wanted to establish the fact that the behavioral

¹⁹² Data on third party voting in local contests are sparse since the vast majority of local contests are nonpartisan and few have exit polls. Before Chicago shifted to nonpartisan contests, several independent candidates ran for the mayor generally garnering considerable support from Independent voters. Ed Vrdolyak was perhaps the most successful, winning over some 43 percent of Independent voters in 1987 (CBS News Exit Poll).

¹⁹³ All of this also ignores the message or the content of the third party candidacy. The degree to which an upstart third party attracts voters from different segments of the nonpartisan should depend on the kinds of campaigns they run and the closeness of their issue positions to those of individual nonpartisans. To really understand, the willingness of different members of the nonpartisans population to voice opposition to the two major parties, we would need to find and analyze cases where the third party messages varied to determine which segments of the nonpartisan population were defecting.

implications of nonpartisan are important not just when we look at individual racial or ethnic groups in isolation but also when we assess the American population as a whole. Our story is not simply a story for minority, immigrant populations.

But our story is surely also one of race and ethnicity and immigration and their implications. Since the previous chapters of this book have attempted to demonstrate to our readers that the reasons members of different racial and ethnic groups end up identifying as nonpartisan can be varied, we would be surprised to find that the implications of nonpartisan across America's racial and ethnic groups do not vary in important ways. To that end, we now compare each of the four main racial and ethnic groups on basic indicators of exit, voice, and loyalty and in the following sections examine in more detail questions that are particularly relevant to the voting choices of each particular racial/ethnic group.

Do the implications of nonpartisanship differ across America's main racial and ethnic groups? In Table 8.6 we begin to answer that question by looking at the same three options of exit, voice, and loyalty that we looked at earlier for the entire population. Only this time we break down results by racial and ethnic group.¹⁹⁴ The Asian American data which are from the PNAAPS of 2001 are not strictly comparable to the data for the other three racial and ethnic groups which are from the same set of ANES measures. We utilize the PNAAPS data for Asian Americans because it is the only survey with voting

¹⁹⁴ The one difference is that this time we examine the tendency to support third party candidates only in elections where there is a candidate on the ballot in more than half of the states. Given the concerns we raised about assessing third party support in contests without a candidate on the ballot, we believe this is a more accurate portrayal of third party support.

behavior and a sufficiently large sample of Asian Americans to confidently estimate patterns within subsets of the Asian American population.¹⁹⁵

Table 8.6. The Implications of Nonpartisanship Across Race/Ethnicity												
	Exit – Nonvoters				Voice -3 rd Party Voters				Loyalty –Party Voters			
	Wh	Bl	La	As	Wh	Bl	La	As	Wh	Bl	La	As
Dems	22%	31%	31%	49%	10%	1%	12%	1%	64%	84%	73%	--
Inds	28	51	47	59	22	1	16	9	58	75	54	--
Reps	15	52	28	65	10	0	10	1	72	17	44	--

Source: ANES Cumulative File and PNAAPS.

A quick glance at the table indicates that the patterns do indeed differ across race and ethnicity. This is true for all three options of exit, voice and loyalty but the differences are starkest for voice and loyalty. In terms of the relationship between nonpartisanship and exit, the divide is between whites, Latinos, and Asian Americans on one hand and African Americans on the other. For the first three groups, nonpartisanship is associated with much lower rates of participation. White Independents are almost twice as likely as white Republicans to exit and a third more likely than white Democrats to choose to sit out. The pattern is similar for both Latinos and Asian Americans.¹⁹⁶ For blacks, Republican identifiers are just as likely as nonpartisans to drop out of a Presidential contest. This suggests that the Republican Party has high hurdles to overcome with the black community. Not only are African Americans not apt to identify

¹⁹⁵ Since the PNAAPS data only have voting preferences in one election, we were not able to assess loyalty for Asian Americans. The NAAS of 2008 has a broader sample and more recent data but was conducted during the campaign and thus only has vote intentions. The Asian American sample in the ANES is far too small to present a breakdown within the pan-ethnic group.

¹⁹⁶ The pattern for Latinos in the Post/Kaiser Poll of 2000 is somewhat different. In that survey, Latino Republicans were more likely than Latino nonpartisans to exit – mirroring the behavior of black Republicans. The exit pattern for the other three racial and ethnic groups in the Post/Kaiser Poll was similar to what we see in Table 8.7.

with the Republican Party, but even when they do identify as Republican they are also quite likely to choose exit over active participation.

The implications of nonpartisanship are even more varied when we consider third party support. Across the four racial and ethnic groups, nonpartisanship leads either to substantially increased third party support (whites and Latinos) or no increase in third party support (African Americans and Asian Americans). In other words, third party candidates in Presidential elections have been somewhat attractive to nonpartisan whites and Latinos, and wholly unattractive to nonpartisan Asian Americans and African Americans. Given that the platform of the typical third party presidential candidate has been on the right and at times has even been segregationist, the reluctance of black and Asian American Independents to vote third party is hardly surprising.¹⁹⁷ The willingness of Latino Independents to do so is more interesting. It may be that nonpartisans within the Latino population are unhappy enough with the alternatives being offered by either major party that they are willing to support third party bids that have little chance of succeeding.

Finally, the implications of nonpartisanship for partisan loyalty are equally divergent across the four main racial and ethnic groups.¹⁹⁸ For whites, nonpartisanship leads to much less consistent party line voting. White nonpartisans are, in fact, almost as likely to cross-over as to vote a straight party line in presidential, congressional, and senatorial elections in the same year. For African Americans and Latinos, by contrast,

¹⁹⁷ This doesn't mean that nonpartisan blacks would not vote for an attractive third party candidate if offered one. Asked if a "black political party is the best strategy" black nonpartisans are especially apt to say yes. Some 51 percent of black nonpartisans agree that forming a black party is an optimal strategy compared to only 25 percent of Democrats and 39 percent of Republicans.

¹⁹⁸ We see the same divergence in partisan loyalty across race and ethnicity, when we examine loyalty in the 2000 elections using the Kaiser Foundation /Washington Post data.

the group least likely to vote loyally is Republicans. Only 17 percent of black Republicans and 44 percent of Latino Republicans consistently favor their party.¹⁹⁹ The other important pattern hidden in these numbers is the partisan imbalance for black nonpartisans. Among African Americans, nonpartisanship does not lead to the abandonment of the Democratic Party in national elections. Three quarters of black nonpartisans vote a straight party ticket across the three elections and of these black party-line voters, 71 percent vote a straight Democratic ticket. In short, nonpartisan for African Americans still means voting Democratic in national elections.²⁰⁰

The figures in Table 8.6 are telling on several fronts. They demonstrate quite definitively that we cannot fully understand nonpartisanship and its implications without considering race and ethnicity. General conclusions about the electoral choices of nonpartisans will miss an important part of the picture if they do not break down the choices of different racial and ethnic groups.²⁰¹

When we do break down choices by racial and ethnic group we find patterns that hint at the political failings of the Republican Party and at opportunities that are available both to the two major parties and to third party candidates. Among racial and ethnic minorities, Republican identifiers are especially prone to fail to vote consistently for candidates from their party. The clear implication is that there is no consistently

¹⁹⁹ The most logical interpretation is that there is no partisan option that is consistently attractive to these non-white Republicans.

²⁰⁰ Among Latinos both parties benefit from this straight line voting among Independents. About half of these consistent Independents voters support candidates from the Democratic Party and half support candidates from the Republican Party.

²⁰¹ Given the diversity within each racial and ethnic group, we might also seek to further break down the population by immigrant status and national origin group. When we did this for Asian Americans and Latinos, in particular, we found that the implications of nonpartisanship did not vary dramatically for any subpopulations that we could identify. Nonpartisanship has similar implications for exit, voice, and loyalty for all kinds of different communities within the Latino and Asian American populations.

attractive option for minority voters who lean toward the Republican Party. The fact that few non-white nonpartisans are drawn to third party candidates also indicates that there are few attractive electoral alternatives for these nonpartisans. Both of these patterns suggest that there are many minority voters in the population with no true home. If properly targeted, this group could shift the balance of power between the two major parties. All of this highlights an important opening for political entrepreneurs.

The Makeup of the Nonpartisan Population by Race/Ethnicity

Perhaps the biggest difference between nonpartisans of the various racial and ethnic groups is not even evident in Table 8.6. If we break down nonpartisans by type, we find that black, white, Latino, and Asian American nonpartisans place themselves into very different categories. To illustrate this, Table 8.7 breaks down the non-partisan population of each group by the now familiar categories of independent leaners, pure independents, and non-identifiers. Since no single survey has a sufficient sample size to provide a breakdown of nonpartisans for all four racial and ethnic groups and also because nonpartisan figures can be sensitive to question wording - whether the option of don't know or other or no preference is explicit or not- we supplement results from the NES with data from three other surveys. We focus on the Post-Kaiser Family Foundation survey of 2000 because it is the only recent survey that explicitly gives respondents the option of identifying as something other than Democrat, Republican, or Independent, has large enough numbers of Asian Americans, Latinos and African Americans to offer estimates for all of these groups, and has questions on voting behavior in multiple contests. However since, the Latino and Asian American samples in the Post-Kaiser poll

are still small, we also present data from two ethnic-specific surveys - the 2008 NAAS and the Latino National Survey of 2006.²⁰² Since the ANES only includes citizens, we exclude non-citizens from the other three surveys to try to ensure comparability across all figures.

Table 8.7. The Makeup of the Nonpartisan Population by Race/Ethnicity								
	Whites		Blacks		Latinos		Asian Americans	
	NES	Post	NES	Post	Post	LNS	Post	NAAS
Leaners	63%	57%	53%	47%	47%	17%	9%	25%
Pure Independents	32	20	30	23	20	23	18	13
Nonidentifiers	5	23	17	30	32	60	73	61

Put succinctly, when we talk about nonpartisanship, we are talking about very different things for each racial and ethnic group. For white Americans and African Americans the nonpartisanship story is largely one of Independent leaners. By contrast for Latinos and Asian Americans, the story is much more about non-identifiers.²⁰³ The differences are stark. In the NES some 63 percent of white nonpartisans and 53 percent of African American nonpartisans admit an affinity to one of the two parties. Clearly, if we want to understand the African American and white nonpartisan populations, we need to know what leaners are thinking and doing. Among Latinos and Asian Americans the proportion of nonpartisans who lean to one party typically falls to less than one quarter of the nonpartisan population – depending on which group is the focus and which survey is

²⁰² We do not focus on the NAAS of 2008 in this chapter because it is a pre-election survey and thus has less reliable data on voting behavior. However, it is worth noting that the breakdown of Asian Americans nonpartisans in the NAAS is quite similar to the figures presented in Table 8.8.

²⁰³ We tested the robustness of this basic pattern by looking at the makeup of the nonpartisan population in a range of different national public opinion surveys including the General Social Survey cumulative file, the American Citizen Participation Survey of 1990, and the PEW/Kaiser Foundation Latino Survey of 2004. The exact numbers for each racial and ethnic group do vary from survey to survey but the basic pattern persists. The black and white nonpartisan populations are dominated by leaners whereas among the Latino and Asians American samples, non-identifiers are a critical – if not the largest – group in the nonpartisan population.

employed. For these two latter groups, leaners are not the central story and by some measures play only a minor role.

By contrast, if we want to better comprehend Latino and Asian American nonpartisans, we have to focus more on non-identifiers. The clear majority of Asian Americans and between a third and two-thirds of the Latino population fits the non-identifier label.²⁰⁴ The proportions are even larger if we include non-citizens. This may not be surprising given the limited knowledge and experience that major segments of the Latino and Asian American populations have with the American party system but it does set them apart from blacks and white Americans.²⁰⁵ Few white Americans and African Americans fail to place themselves somewhere on the traditional partisan scale. Only 5 percent of whites and 17 percent of blacks in the NES can be labeled as non-identifiers.

This divergence in the makeup of the nonpartisan population means that the critical questions that we need to answer to understand the electoral politics of each racial and ethnic group are not the same. If we want to understand white nonpartisans, we need to understand the choices of independent leaners. As numerous scholars have long realized, the critical question for whites is whether or not Independent leaners are truly independent. Fortunately, we have, in the early sections of this chapter, already addressed this question. Although we did not specifically focus on white Independents in

²⁰⁴ By comparison, in the American Citizen Participation Survey, 48 percent of Latino nonpartisans and 63 percent of Asian American nonpartisans are classified as non-identifiers.

²⁰⁵ As expected, there are important differences in the makeup of the nonpartisan population across generation and national origin group for Asian Americans. Among Asian Americans foreign born nonpartisans are more likely to be non-identifiers (61 percent) but the native born are also dominated by non-identifiers (57 percent). Korean Americans were the group most likely to end up as non-identifiers (82 percent) while Asian Indians, Chinese, and Vietnamese were the least likely (56, 56, and 59 percent respectively). Differences across generation and national origin group among Latinos were much more muted. Cuban Americans were somewhat more likely than other national origin groups to label themselves leaners (49 percent) while Puerto Ricans less likely to do so (36 percent).

these earlier sections, the results of our tests certainly apply to the white population. Roughly 90 percent of the voters we looked at in the NES cumulative file are white, so the conclusions we reached were largely driven by white Americans. Moreover, if we repeat the analysis dropping all non-white respondents, the patterns that emerge are essentially identical to what we saw. When it comes to white Independent leaners, the bottom line is that real differences do emerge between leaners and weak partisans. Although most white Independent leaners do vote with their party in a single election, most of these leaners fail to remain loyal over time and they often switch their partisan leaning to match their votes. Moreover, when given an attractive third party option, these leaners regularly abandon their major party attachments. While many white leaners are quite partisan, we cannot simply lump all leaners in with partisans.

To understand black nonpartisanship the numbers in Table 8.8 suggest that we once again have to focus on leaners. The question for African Americans is, however, slightly different. Although black nonpartisans, like white nonpartisans, tend to be largely comprised of leaners, there is a very different partisan balance to the black leaners. White leaners are almost evenly divided between Republican leaners and Democratic leaners (51 percent Democratic leaning). By contrast, African Americans leaners overwhelmingly lean toward the Democratic Party (79 percent Democratic leaning). Thus, for African Americans, the critical question is more about defections from the Democratic Party than it is about Independence generally. As several researchers such as Dawson (1994) and Tate (1994) have noted, for blacks the core question is whether or not increasing diversity in party identification leads to reduced black support for the Democratic Party in the voting booth. Finally, for the last two

groups, Asian Americans and Latinos, we have an entirely different question. For both of these racial and ethnic communities, non-identifiers are either the majority of the nonpartisan population or at the least a substantial proportion of this population. The critical question then relates to these non-identifiers. We need to know how they react to the opportunities that are presented to them by the American party system and the candidates it puts forward.

For Asian Americans and Latinos, this is largely uncharted territory that we will attempt to fill in with some important but preliminary results. For black nonpartisans, we will seek to shed some new light on old questions. Finally, for white nonpartisans, we can add little to what we have already presented.

Latino and Asian American Non-identifiers

We begin by focusing on Latinos and Asian Americans, the two least studied and as such the two most interesting groups. The key partisan type here is non-identifiers. We now know that a clear majority of Asian American nonpartisans and a large percentage of Latino nonpartisans are non-identifiers. What we do not know is how this influences the choices that Latino nonpartisans make in the electoral arena. In Table 8.8 we begin to outline those choices.

The table presents data on the extent to which Asian Americans and Latinos opt for exit, voice, and loyalty under different circumstances. We are most interested in the behavior of non-identifiers but for comparison purposes, we include the choices of other nonpartisans and partisans as well. Since we need relatively large sample sizes and data on voting patterns, we have little choice in terms of the surveys that we analyze. For

Latinos, we present data from the only national survey with a sufficient Latino sample size and data on voting patterns in more than one electoral contest – the Washington Post/Kaiser Foundation survey of 2000.²⁰⁶ For Asian Americans there is no survey with questions on voting behavior in multiple elections and a sufficient number of Asian American respondents. Thus, we cannot present figures for loyalty for Asian Americans. Instead, for Asian Americans, we focus on the one survey with a large sample size and data on voting behavior in at least one general election – the 2001 PNAAPS data.²⁰⁷

The exact measures in the table are similar to those we have used before. For both Latinos and Asian Americans exit is measured as non-voting in presidential elections. Similarly, for both groups voice is support for a third party candidate in a presidential contest. For Latinos, loyalty is measured as support for the same party across two Presidential and one Congressional contest over a four year period.

Table 8.9. Implications of Nonpartisanship Among Latinos and Asian Americans¹						
	Exit – Nonvoters		Voice -3 rd Party Voters		Loyalty –Party Voters	
	Latinos	As. Ams.	Latinos	As. Ams.	Latinos	As. Ams.
PARTISANS						
Strong	43	40	3	0	80	--
Weak	59	52	4	3	66	--
NONPARTISANS						
Leaners	72	52	15	8	57	--
Pure Inds	76	66	22	4	58	--
Non-identifier	76	64	8	2	53	--

¹ Source: For Latinos the Washington Post/Kaiser Foundation survey of 2000. For Asian Americans the 2001 PNAAPS.

²⁰⁶ As a test of robustness, in alternate analysis we also look at Latino behavioral patterns in the LNS of 2006, PEW 2004, the LNPS of 1990, and the NES cumulative file and at Asian American political behavior in the NAAS of 2008. Although the data in each case are limited in important ways, the basic patterns are consistent across surveys.

²⁰⁷ The NAAS of 2008 is obviously more recent and has a more representative sample but it is a pre-election survey.

Two important aspects of non-identifier behavior stand out. The first is the regularity with which Latino and Asian American non-identifiers opt to exit electoral contests. Some 76 percent of Latino non-identifiers chose not to vote in the 1996 presidential election. The LNPS shows even higher rates of non-participation. It suggests that fully 86 percent of Latino non-identifiers are inactive in presidential elections. The figures for Asian Americans are not as stark but nevertheless point to widespread exit. Some 64 percent of Asian American non-identifiers failed to vote in the 2000 presidential contest according to the PNAAPS survey. Given that these figures only include citizens and are self-reported voting rates, these are remarkably high levels of non-participation.

Thus, an important story for both Latinos and Asian Americans is not only that members of both are especially prone to being non-identifiers but also that members of this non-identifier group have by and large not been attracted enough by the typical electoral contest to get involved. Some might argue that this group of Latinos and Asian Americans is largely apolitical and therefore unlikely to ever get involved in the electoral arena. We contend, however, that two other explanations for this non-participation are more plausible. We suspect that large numbers of Latino and Asian American non-identifiers fail to get involved either because of limited information about the available partisan alternatives or because the available partisan options are not attractive.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ Data from the LNPS reveal that when asked if there are any important differences between the two major parties, 48 percent of non-identifiers responded that they did not know compared to only 21 percent of pure independents and 11 percent of leaners. This suggests that limited information is an important barrier. There is also evidence to suggest that these nonpartisans are not merely apolitical. As we have already noted, although Latino nonpartisans seldom vote in national contests, they are just as active as partisans across a wide range of political activities that do not involve direct contact with a political party.

Looking further across Table 8.9, it is evident that non-identifiers from both racial and ethnic groups are not especially apt to voice opposition to the major party system by supporting third party candidates. Latino non-identifiers were more likely than Latino partisans to support Perot in 2000 but in the end only 8 percent of Latino non-identifiers chose this option. Among Asian Americans, uncommitted nonpartisans were not at all likely to support Perot in 2000. Only 2 percent did so. This suggests that in the few contests we have data for, non-identifiers from these two communities have not been particularly attracted to third party alternatives. Whether a third party candidate that appealed more directly to Latinos and Asian Americans would capture more of their votes is an open question.

The last major conclusion to emerge from Table 8.9 is that these non-identifiers appear to be particularly unlikely to vote a straight party line. The data for Latinos are limited to three elections during the 1996 and 2000 electoral cycle and we cannot say anything about Asian American loyalty. Nevertheless, these preliminary figures do suggest that when nonidentifiers do vote, they often switch their support from party to party. Only 53 percent of Latino non-identifiers voted for the same party in all three contests for which we have data (two presidential and one Congressional). Partisan voting was, by contrast, much higher among strong and weak partisans and marginally higher among leaners and pure Independents.

The only other finding of note here is the rather large gap in behavior between leaners and weak partisans within the Latino population.²⁰⁹ Latino leaners are much more likely than weak partisans to choose exit. Some 52 percent of leaners opt out

²⁰⁹ We see the same pattern in the LNPS.

compared to only 38 percent of weak partisans. Latino leaners are also almost four times more likely than weak partisans to vote for a third party. Whereas only 4 percent of weak partisan Latinos voted for Perot, fully 15 percent of leaners did so. Importantly, on both measures, leaners were much closer to pure Independents in their choices than they were to weak partisans. By contrast, among Asian Americans the behavior of leaners fairly closely paralleled the behavior of weak partisans. What all of this means is that any conclusion we hope to make about the distinction between leaners and weak partisans has to be race or ethnicity specific. Broad generalizations based on analysis of white Independents do not generally apply to minority communities.

Overall then, the account that emerges from this analysis of the Asian American and Latino non-identifiers is of a large population of Americans who are up for grabs politically. Large numbers of non-identifiers feel little identity with the party system, regularly do not vote in that system, and then tend to switch their electoral support back and forth between the two parties when they do vote. If, as we believe, these non-identifiers can be motivated with the right message and a candidate that more directly targets their interests and concerns, this is an important story for both parties to learn.

Implications for Black Electoral Politics

The critical question for African Americans, as several observers have already noted, is whether increasing diversity in black partisanship is translating into less active support for the Democratic Party. As we have seen, African Americans Independents are growing in number but, most of these nonpartisans are Independent leaners and the vast majority of these leaners lean toward the Democratic Party. If these Democratic leaners

continue to support the Democratic Party in the voting booth, the decline in Democratic Party identification may only represent a modest shift in the level of attachment to the Democratic Party that has limited consequences for electoral politics. In this next section, we seek to determine if this is really the case.

By some obvious indicators there are almost no consequences to the shift in black partisanship that has occurred over the last few decades. 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.²¹⁰ In the last presidential election, a record number of African Americans – 95 percent – supported the Democratic nominee. At least in these circumstances, diversity in partisanship does not flow neatly into voting patterns.²¹¹

Nevertheless, we suspect that this data is masking important underlying differences of opinion that at least have the possibility of driving defections from the Democratic Party. 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 national contests may be less the result of

²¹⁰ Moreover, there was little in the way of an over-time trend on any of these measures.

²¹¹ 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.

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

To see if African Americans are still largely united and supportive of the Democratic Party we need to recognize that the national contests we generally focus on are limited in their options – two major party candidates and no viable alternatives – and we need to examine other contexts where the options may be more varied and more attractive to different segments of the African American population.

We begin this examination by looking at two contexts where the options are not only more varied but also less partisan. The goal here is merely to see if in these different contexts the black vote is less unified. 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.²¹² 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 2000.²¹³ Neither data set should be viewed as a

²¹² 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.

²¹³ 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 the black respondents in each poll roughly match the demographic characteristics of the total black population of the state. The exit poll data are very accurate. The actual vote and the estimated vote based on the exit poll data differ by an average of

representative indication of how blacks across the national 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.

Table 8.9. Division in the Black Vote

	Presidency	Congress	Mayoralty	Direct Democracy
Blacks Opposing the Black Majority	10%	14%	26%	38%

As Table 8.9 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.²¹⁴ That was still somewhat more cohesive than Latinos (30 percent), whites (34 percent), and Asian Americans (44 percent) but it is a far

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 estimates derived from ecological inference analysis of actual precinct level returns. The direct democracy data set includes 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.

²¹⁴ 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%).

cry from the near unanimity we see in the black vote in presidential (10 percent) and Congressional elections (14 percent).²¹⁵

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 2007). Clearly, there are a range of divergent preferences within the black community that under certain circumstances are expressed in the ballot box.

All of these figures suggest that blacks are more divided in their electoral interests than many have suggested but they do little to tell us whether or not African Americans vote against the Democratic Party if offered a viable and attractive option. The data on this question, although limited, strongly suggest that many black voters will go so far as to abandon the Democratic Party if the exit options are appealing 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)

²¹⁵ 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.

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.²¹⁶ 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 when 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.²¹⁷ 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 national surveys of the African American population, 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

²¹⁶ 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).

²¹⁷ 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.

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 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 Democratic.

It is also apparent that black Independents make up a significant part of this story. Although much of data on the black vote in the contests that we have already talked about 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.²¹⁸ The same pattern is evident in the few partisan

²¹⁸ 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

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.²¹⁹

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 or demographic group (Hajnal and Louch 2001).²²⁰ 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.²²¹

Democratic incumbent and a further 56 percent opposed Bustamente, the Democratic candidate, in the subsequent election.

²¹⁹ 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. In most cases, local surveys do not allow us to distinguish between leaners and pure Independents. Nevertheless, 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 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 concrete data on the black leaner vote. According to the NES, black 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.

²²⁰ Hajnal (2007) 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.

²²¹ 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

Conclusion

In writing this chapter we have tried to illuminate three broad sentiments about nonpartisanship and its electoral significance. The first is that nonpartisanship matters in the electoral arena. Failing to identify with one of the two major parties can have wide ranging consequences for the electoral choices that individual Americans make. This is not to say that all nonpartisans are wholly disconnected from the two parties. Many nonpartisans will, despite their self-professed Independence, be closely linked with a political party and will act for all intents and purposes like partisans. But many others will not. In the end, whether Americans choose exit, voice, or loyalty depends heavily on their status as partisans or nonpartisans.

We have also tried to show that the choices that nonpartisans make are greatly shaped by the electoral context they face. In America that context is often a two-party duopoly with limited options for the many nonpartisans that do not fit neatly into one of the two parties. But that is not always the case. When these ill-fitting nonpartisans are offered an attractive alternative in the electoral arena – an admittedly rare event in American politics – they tend to respond. Viable candidates and appealing issue platforms can draw in large segments of the nonpartisan population.

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.

Finally, we hope we have convincingly shown that race and ethnicity are critical components to understanding nonpartisanship. Accounts of nonpartisans that rely solely on assessments of the white community are likely to be incomplete if not totally inaccurate. The meaning and implications of nonpartisanship vary dramatically from one racial and ethnic group to another. To understand nonpartisanship and perhaps even more importantly to try to appeal to nonpartisans, the divergent motivations and actions of nonpartisans from each racial and ethnic group need to be taken into account.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

“Anytime you throw your weight behind a political party that controls two-thirds of the government and that party can’t keep the promise it made to you during election time and you are dumb enough to walk around continuing to identify yourself with that party you are not only a chump but you are a traitor to your race ... You’ve been misled, you’ve been had, you’ve been took.”

Malcolm X (1964)

In this final chapter, we begin with a brief summary of our key findings. We start by returning to the observation that the time is ripe for a reconsideration of party identification and its place in the American political landscape. Demographic changes in the electorate and changes in the nature of party competition and partisan ideological polarization since the first printing of *The American Voter* might tempt some to consider a radical revision of existing conventions on partisanship. We find no cause to abandon this baby simply because its bathwater is no longer still. For as long as political scientists have studied the attachments of mass publics to political parties in America, they have very fruitfully looked to sources of political socialization and social identity formation, following a tradition rooted in *The American Voter*, or they have also productively focused on information heuristics, ideological positioning, and rational learning about parties, following a more Downsian approach. In the pages of this book we have advanced an account of partisanship that adapts key elements from both the Michigan and the Downsian schools of thought, both properly modified to the shifting realities of race and immigration in the United States in the Twenty-First Century.

Our proposed adaptations rest on the multiple dimensions of partisanship, coined alliteratively in our book as identity, ideology, and information. The nub of our story in this book is that the partisan choices of all racial and ethnic groups in America share in

common the primary social *identities* and the *ideological* beliefs that shape their political predispositions and the *information* environments that regulate whether partisan cues come to be accepted as relevant political considerations. Much of the empirical core of this book has been a demonstration of the distinctive ways in which group identities, ideological beliefs, and information environments interact to define the relationship that Whites, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans have to America's unique system of two-party competition. One key contribution of our book, then, has been to propose a general framework on party identification within which to fit the growing diversity of the American electorate.

That said, immigrants, racial minorities, and whites with distinct ideological profiles not attended to by the Democratic and Republican parties and their candidates will be motivated to remain neutral – at least as a matter of self-identification – between the two major parties. More generally, when the choices the major parties present to the American public do not match our available stock of political knowledge (information), our deeply held political beliefs (ideology), or how we think of ourselves (identity), nonpartisanship becomes a rationally adaptive strategy. Another key contribution of this book has thus been to highlight the diversity of non-partisans in the increasingly diverse U.S. electorate. Much of the previous scholarship has focused on white Independents only and with withering scrutiny on one particular aspect of non-partisanship: whether Independents are truly non-partisan or whether they reveal their true partisan preferences in the anonymity of the ballot box. This preoccupation, we submit, results to a significant extent from a very particular approach to the study and measurement of partisanship – using opinion surveys and measuring individuals' self-reported identification with a given

set of partisan labels that range from strong Republican at one end of the spectrum to strong Democrat at the other, with "pure Independents" in the middle.

We offer some rejoinders on the matter of whether Independents reveal their underlying partisan preferences when they vote, but shine a sustained light first on the prior phenomenon of choosing to identify as a nonpartisan. Along the way, we also spotlight a yet relatively unexamined aspect of partisan choice – namely, the ability to make sense of the conventional three-way choice between identifying as a Democrat, Republican, or Independent. As we have seen, a non-trivial number of Americans indicate no preference when given this three-way choice and many others who simply do not know or refuse to answer a question about their party identification. In recent versions of the ANES' representative sample of adult Americans, almost 9 percent of respondents would be classified as "non-identifiers." In some sub-groups, the prevalence of non-identifiers is far greater. In the LNS and NAAS data that we use in this book, we find that an identical 36 percent of Latinos and Asian Americans are non-identifiers. The story of why such large proportions of these newcomers are non-identifiers, we further submit, is a story about immigrant political incorporation.

In bringing together our claims about the racially group-specific ideological, identitarian, and informational bases of partisanship with our claims about non-partisanship, we have along the way also proposed additional key contributions to our substantive understanding of the ties that African Americans, Whites, Latinos, and Asian Americans have to Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. We began in Chapter Four by considering the partisanship of African Americans. African Americans continue to be reasonably well characterized (especially so in the most recent 2008 presidential

election) by the joint occurrence of extraordinarily high rates of voting for Democratic candidates and the remarkably crystallized sense of racial group interests and identity. Viewing group identity and political choice as essentially equivalent, however, would attribute too much structure and stability to African American partisanship. A century ago, African Americans were similarly homogeneous, but with a strong allegiance to the party of Lincoln and not the party of Jefferson. Even during the span of history covered by American National Election Study data, African Americans have grown less willing to call themselves "Democrats" even if they ultimately choose to vote for the Democratic presidential candidate come Election Day. This empirical variation and the observable links between individual circumstances, group interests, and the coordination of collective choice in favor of the Democratic Party are far from automatic. We show, more specifically, that African Americans are especially likely to break from group ranks in identifying as Democrats under three conditions: when the sense of shared group identity is diminished; when ideological beliefs in black autonomy and self-determination become more staunch; when information-based assessments imply that continued allegiance to the Democratic Party may not be in the best interests of African Americans.

If African Americans represent an archetype of sorts for how salient social group identities can intersect with one's primary political identity qua partisanship in meaningful ways, Latinos and Asian Americans represent a sharply contrasting archetype of the extent to which both social group identities and one's political identity can be inchoate and undefined. In Chapters Five and Six, we turned our gaze to these groups and argue that the partisan choices of Latinos and Asian Americans have to be understood in the context of immigrant political incorporation. The consequence of

taking the immigration histories of these groups into account is a view of partisanship as a sequential choice. In the first stage of choice, Latinos and Asian Americans need to feel some connection to the partisan labels "Democrat," "Republican," and "Independent" before they can, in the second stage make a meaningful selection between these labels. In the first stage, factors that capture the uncertainty and ambivalence characteristic of the process of immigrant political socialization are dominant; in the second stage, factors that capture the ideological and identitarian orientation of Latinos and Asian Americans and their ability to perceive important differences between the two major parties become more important.

Finally, the point of departure – and as we have argued in this book, for most scholars, the entire journey – is the partisanship of White Americans. For this group, the extant body of scholarship continues to explain most of the variation in partisanship, with some notable exceptions defined by non-partisanship and the link between non-partisanship and vote choice. Within our theoretical framework, the robust explanatory power of existing models of partisanship is predicted because Whites are a more established, predominantly native-born population. Thus partisanship itself is the primary political identity of relevance, anchored by ideological predispositions set in one's formative (typically) pre-adult years, and set in an environment of information cues that then allow one to situate and update the preferences that derive from these identities and ideologies.

At the same time, we have also seen in these pages that not all White non-partisans are apolitical beings without well-developed partisanship and ideological beliefs as their primary political predispositions or without access to information cues to situate

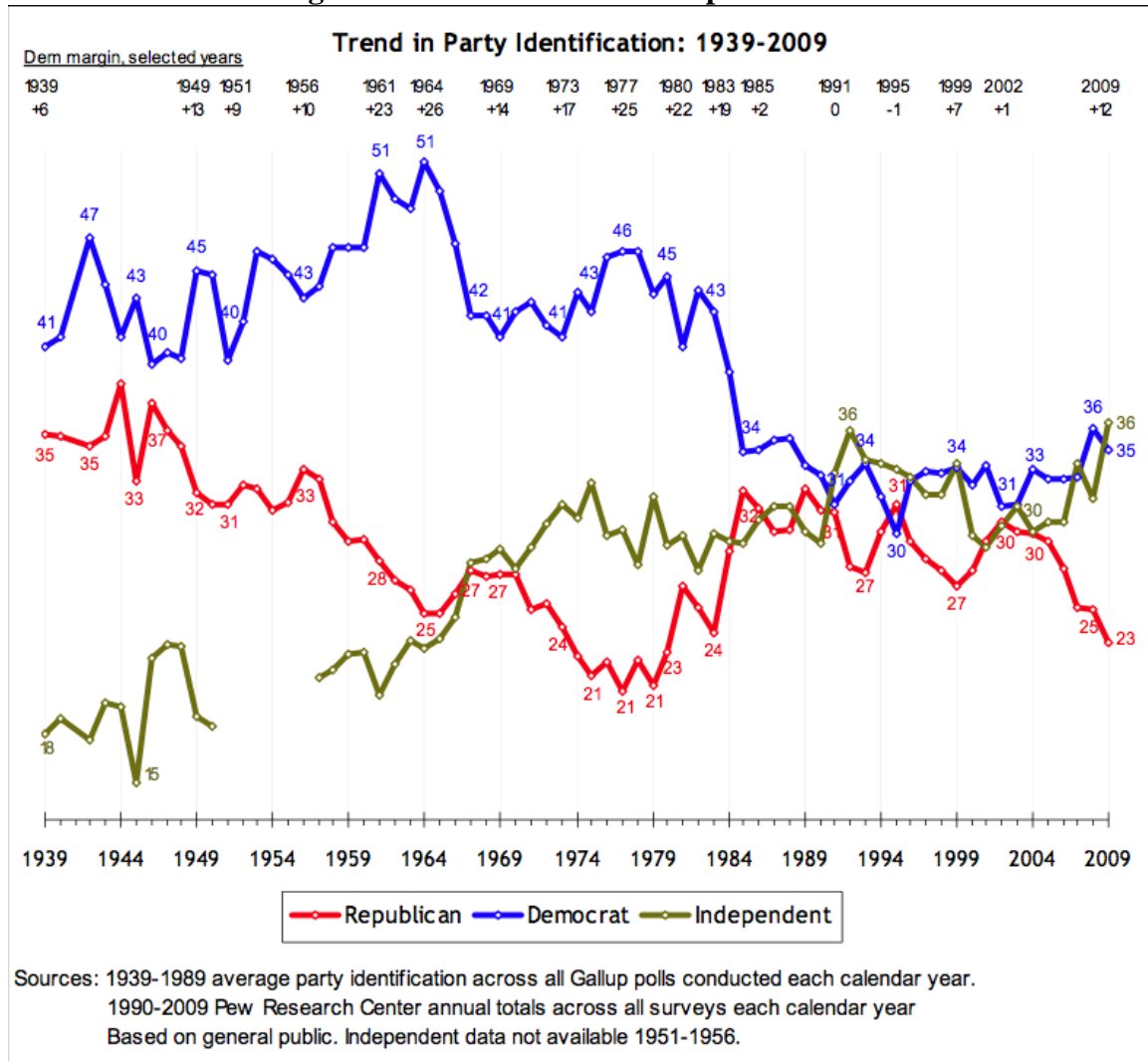
their own interests and preferences vis-a-vis the stated issue positions of party organizations and candidates. We saw in Chapter Seven that many Whites come to their non-partisanship through at least two other routes: their strong views on particular policy areas (in effect, being so distinct in their policy profile that identification with neither party is attractive); their cross-cutting ideological commitments (in effect, having a sufficiently mixed profile of liberalism and conservatism across issues areas that they are ambivalent about identifying with a party). We further saw in Chapter Eight that being a political Independent can – when a viable third-party alternative presents itself – be electorally consequential. Moreover, while it may still be too early to tell, the growing polarization of party competition in the last few election cycles (2000 to 2008) appears to be pushing Independent leaners to be increasingly distinct as voters from weak partisans.

The Growing Importance and Diversity of Nonpartisans

Our attention to America's racial and ethnic diversity and our efforts at building a more inclusive accounting of the partisan proclivities of the American public has led to a story that highlights the central role played by nonpartisans. This renewed focus on nonpartisans is warranted not only for the reasons we have outlined in this book but also for the significant growth in nonpartisanship across the nation. That non-partisanship is an important phenomenon requires no convincing to observers of recent trends in American politics. One of the main developments over the nearly seven decades-long history of survey data on party identification is a real expansion of the nonpartisan population. Figure 9.1 shows this trend from a recent Pew Research Center report, subtitled "Independents Take Center Stage in Obama Era" (2009). In the earliest Gallup

polls on partisanship, less than twenty percent of respondents self-identified as Independents; in the most recent polls, this proportion has nearly doubled.²²²

Figure 9.1. The Growth of Independence over Time



If we instead focus on the ANES version of the party identification question, the pattern is essentially the same with a few refinements. The proportion of Independents in the ANES also doubles from roughly 20 percent in the 1950s to almost 40 percent by

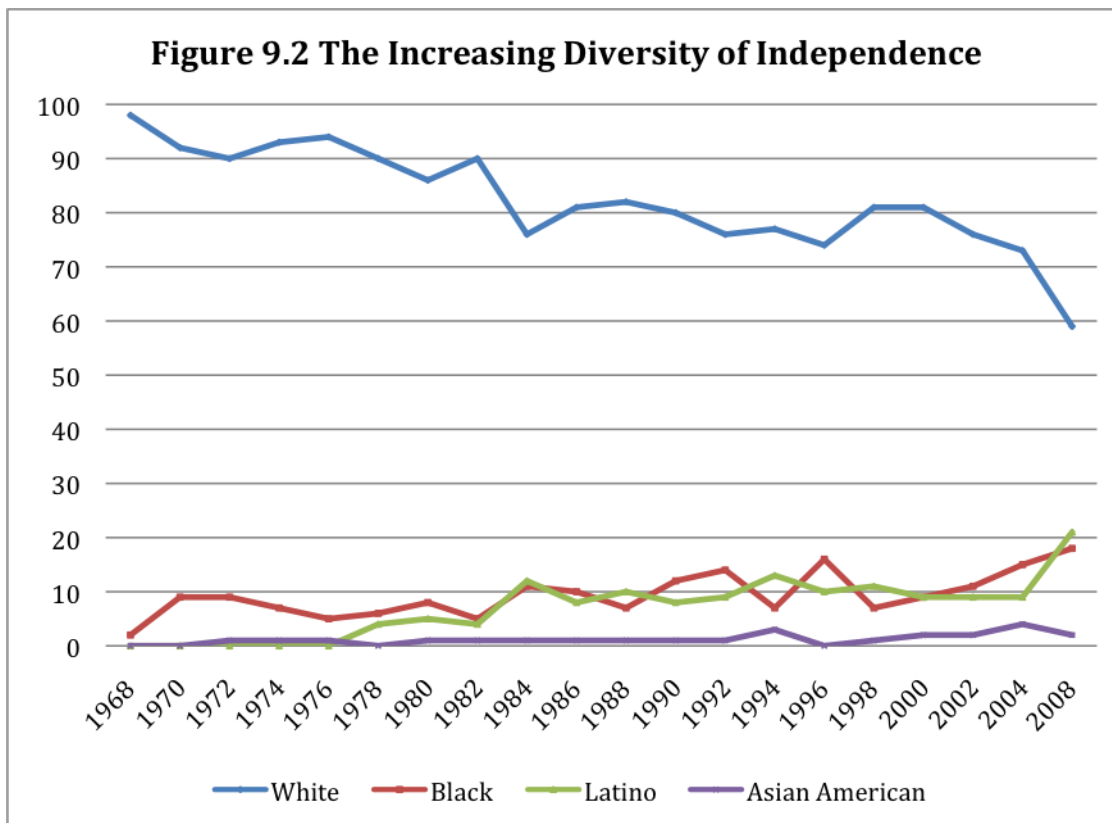
²²² Figure 9.1 further shows the shifts over time in the two-way split in partisanship between the Democratic and Republican parties. Here there is a modest Democratic advantage in the late 1930s and 1940s that then grows to a 20-plus percentage point margin favoring Democratic partisanship in the 1960s and 1970s. This margin almost completely vanishes by the 1990s, but in the most recent decade, there is some evidence of a return to a Democratic advantage.

1978. From 1980 onward, the proportion of Independents see-saws and by 2008 returns to historic highs with just over 38 percent of the public identifying as Independent.

Even Barack's Obama's presidential leadership has not appeared to do much to dent the public's aversion to partisan labels. Since the end of the 2008 campaign, published Gallup figures indicate that the proportion of the public that identifies as Independent has grown roughly 8 percentage points to a near record high of 38 percent in the fourth quarter of 2009. Although we readily admit that many of these nonpartisans are aligned with either the Democratic or the Republican Party, there is no doubt that there are more than enough uncommitted nonpartisans to sway most of the electoral contests in this nation.

There is also little doubt that race plays a significant role in this story of growing nonpartisanship. While it was reasonable to argue that Independence was a white phenomenon in the 1950s and 1960s when the foundational studies of party identification emerged, that is decidedly not the case today. As Figure 9.2 demonstrates, back in the mid-part of the 20th Century almost 95 percent of all nonpartisans were white. However, according to the ANES, that figure has dropped consistently over time. In 2008, only 59 percent of all nonpartisan identifiers are white – still a majority but far from an overwhelming one.²²³ As demonstrated here and as we have seen throughout this book, there is a salient and growing diversity among non-partisans, colored by race and contextualized by immigration. To understand and more importantly to try to attract today's nonpartisans, parties and candidates will have to seriously consider the racial dimensions of nonpartisanship.

²²³ This 59 percent figure is substantially smaller than the proportion of adults in the nation who are white (69 percent), confirming that racial and ethnic minorities are particularly prone to choose nonpartisanship.



Lessons for America's Parties

These trends make it eminently clear that neither the Democratic nor the Republican Party can afford to ignore either non-partisans or the diversifying electorate in the United States. What lessons can we then offer parties and their candidates based on our research? The first and most obvious lesson is that this growing nonpartisan population can be fruitfully targeted by the nation's political operatives. Our analysis suggests that today's nonpartisans can no longer be dismissed as non-ideologues disinterested in the game of politics. Within the ranks of the nonpartisan population there are still many apoliticals who will ignore any range of entreaties from the political sphere and who will remain largely immutable on the sidelines of the country's democracy. But

the nonpartisan population is now a compellingly diverse one. In the midst of this diverse nonpartisan population is an array of individuals who would – if properly targeted – become fully engaged in the politics of the nation.

If we recognize that there are multiple routes to nonpartisanship and if we see nonpartisans as being untrusting of parties that they do not know well, or as ambivalent of parties that they do not neatly fit into, or unsure of parties that do not cater to their interests, then there is reason to believe that the nonpartisan population can be integrated into partisan politics and mobilized in the electoral arena. The environmentalist seeking genuine commitments to scale back greenhouse gases and reverse environmental degradation, the Mexican American looking to either party for direction on amnesty and comprehensive immigration reform, the libertarian longing to be free from the twin scourges of big business and big government, or the Chinese American who seeks a party who will stand up to the human rights abuses and unfettered urbanization in her home country are all open to partisan appeals.

Indeed, there is already ample evidence that this kind of recruitment can work. The rapid mobilization of millions of immigrants and their supporters in response to Congress's 2006 efforts at immigration reform testifies to the possibilities. Similarly, the increase in naturalization rates, voter turnout, and Democratic Party identification among Latinos that occurred in California in the aftermath of the Republican Party's efforts to pass Prop 187 – an anti-illegal immigrant initiative – also confirms the potential for engagement (Bowler et al 2006, Pantoja et al 2001). Field experimental studies show that contacting individual Asian Americans and Latinos with simple phone calls can expand voter turnout by appreciable numbers highlight the promise of this segment of the

electorate (Ramirez and Wong 2006). Finally, there may be no fresher and more forceful a proof point on the efficacy of mobilizing communities of color than the 2008 presidential election. More than 90 percent of the estimated 5 million new voters in 2008 (compared to the 2004 election), according to the 2008 Current Population Survey, were African American, Latino, and Asian American.

Today's minorities are no different from the minorities of yesterday in one very important sense. They are politically approachable and readily mobilized. In the case of immigrant minorities, at present they may be particularly apt not to participate in American electoral politics and they may be remarkably ambiguous and uncertain about the nation's partisan landscape but that is only because the two parties in the current era have failed to directly and actively engage them. Or, in the case of African Americans, they may feel taken for granted and boxed in by few exit options beyond racial separatism and ideological conservatism.

The reasons why political parties have not chosen more directly to target these new electorates are numerous. Some reasons speak to the shifting organization capacity of political parties, which have grown weaker locally, more resource-dependent, and more candidate-centered nationally. Other reasons illuminate the transformed terrain of electoral competition, with the ever-growing ideological polarization of party elites and activists, the strategic impetus to maintain existing party coalitions, and the lingering, if not obsessive, attentiveness to technologies of micro-mobilization and narrow-casting in battleground districts and among "swing" segments of the electorate. Perhaps the most troubling of reasons, however, is the questionably cynical resort to symbolic (perhaps even culturally inauthentic) overtures toward minority electorates – seemingly aimed

more towards to reassuring more established segments of the electorate that a party is not intolerant and hate-mongering than towards mobilizing communities of color themselves.

In light of these reasons, how then should parties extricate themselves from these nettles that keep African Americans at bay and Latinos and Asian Americans in check? We hone in on possible strategies, or lessons, for political parties to draw about non-partisans. The first is the rationalist logic of racing to the median voter's ideal point. Faced with a diverse electorate, one conventional logic has been to target the median voter with a middle-of-the-road approach. We contend, however, that current demographic realities and an array of findings in this book indicate that this logic is less sustainable. Given the increasingly multi-dimensional nature of the American public, it is far from obvious where the median lies and less than clear that if the parties do try to race to that median, who this strategy will attract.

In a world in which most of the political actors fall neatly along a single spectrum from liberal on the left to conservative on the right, there are compelling reasons to believe in the efficacy of a median voter strategy. But in a political world where multiple factors like information, ideology, and identity play a role, in which many dimensions impinge on partisan choice, and in which different imperatives dominate the choices of each racial and ethnic group, that strategy is likely to be less profitable. For each of the racial and ethnic groups that we examine in this book, there may not be much of a median to target. African Americans are, as a whole far from the national median, whites are increasingly definable as issue publics and ideological ambivalents, and an astonishingly high proportion of Latinos and Asian Americans are ideological non-identifiers. A median position – however that might be defined – is unlikely to be attractive to any of

these groups. Quite unsurprisingly, we agree with observers that the decisive turns in the last three presidential elections – especially 2000 and 2004 – were not centripetal, towards the median voter, but rather centrifugal efforts to mobilize the base of the Republican Party.

We suggest that to be successful in America's increasingly diverse electorate, candidates and political parties will have to consider a multifaceted and multi-racial campaign. This is an approach that the Democrats and Republicans have been reluctant to pursue in the recent past. When racial considerations were incorporated in partisan strategies in the past few decades, it was usually to try to use race to lure whites together into a dominant and largely exclusionary majority. The successful efforts of the Republican Party to portray the Democratic Party as the 'black party' led, by almost all accounts, to a fairly robust coalition of traditional Northern Republicans and racially conservative Southern whites (Edsall and Edsall 1991, Frymer 1999, Black and Black 2003). The well publicized targeting of illegal immigrants in the policy programs of most recent Republican presidential candidates appears to be a replay of this black southern strategy adapted to the fact that Latinos now represent the largest and potentially the most threatening racial minority group. For the most part, the response of the Democratic Party has been to try to ignore race altogether. The countermove of "Third Way" Democrats to leave race off the center stage is often epitomized by Bill Clinton's rejection of Sister Souljah but is more broadly an attempt to keep racially contentious issues like affirmative action out of the electoral equation. The silence of many of today's Democratic leaders on immigration is, in many ways, a continuation of this strategy.

Current demographic realities and the partisan patterns that we have highlighted in this book make both of these approaches increasingly untenable. The white portion of the adult population is at 69 percent and falling. Moreover, a growing proportion of American whites are racial liberals and racial optimists. In the context of the 2008 election, for instance, Michael Tesler and David Sears (2010) powerfully show that their “racial resentment scale” – for decades, wielded by scholars as a probative measure of the lingering residues of racism, refashioned to modern times – now cuts both ways. The relationship of racial resentment to white voters’ preferences in the 2008 presidential contest is more telling for those on the low end of the scale (whites who harbor no resentment towards racial progress) than those on the high end of the scale. As a consequence, a whites-only coalition of fiscal, moral, and racial conservatives is no longer sustainable, but for short-term and shortsighted fusillades of fear mongering.

The growth, diversity, and increasing activism and empowerment of communities of color also suggest to us that color-blind and post-racial approaches will require a great deal more hoe-work than political parties and their candidates seem willing to toil through. African Americans, no matter how electorally “captured” they may be on paper, are clearly not honor bound to accept a continuing role as a silent and decidedly junior partner in the managing coalition of the Democratic Party. Latinos and Asian Americans – in the absence of deeper partisan roots – will continue to look to partisan cues that signal their recognition and standing as a group. Even President Obama, for all his historic success in representing the potential transcendence of racial “groupism” in American politics, has on multiple occasions been brought back down to the street-level politics of “wise Latinas,” “Beer Summits,” and “Tea Baggers.”

The alternative that we offer is to communicate multi-vocally across the spectrum of racial and ethnic segments of the electorate. To borrow a term used to describe Lorenzo de Medici's grip on power during the Italian Renaissance, this approach is to be a "robust actor" (Padgett and Ansell 1993) – exploiting to great electoral effect the cross-cutting identities, ideological ambiguities, and heterogeneous interests that characterize today's American body politic. Thus, a savvy party or politician can, for example, simultaneously appeal to Chinese-American interests with a crack down on China's human rights violations, to white voters with a middle-class tax cut, and to Latino citizens with increased public education funds. The key is to exploit the multi-dimensional nature of the American public by appealing to each group on areas of particular concern to that group. Since the areas of unique concern to one group can often be orthogonal or inconsequential to the core concerns of a second (or third or fourth) group, this multi-pronged approach can accommodate a fairly diverse array of interests – an accommodation that is a near necessity given the wide ranging experiences and disparate issue concerns that now shape the electorate. The basic intuition here is to leverage racial diversity rather than put all one's political chips into one group or ignore race altogether.

This appeal to racial multi-vocality is not new. Black candidates have, for decades, been walking this electoral tightrope by trying to simultaneously calm white fears by promising racial equanimity and mobilize black voters by speaking to the core racial concerns of the African American community. Black mayoral candidates like Tom Bradley often pursued this strategy by consciously using different voices with different audiences. One set of speeches was designed for primarily white spectators and a

noticeably altered script was employed for largely black audiences. Although the contrasting concerns of black and white voters in cities made this electoral equation difficult to navigate, empirical evidence suggests that this bi-racial strategy has been both widespread and increasingly successful (Hajnal 2007).

A more relevant and likely more convincing exemplar of this approach is the Axelrod-Obama strategy during the 2008 Presidential election. President Obama, as we noted in the first pages of this book, did not build his campaign around an appeal to white voters nor did white voters push him over the top. At the same time, the public face of Obama's campaign as post-racial implies too strongly the irrelevance of race on the part of both the candidate and his constituents. Here, we simply note that there has been an unusual degree of identity claims made on Obama's behalf, each taking its own Morrisonian turn.²²⁴ Rabbi Arnold Wolf, head of a synagogue in Obama's own South Side of Chicago, proclaimed, "Obama is from nowhere and everywhere—just like the Jews. He's Black, he's White, he's American, he's Asian, he's African—and so are we." In a similar vein, the *New York Times* reporter Jodi Kantor described the First Family's multi-vocality thus: "The family that produced Barack and Michelle Obama is Black and White and Asian, Christian, Muslim, and Jewish. They speak English; Indonesian; French; Cantonese; German; Hebrew; African languages including Swahili, Luo, and Ibo; and even a few phrases of Gullah, the Creole dialect of the South Carolina Low country."²²⁵

²²⁴ Toni Morrison famously described Bill Clinton, in a 1998 article in the *New Yorker*, as "our first Black President." In Morrison's terms, "Clinton displays almost every trait of Blackness: single-parent household, born poor, working-class, saxophone-playing, McDonald's-and-junk-food loving boy from Arkansas."

²²⁵ Even one of us could not resist the opportunity to co-author an essay cheekily titled "Barack Like Me" on the extent to which Obama could be claimed as the nation's first Asian American president (Omi and Lee 2009).

Although Obama was uniquely situated to speak multi-vocally to America's diverse electorate, we do not believe the strategy of racial multi-vocality need be *sui generis* to this case and the near cult of personality surrounding Obama's candidacy. Requisite to the success of racial multi-vocality is a deeper understanding of America's growing diversity and, to put a finer point on it, the multiple roots of partisanship and nonpartisanship in America. For a politician of Barack Obama's autobiography, such a deeper understanding may come more as a felt intuition than as a learned maneuver. There is always an obvious danger that attention to the needs of one group will incite anger and rejection from another. Or, worse yet, parties and their candidates who blunder through their perhaps earnest appeals to speak multi-vocally – Gerald Ford's tamale-shucking, John Kerry's attempt to claim the symbolic mantle of the "second black President of the United States," Mitt Romney's summoning call of "who let the dogs out," and, yes, Barack Obama's infamous gutter ball in a Pennsylvania bowling alley – may suffer from irrecoverable embarrassment and notoriety.

Carefully nuanced and artfully executed, this kind of strategy is possible for a range of candidates. A successful racial multi-vocality entails knowledge of and attention to the diverse realities of both partisanship and nonpartisanship. It entails carefully culling through a political agenda to hone in on issues of particular concern to one group that are sufficiently peripheral to other groups that strong stands on these issues will not repel support from other groups. For Latinos, that issue might be some narrow elements of immigration reform. For Asian Americans, access to higher education might be an area to make in-roads without inciting an equal and opposite reaction. Anti-

discrimination efforts might similarly attract black support without provoking hostility from other groups. The winnable set may be thin, but the list could go on.

At present, one party – the Democrats – has an inside track on this strategy. Past opposition by Republican leaders to policies designed to try to ensure racial equality in the voting booth, in housing, and in many other aspects of American society, and current Republican stands against immigration and immigrants themselves have, in the minds of many Americans, marked the Republican Party as the party of white interests. By contrast, past support of the civil rights agenda by the Democratic Party and the visible backing of the Democratic Party by large numbers of racial and ethnic minority voters have garnered the Democratic Party a fairly widely held reputation for being pro-minority. The results of the 2008 presidential election only served to highlight the multi-racial nature of the Democratic coalition and the largely white character of Republican Party support. On the Democratic side, Obama garnered a clear majority of the Black, Latino, and Asian American vote and some 43 percent of the white vote. On the Republican side, 91 percent of John McCain's votes came from white Americans. Finally, Obama's ongoing presence as the nominal head of the Democratic Party should at least temporarily accentuate this Democratic advantage.

But the partisan consequences of America's increasingly diverse electorate are far from settled. The Democrats may have a clear advantage at present but as we have repeatedly highlighted in this book, the most dominant forces in this racial equation are ambivalence and uncertainty. The largest segment of the Latino and Asian American population is not Democratic identifiers but rather non-identifiers. Combined non-identifiers and Independents make up the clear majority of both groups. All told 56

percent of Latinos and 57 percent of Asian Americans identify as Independent or as non-identifiers.²²⁶ Perhaps even more alarmingly for the Democratic Party, some 41 percent of Latinos see no difference in how the two parties serve their group's interests (PEW 2007). A nearly identical 42 percent of Asian Americans in the 2008 NAAS see no difference between the two parties on the single issue that they declare to be most important to them. Among blacks, racial considerations are still central and Democrats are still seen by most as the party that is most sympathetic to black interests. But more and more African Americans are unsure about just how well the Democratic Party is serving the black community. Almost thirty percent of blacks feel that the Democratic Party does not work hard for black interests. And even within the white population, there are ample nonpartisans whose ideological views and issue preferences engender considerable uncertainty about which party to support.

There are also clear opportunities for the Republican Party to exploit. Large segments of the minority population hold relatively conservative ideological views. Some 21 percent of Latinos, 13 percent of Asian Americans, and 15 percent of African Americans label themselves as conservative. For both Latinos and blacks that is higher than the proportion who identify as liberal and for Asian Americans the conservative figure is only slightly smaller than the liberal segment of the population. Moreover, Republican issue stances on gay marriage, abortion, women's rights, and other key moral issues could appeal to broad segments of the black, Latino, and Asian American communities. Finally, most of the minority population remains outside the electoral

²²⁶ Similarly, in terms of ideology a plurality - roughly 49 percent of Latinos and 34 percent of Asian Americans - express uncertainty about where to place themselves on the basic liberal-conservative ideological spectrum that divides the two parties.

arena with few strong views about either party and no apparent allegiances in the American political sphere. Over 65 percent of the minority adult population did not vote in the last presidential contest. These are individuals who could be mobilized, who could be attracted to a party, and who could sway electoral outcomes.

Thus the eventual outcome of this battle for the hearts and minds of America's diverse uncommitted population is far from clear. Current Democratic advantages could be translated into a massive and lasting Democratic majority if the bulk of the minority population continues to view Democrats as their party. But if Republicans alter their tactics and appeal more earnestly to this growing minority population, then the huge numbers of non-identifiers could easily swing victory to the Republican side. What is clear is that the patterns that we have detailed are, in some senses, only the tip of the iceberg. If current demographic projections are accurate, racial and ethnic minorities will make up half of the nation's population by the mid part of this Century. A party platform that seeks either to use race to unify whites or that simply does not incorporate the diverse experiences and interests of the minority population will likely fail. Politicians and parties ignore these lessons at their peril.

A final observation we offer is that our proposed strategy of racial multi-vocality is aimed somewhat narrowly as a political gambit between two warring factions, each vying to gain the upper hand. What is clearly at risk when catering to the organizational and electoral self-interest of the Democratic and Republican parties is some notion of a greater collective goal, whether it be the national interest, social welfare maximization, civic republican ideals of virtue, or some other conception of the good. As such, not all normative accounts of partisanship and the web of plural, civic associations they might

engender in the service of an idealized democratic politics are sustained by our brass-tacks discussion of racial multi-vocality. Under a bandwidth of liberalism, however, both individual and group interests are likely to be more crystallized and better pursued if both Republican and Democratic parties can be made to appeal more broadly and deeply to America's increasingly diverse electorate. The prospects for these interests grow even rosier if and when other political parties are able to break the viselike grip of the Republican and Democratic parties on electoral competition in the United States. Until the such a time arrives where either or both of these possibilities becomes an eventuality, we are reminded that the work of forming a more perfect union takes time. Here the central challenge of partisan politics within an ever more diverse democracy is well captured by Charles Merriam's classic text on parties written nearly a century ago:

"It is, of course, inevitable that the formation of a common political consciousness and of a common agreement upon questions of public policy should be more difficult in proportion as the population is more diverse and easier in proportion as it is more homogeneous. Each race brings its own standards, customs, and ideals and these must first be blended before a common understanding in regard to common matters can be reached. In the meantime, appeals to race pride and race prejudice will be made with more or less success by various interests, selfish or unselfish as the case may be, and in this way the day of reaching a common understanding will be so much delayed. This does not involve any reflection upon any particular race, but is merely the statement of the simple fact that it takes time for strangers to reach a common understanding (1922, 182)."

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