

The Dynamics of Party Identification

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This article presents a model of individuals' party identification that contrasts with previous models. Past models, with the few recent exceptions noted, assume a hierarchical relationship either from identification to other aspects of political behavior, such as the perception and evaluation of issues and candidates, or from these behaviors to party identifications. The model discussed here places party within a dynamic concept of the electoral process and tests several hypotheses about factors producing changes in identifications. The first factor, consistent with the spatial-type issue voting models, estimates the effects of the relative proximity of each party to the individual's own policy preferences. Second, we examine the effect of the actual voting decision on subsequent identifications, with the expectation that if votes differ from previous identifications, there is a resulting shift in partisanship. Finally, we examine the hypothesis that identifications become less susceptible to change as people age and accumulate political experience. When combined with other research, the results indicate a model of the electoral process in which party identifications are both influenced by circumstances specific to each election and influence other behaviors. This nonrecursive model has a number of implications for the development and evolution of individual and aggregate partisanship. These implications are discussed at the end of the article.

Descriptions of electoral behavior, and specifically of the development and role of party identification, have changed substantially during the past several years. Recent empirical studies suggest a complex dynamic process that differs from previous views in important ways. This article argues for a specific model of how party identifications evolve and estimates empirically the effects of forces hypothesized to produce change.

The initial survey-based concept of party identification was rooted in the psychology of groups (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960, chaps. 6 and 7). Parties were viewed as the major group objects on the political horizon. Once imbued with positive or negative associations by an individual, these groups acted as powerful organizing mechanisms for the person's political cognitions, which would otherwise rest on only the most rudimentary stores of information.

Party identification allowed individuals to "know" more about persons and policies associated with the parties than was possible on the basis of their direct contact with issue positions and candidate characteristics.

The impressive stability of the party identification measure over successive cross-section samples and over panel studies suggested that the sense of identification was not easily modified. Although recall questions suggested that change did occur, most of this was attributable either to personal forces associated with changes in social or physical location, such as "a marriage, a new job or a change in neighborhood," or to major social upheavals such as those of the New Deal (Campbell et al., 1960, p. 150). As the latter were rare, and the former idiosyncratic, continual, systematic change in identification was discounted as an important aspect of political behavior. Instead, the continuity of identification argued for a long-term, stable factor in citizens' political lives.

This stability, when coupled with the prevailing beliefs about political socialization, leads to the construction of a theory that cast party identification as a variable exogenous to the electoral process. One's party identification was seen as developing in youth, largely as a result of one's association with parents' partisan preference, and was ubiquitous in its influence over the other aspects of electoral behavior. The forces that might impinge upon identification had the character of random noise, arising from unpredictable and seemingly nonpolitical factors. Only in the

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most unusual situations did political events affect partisan preferences, and in these cases the effect was concentrated on the young and the previously quiescent. Thus the subject of change in party identification was largely dismissed.

In contrast to the concept derived from survey studies, the theoretical work based on rational choice viewed party preference as extremely malleable and placed it as a clearly endogenous part of electoral behavior (Downs, 1957). Party preference was treated in this model as a function of voters' issue positions and the positions of the parties. The cost of information might lead voters to adopt methods of evaluating party positions which could lag behind actual party policies, and this could produce apparent loyalty to a party. However, once provided with more current information, voters would immediately reevaluate their party preferences. Thus there was no party loyalty per se in the Downsian framework. Stability of party preferences would result only from stable policy preferences and party platforms. Further, the Downsian model took voters' issue positions as exogenous to party preference. In this structure party identification was a summary of policy preferences which was totally responsive to changes in those preferences and played no role in organizing other political perceptions or behaviors, quite unlike the *American Voter* model.

Recent empirical work questions both of these traditional models of party identification. Studies by Fiorina (1981), Jackson (1975a, b), Markus and Converse (1979), and Page and Jones (1979) present analyses that indicate that partisanship responds to other political forces, results that are at odds with the *American Voter* model. Yet the same work also indicates that partisanship is not merely a restatement of current policy preferences, as the Downsian model predicts. If it is indeed the case that partisanship is not accurately described by either of these dominant models, we must construct a revised model of partisanship which simultaneously accounts for the responsiveness and the stability of partisanship. The important questions now concern the structure of the endogenous relationships, which include party identification. What circumstances and actions are likely to alter identifications, by how much, and for which individuals? The answers to these questions will indicate how much stability we might expect in identifications and what situations are likely to lead to change. This information, in conjunction with findings about the role of party identification in influencing other political behaviors, will help us consider the electoral process in its dynamic context, with many aspects subject to change and evolution.

Our attention in this article is focused on the

dynamic aspects of party identification. We enumerate several of the recent hypothesized influences on party identification and specifically test two of these, using data on the American electorate for the period from the late 1950s to 1980. The emphasis in this article is on comparing the extent and magnitude of the changes in party identification likely to result from these forces.

Effects on Party Identification

The basic structure of the dynamic model is that party identification at time t , denoted here as $P(t)$, is a function of previous identification, denoted as $P(t-1)$, some other influences, which for the moment we will designate as X , and a random disturbance, $u(t)$.¹ The simplest expression of the model is

$$P(t) = a_0 + a_1X + a_2P(t-1) + u(t).$$

For the moment, X stands for any factors that might systematically affect identifications at t . The coefficients a_1 and a_2 indicate how exogenous partisanship is and how stable partisan preference is. If we have a_1 close to 0 and a_2 close to 1, then we find ourselves with the traditional model of party identification, where identifications are predetermined and any change in identifications is related only to the stochastic term. If we find the reverse, with a_1 close to one and a_2 equal zero, and with X being the issue-based spatial evaluations of each party, we have the rational choice model where current identifications only relate to relative issue positions at time t . If neither a_1 nor a_2 is close to zero, partisanship is likely endogenous (depending upon the definition of X), but with a degree of stability related to the relative size of the coefficients.

Now consider the implications of various values of a_2 for our theories of party identification. If a_2 is equal to 1.0, partisanship is stable unless it is disturbed by the X in our equation. If, on the other hand, a_2 is greater than one, then party

¹We assume, along with both *The American Voter* and the Downsian models, that the partisanship concept (as opposed to its operationalization in empirical research, which is discussed subsequently) is a continuous unidimensional variable, i.e., representable by the real number line, with the zero point representing indifference to the two parties. Increasing positive values represent monotonically increasing Republican partisanship, whereas increasingly negative values indicate greater Democratic preferences. In the context of the theoretical model, we conceive of X in a similar fashion, with positive values indicating pro-Republican factors and negative values indicating forces favorable to the Democrats.

identification is self-reinforcing, and we would expect increased individual partisanship over time, unless confronted with some X that runs counter to past party preference. In contrast, if a_2 is less than one, identifiers will move away from their party, toward neutrality, unless given some positive reason, (X), to remain loyal.² Our empirical efforts are directed at estimating the magnitude of a_1 and a_2 so that we have a direct empirical test of the different models of partisanship.

The specification of the X in our equation is central to theories of partisan change. Three different factors have been identified as possible influences on partisanship. One hypothesis (Jackson, 1975b), consistent with the issue-based spatial models of electoral politics, sees these forces as derived from individuals' relative placement of the two parties' platforms and candidates in comparison with their own preferences. The closer one of the two parties is to the person's preferred policies, the more likely and the stronger the person's identification with that party. If we denote by $E(t)$ the evaluation of the parties' relative positions at time t , this model is

$$P(t) = a_0 + a_1E(t) + a_2P(t-1) + u(t).$$

This model is the one most consistent with the early rational choice, spatial-type models. Jackson defined $E(t)$ in ways analogous to the proximity structure of those theoretical models. In this model, if a_1 is large relative to a_2 , it indicates that identifications are reformed at each election and are stable only if individual preferences and the positions of the parties relative to those preferences are stable. Using data from the 1960 and 1964 presidential election studies, Jackson estimates $a_1 = 0.52$ and $a_2 = 0.66$ for the average voter, indicating substantial responsiveness to issue preferences as well as a clear continuity of party identification.

A second model of party change is that of Markus and Converse (1979), who propose that current identifications are a function of past identifications and the vote in the previous presidential election. This gives

$$P(t) = a_0 + a_1V(t-1) + a_2P(t-1) + u(t)$$

where $V(t-1)$ contains two dummy variables, one for a Democratic and one for a Republican choice. They estimate $a_1 = -0.10$ and 0.49 for Democratic and Republican votes respectively, and $a_2 = 0.73$ for a voter, or 0.63 for a nonvoter.³ They conclude that partisan attachments are "very durable" between elections, and that although the effect of a single vote is "hardly dramatic," a series of votes counter to identifications might lead to changed partisanship (Markus & Converse, 1979, pp. 1060-1061).

A third model of partisanship is the retrospective version (Fiorina, 1981, chap. 5). In this model, identifications are adjusted based on the performance of the incumbent party. For example, those concerned with the performance of the economy will become more likely to favor, or will favor more strongly, the incumbent party in good times and defect to the other party in bad times. Fiorina does not summarize his evaluations in a single measure, but treats evaluations on several issues separately. For the period from 1958 to 1960, evaluations on domestic economy and foreign affairs each have coefficients (a_1) ranging from 0.4 to 0.6. In the 1974-1976 models, coefficients range from 0.2 for economic performance evaluations to 0.5 for assessments of Ford's performance. The coefficients on previous party identification (a_2) range from 0.75 to 1.00, with a mean between 0.8 and 0.85. These results indicate "a pronounced element of continuity" in party identification, but also the potential for retrospective evaluations to play a "major role" in shifting partisanship (Fiorina, 1981, p. 96).

An important variation on the above models is proposed by Converse (1969) and Jackson (1975b), who argue that the nature of party identification is such that the dynamic relationship changes with age. Converse hypothesizes that as people accumulate political experience, they become stronger in their partisan identifications. Thus a person enters the electorate with a pre-conceived party identification developed from the relevant socializing experiences. As political behavior reinforces that identification, it becomes stronger and more partisan. Jackson's version of the aging hypothesis is that as people accumulate

²Incidentally, note that any set of values for a_2 could be consistent with the *correlational* stability of party identification. Although a_2 values different from 1.0 would indicate a strengthening or weakening of party identification, these changes would affect all partisans equally, thus leaving the relative positions of individuals unchanged. It is the relative positions which are measured by the correlation coefficient. A strengthening or decaying partisanship may still produce high correlational stability, yet most discussions of stability are based on the correlational measure.

³Differences in scales and statistical techniques used by the various authors make direct comparisons of the coefficients inappropriate. They are included here only for completeness. For example, Markus and Converse (1979) score party identification from -3 to +3, whereas Jackson uses a 0 to 1 scale. If expressed on Jackson's scale, the Markus and Converse vote coefficients would be approximately -0.03 and 0.08.

experience, it becomes more difficult to alter their previous party identification. This specification is expressed by making the coefficients a function of the person's age.

$$P(t) = a_0 + (a_1 + a_3 \times \text{age})E(t) \\ + (a_2 + a_4 \times \text{age})P(t-1) + u(t)$$

with the expectation that a_3 is negative and that a_4 is positive. Thus younger voters might exhibit greater sensitivity to current evaluations, whereas older individuals will exhibit more stability in the face of evaluations that run counter to previous partisanship. The age coefficients may reflect a built-in increasing resistance to change. Such a phenomenon might also occur if older voters are less likely to let a single election or campaign alter their opinion or expectations about longer-term party positions and policies. For example, an older Republican in 1964 or an older Democrat in 1972 may easily discount the platforms of their party in those elections as not being truly representative of the party. On the other hand, younger voters with less experience and fewer observations may not be so sure of future party positions. Jackson finds that the evaluation and past-party age-related effects are of opposite sign and equal magnitude (approximately 0.023 per year). With these results, the influence of current evaluations ranges from 1.0 for a 20 year old to 0.1 for a 60 year old, and the weight of past party increases from 0.15 to 1.05 for people of the same ages.

We examine three of these four models explicitly with data on the American electorate collected during the 1960, 1964, 1976, and 1980 presidential campaigns plus the information in the panel studies that link the 1956 and 1960 and the 1972 and 1976 elections. The hypotheses tested are those for current evaluations, past vote, and the age effects. The evaluations related to current campaigns are examined by constructing variables corresponding to the relative distance between the individual's preferred position on a set of issues and his or her perception of each party's position on these issues. This assessment is done for the presidential elections of 1960, 1964, 1976, and 1980, so that we can examine the influence of these evaluations on party identification in those elections, as measured in the preelection interviews. These estimations parallel Jackson's done with the 1960 and 1964 studies. For 1964 and 1980 these estimations require the simulation of a panel, as Jackson did for 1964 with his study.

The second hypothesis examines the effect of the vote on subsequent party identification. The important question here is whether the voting decision itself is the motive force, or whether it is simply a surrogate for other factors that may in-

fluence both vote and partisanship. We specifically address the former question with the 1960 and 1980 election studies, which were the only presidential years in which party identification was measured both before and after the election. In this case we define $P(t)$ and $P(t-1)$ as the post- and pre-election identifications. If the voting decision itself influences partisanship by differing with past values, we should observe this effect in the postelection measure. On the other hand, if electoral and campaign forces have already influenced pre-election identifications and also influence vote choice, we should observe no influence of the vote itself on subsequent partisanship.

The final proposition we test is the one concerning possible age effects. Jackson's estimates indicate that the influence of current evaluations decreases and the influence of past party increases with age. A second proposition is that only the weight of past identifications increases with age. The effect of current evaluations or past vote may stay the same, but as the person ages and accumulates experience, the weight given to past party increases, meaning that for given values of evaluations or vote and past party we should expect less change in current identifications. In essence, as one accumulates political and partisan experience, the importance of this experience in determining current identifications increases, but without a corresponding decrease in the importance of the evaluation or vote differential.

Empirical Procedures

Data

In order to estimate our model, we need measures of party identification at times t and $t-1$, age at time t , previous votes, and issue evaluation at t . The first three are quite conventional and require little comment. Our construction of the issue-evaluation variable is complicated because question wording and format have changed over the years, and the various forms are not readily equated. In resolving this difficulty, we try to capture the essential aspects of issue evaluations as we construe the concept. This conceptualization is derived from that found in spatial models of voting behavior. Citizens locate themselves and the parties on various policy dimensions, and evaluations are measured by the relative distances between ideal policy and the alternatives offered by the parties (as individuals perceive those offers).

The engineering of our issue-evaluation variable generally follows the description presented in Jackson (1975b). The precise details of the construction of the evaluation index are excessively

tedious to describe. To spare the reader, we describe here only the general procedures, omitting discussion of idiosyncrasies imposed by question formats and practical data constraints. A data appendix describing these details is available from the authors.

In the 1960 and 1964 election studies, respondents were asked to state their preference on each of a series of policy issues. They were then asked which party was most likely to pursue the policy in question. We are able to construct our issue index by matching these responses. For example, if a respondent thinks the government should provide a job for everybody who wants to work and believes that the Democratic party is more likely to see to it that jobs are provided, we infer a Democratic preference on this issue. Conversely, if the respondent *opposes* government provision of jobs and believes that the Democrats are more likely to provide jobs, we infer a Republican preference. If no difference is perceived between the parties, or if the respondent has no opinion on the issue, we score him or her as indifferent on this issue and omit this issue from our evaluation variable. We distinguish the strength of preference by whether the respondent does or does not strongly favor or oppose the policy. This results in an index that ranges from -1 for a strong Democratic preference to -0.5 for a weak Democratic preference to 0.0 for indifference. Positive scores are assigned for the corresponding Republican preferences. The net evaluation variable is computed by taking the mean of these individual policy evaluations for those policies where the person states a preference and sees a difference in the parties.

Since 1972 the CPS National Election Studies assess issue positions and perceptions using seven-point scales anchored at the ends by opposing sides of the particular issue. For 1976 and 1980, we construct our issue evaluation scales by averaging the distances between the respondent's position and each party, yielding an average distance score for the Democrats and one for the Republicans. We omit issues where the person has no preference or cannot locate either party. The difference in these averages is taken as the summary issue evaluation measure in 1980. In 1976 we supplement this scale in order to include the issues of inflation, unemployment, and defense spending which were not asked in the seven-point format.⁴

⁴The inflation and unemployment questions are in the format, "Do you think inflation would be handled better by the Democrats, by the Republicans, or about the same by both?" The defense-spending question first gauges the respondent's position and then asks which party would be more likely to cut defense spending. We

For both years the evaluation measure is scaled to range from -1 to 1 as in the 1960 and 1964 models. The score of -1 (or +1) indicates complete agreement between respondent's and the Democrat's (or Republican's) position *and* maximum distance between this position and that of the Republicans (or Democrats). This scaling is arbitrary, and we by no means intend to imply that the metrics are the same across the studies. We suspect, in fact, that a +1.0 score on the 1976 and 1980 index reflects a more intense preference than the corresponding score in 1960 and 1964. This reasonable assumption must go untested, however, as we have no way of constructing comparable metrics.

The model we have specified is clearly dynamic and so requires that we have estimates of party identification across time. This naturally suggests the use of the 1956-1960 and the 1972-1976 SRC/CPS panel studies. Our analysis does, in fact, rest on these studies, and they provide us with compelling evidence. In addition, however, we have other data available to us, although we must make some assumptions in order to use them. We are able to construct simulated panel data using the 1964 and 1980 election studies. We do this by estimating the relationship between a set of exogenous sociodemographic variables, and $P(t-1)$ from the preceding presidential election study and by assuming this relationship holds for the subsequent sample.⁵ Since our exogenous variables are subject to little change, we are able to estimate the 1960 and the 1976 party identification of the 1964 and 1980 respondents using their exogenous characteristics, which we observe only

score the inflation and unemployment questions as -1.0 for a pro-Democratic response, 0.0 for a neutral response and 1.0 for a pro-Republican response. The defense-spending question follows the same scoring used in the 1960 survey. We compute a mean score for these three issues and average this score with the seven-point distances to create our final evaluation variable for 1976.

⁵This procedure can be described symbolically in the following way. We let Z_i denote the set of individual characteristics describing party identifications and $P_i(t-1) = Z_i B(t-1) + U_i(t-1)$, which is the reduced-form expression for party identification at period $t-1$ (e.g., 1960 and 1976). Using the cross-section studies at $t-1$ (1960 and 1976), we estimate $B(t-1)$, denoted as $b(t-1)$. We now let Z_j be the set of values for the appropriate variables for person j in the current election's survey (1964 or 1980). The subscript j denotes that respondents in this current survey are not the same as those in the previous election's survey, denoted by i , who were used to obtain $b(t-1)$. Past party identification for individual j in the current election t (1964 or 1980) is given by

$$\hat{P}_j(t) = Z_j b(t-1).$$

at the later time period. Although some of these exogenous variables, such as place of residence, may change, others are quite stable, such as education, age, religious preference, and race. We are confident that we can estimate prior party affiliation based on these observed relationships in previous studies. These simulated panels allow us to extend the time range covered and to provide a further test of the stability of our results by considering a larger variety of elections.

That both the 1960 and 1980 studies repeated the party identification question in the post-election interview provides a further use. These are the only years in which this was done. The import is that we are able to examine the effect of the vote which is cast between the first and second interviews on party identification. If voting decisions per se affect party identification, we would expect that effect to show itself most clearly in this case, where other factors have only a little time to mask the vote effect.

Thus our data analysis rests on four election studies: two true panel studies and two simulated ones. The pre- to postelection interviews in 1960 and 1980 also constitute true panels, so in fact we have four panels that allow us to test the central hypotheses using the most compelling designs. The simulated panels provide additional evidence with which to evaluate the conclusions drawn from the other studies.

Estimation Method

Once we forsake the concept of an exogenous party identification and allow party affiliation to be influenced by other electoral circumstances, our estimation methods must take into account this simultaneity among the different aspects of political behavior. So far we have discussed the proposed party identification model without reference to its place within a structured system. We must now admit that our model is but part of a larger system, one in which party identification and issue evaluations at time t are simultaneously related. This is no surprise, of course, as it is not disputed that partisan preferences influence other political phenomena. What is new is that we now also allow those other factors to influence partisan allegiance. In fact, partisanship is endogenous at $t-1$ as well as at t , and we cannot treat $P(t-1)$ as exogenous. Our estimation procedure must take account of this nonrecursiveness. The use of a consistent estimator, such as two stage least squares, is indicated. But there are additional complications related to the common measures of partisanship.

We contend that partisanship, as theoretically defined in both *The American Voter* and the spatial models, as used historically in empirical

studies, and as we use it here, is a continuous unidimensional variable, with increasing values in one direction indicating growing Republican partisanship, whereas movement in the opposite direction indicates greater Democratic preferences. (See note 1.) The traditional party identification questions segment this variable at six points or thresholds, creating the seven ordered partisan categories. This procedure is analogous to the theory underlying n -chotomous or multi-category probit analysis. Individuals with the most pro-Democratic partisanship values will fall below the first threshold and will be classed as strong Democrats. Those with partisanship values between the first and second thresholds will be classed as weak Democrats, whereas those with even weaker but still pro-Democratic preferences will fall between the second and third thresholds and will be included in the leaning Democrat category. This process continues until we get to those whose partisanship values are above the sixth threshold and who are therefore classed as strong Republicans.

Some recent research questions the adequacy of this measure of party identification and the unidimensional concept that underlies it. The debate in the literature raises two major challenges to this view. Some authors (e.g., Dennis, 1981) maintain the unidimensional partisanship concept, but argue that there are "intransitivities" in the party identification scale caused by imperfect measurement. Specifically, some people with definite partisan preferences (and the behavior to match), classify themselves as independent leaning partisans (either Democrat or Republican) because of an unwillingness to admit to being party loyalists. For some of these respondents, the concept of "independent" may exert a positive attraction despite consistent party preferences. The difficulty this produces is that some people classed as independent leaning partisans are actually as or more partisan than weak identifiers. This point of view stresses the imperfections in measurement which allow such respondents to be incorrectly classified and simply argues for better measures.

Other participants in the debate (e.g., Weisberg, 1980) claim that the concept of party identification itself is multidimensional. In particular they argue that citizens are attracted to each party and to the category "independent" as symbols and may be separately favorably or unfavorably disposed to any of these three symbols. This produces a three-dimensional notion in which partisanship consists of the response to each of the three symbols. One may be simultaneously positive toward both, one, or neither of the parties. In such a case there is no reason to order the party identification dimension as the traditional measure does. Strong Democrats may actually be

closer to strong Republicans—if they like both parties strongly, but the Democrats slightly more—than they are to independent-leaning Democrats in the three-dimensional space.

We contend that the empirical issues raised in the above debate are small and likely to have little or no effect on our results, and if the phenomena are larger than we believe, the consequences are conservative with respect to a finding that current political forces can alter partisanship. These two arguments are elaborated below.

The independent-leaning Democrat and independent-leaning Republican categories are routinely small in terms of the number of respondents so classified, ranging from 11 to 24% of the sample. Given that we obviously expect a substantial proportion of people in this category are so classified because they are truly between pure independent and weak partisan, only a very small number of people are inappropriately classified. Furthermore, there is a very strong, monotonic relationship between the seven-point scale and an alternative measure of partisanship, defined by the difference between Democratic and Republican feeling thermometer scores. Only two of the eight comparisons of weak with independent partisans violate the expected monotonic relationship in presidential elections from 1964 to 1976, and then by insignificant magnitudes (Weisberg, 1980, p. 46). (This proportion falls to two in ten with inclusion of the 1980 data.) Thus the seven category traditional variable is consistent with the relative evaluation of each party, or with the unidimensional concept of partisanship. Thus, for our purposes, the concerns about the traditional measure are unlikely to have any substantial effect upon our estimates.

If we assume that the problem is more serious, in that a significant number of people are erroneously grouped in the leaning category each year, the consequence will be an upward bias to the coefficient assessing the stability of partisanship (α_2 in the model) and an underestimate of the coefficient on any variable that might be producing change in partisanship (α_1).

Consider a person whose issue-based evaluations of the parties is partisan, but who maintains an identification that is an independent leaner because of the attraction of being independent. The model predicts an alteration in partisanship in response to the apparent disequilibrium between evaluations and past partisanship. However, the person's attachment to the symbol of independence indicates that he or she will not alter his or her category on the traditional seven-point scale. The statistical consequences of this process, particularly if it occurs in a large number of observations, are to overstate the effect of past partisanship and to underestimate the effect of

evaluations. In this situation, our conclusions about the influences on party identification are understated, not overstated. Thus, if we err, we do so in favor of the view that holds that partisanship is exogenous.

If we suppose that party identification really is multidimensional for many respondents, as Weisberg argues, then we are unable to specify a priori what effects this might have on our estimates. The size and even the direction of the effects would depend on the distribution of respondents within the partisan space at each election. If the independence dimension dominates the party dimension, as Weisberg suggests, then our procedure is conservative, as argued above. However, if a large number of people feel simultaneously very warm toward both the Republicans and the Democrats, we might find the opposite effect on our estimates. In short, the implications of Weisberg's model for our estimates are quite uncertain, if significant numbers of respondents follow his structure. Rather than attempting a test of the multidimensional concept of partisanship, our model contributes to the discussion by testing some implications of the traditional unidimensional notion which remain relevant and important to the many readers who accept the conventional concept and measurement of party identification.

Now we return to the problem of estimating the parameters of our model. The ordinal nature of the party identification variable rules out the use of a linear model, whereas the simultaneity of the model disallows simple probit methods. We can accommodate both of these constraints by using a two-stage probit procedure (see Lee, 1981; Nelson & Olson, 1978). The estimation is analogous to two stage least squares, except that the ordinal probit model is used in each stage rather than least squares.

In the studies for 1956, 1960, 1964, 1972, 1976, and 1980, as the first stage, we have estimated the relationship between a set of exogenous variables and party identifications and the thresholds between strata of the party identification variable using n -chotomous probit analysis (McKelvey & Zavoina, 1975). These thresholds are defined only to a linear transformation of the underlying scale. A convenient standardization of this scale is to center the pure independents at zero, indicating no partisanship, and to make the difference between the weak Republican threshold and the weak Democrat threshold equal one. This allows us to compare the relative distances between partisan thresholds over time by defining a basic metric and location for the underlying party identification scale. The resulting thresholds plotted by election year are shown in Figure 1 and Table A1 (Appendix). We are impressed by the stability of the relative distances among the various

thresholds. Among the middle categories—weak identifiers, independent leaners, and pure independents—the position of the thresholds hardly change over the 24-year period. What change does occur is at the threshold for the strong partisans. Here the positions of the 1956 to 1964 set are approximately the same, and the later years also appear homogeneous.

We construct predicted lagged partisanship values from the first stage estimations. In order to compare the coefficients for lagged party across years, we employ the standardization discussed above. Thus in all years our underlying lagged and current party variables have the same unit distance. We follow a similar procedure for past vote (an ordinal trichotomy), with the unit distance being the difference between the thresholds for a Democratic and a Republican vote. (Nonvoters form the middle group.) We also construct a first stage estimate of issue evaluation, although we use ordinary least squares in this case because the range and distribution of our evaluation variable follows that of an interval measure. (The estimated first stage probit and OLS equations are presented in the Appendix.) The second stage then uses the *n*-chotomous probit model and these

estimated values for evaluations or votes and previous party (multiplied by age where appropriate) to estimate the structural equation for current party.

Results

Our results support strongly hypotheses about the effect of current evaluations and about the age effects as they relate to the weight of past identifications. We discuss the results related to the age effects first, then work backward to the full equation and some typical examples of the amount of partisan shift expected for different people and situations.

Age Effects

The hypothesis that the effect of current evaluations and votes on current identification would decrease with age is not empirically supported. Just two of the coefficients are negative, as hypothesized, and only the coefficient in the 1980 evaluation model is both of the correct sign and statistically significant. Table 1 shows the estimated age coefficients for the evaluation and

Figure 1. Probit Thresholds for Party Identification, 1956-1980

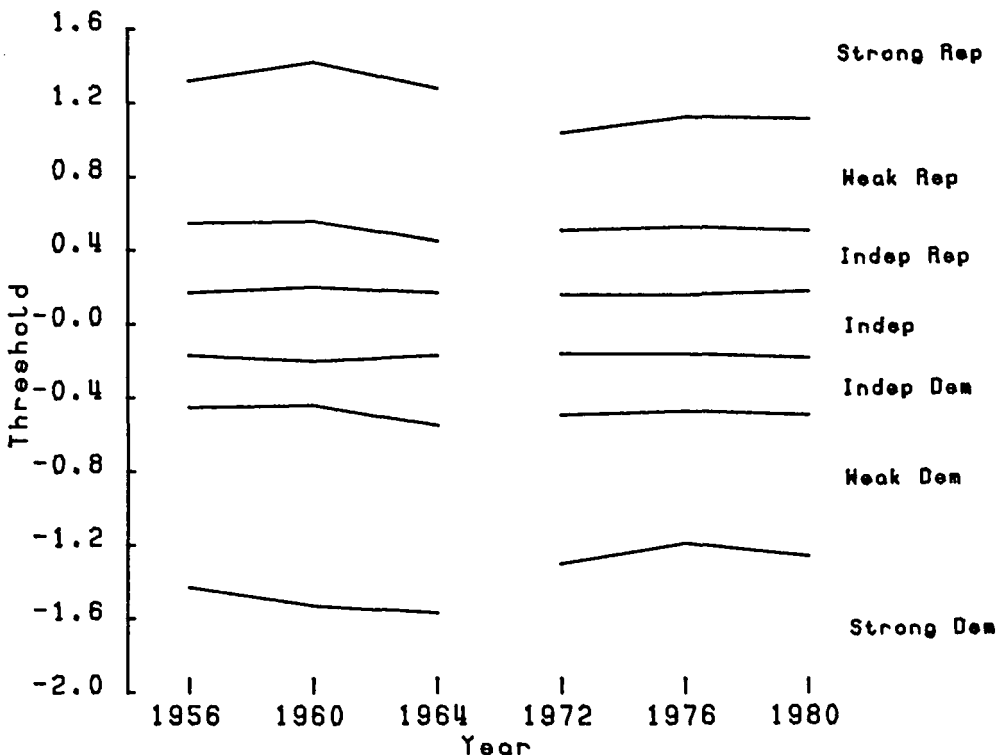


Table 1. Issue and Vote: Age-Related Effects

Model	Coefficient*	χ^2 **	Significance
Evaluations			
1960	0.029	1.6	0.21
1964	0.016	1.9	0.17
1976	-.011	0.4	0.53
1980	-.039	4.4	0.04
Vote			
1960	0.013	6.5	0.02
1980	0.008	4.1	0.05

*Coefficients on the age-times-evaluation and age-times-vote variables.

**Chi-squared statistic testing null hypothesis that age-related coefficient equals zero, computed as minus two times the change in log of the likelihood function.

past vote variables, the chi-squared test for the hypothesis that the true coefficient is zero, and the significance level.

The age coefficient is small and insignificant in three of the four tests of the evaluation model, leading us to accept the hypothesis that the effect of evaluation does not change with age. The coefficient for age and past vote, although large relative to its standard error, nevertheless has the wrong sign. An acceptance of this result would require a model that anticipates an *increase* in the effect of vote on party identification for older people. Although one might construct some plausible *ex post* explanations for such an effect, it is quite contrary to the expectation that partisanship becomes more stable for older persons. For this reason we reject the conclusion that vote effects increase with age.

The age effects associated with previous party identifications are quite significant and very stable over our different estimations.⁶ The last column in Table 2 shows these estimated coefficients, and the standard error calculated in the second stage estimation.⁷ Only the estimated coefficients for

1976 deviates from the pattern of the other coefficients. The remainder are close to 0.013, except for the 1980 previous vote equation where the value is 0.010. We conclude from these results that age definitely increases the stabilizing effects of party identification. Our best guess is that this effect of past identification on current identifications increases by 0.13 for each ten years of age.

Evaluation and Vote Effects

The forces with the greatest impacts on present party identifications are the evaluations of the parties' positions relative to the preferences of the voter during the current campaign. These coefficients are consistently close to one and statistically significant. (See Table 2, column one.) The magnitudes are hard to compare over time because of the change in the construction of the variable with the introduction of the seven-point spatial scale in 1976. We find that a one point difference in overall evaluations has the same effect on party identification, but that one point difference may indicate a greater distance from party positions in 1976 and 1980 than it does in 1960 and 1964.

The coefficients assessing the impact of votes on subsequent identifications are small in both years in which we have pre- and postelection information. These coefficients, also shown in Table 2, are 0.17 for 1960 and -0.02 for 1980. Neither one indicates a very substantial effect, although 1960 provides some support for the hypothesis. The results in 1980, however, when there is at least as much reason to expect a relationship between vote and past party identification, given the Democratic defections to Reagan, do not show any such effect. We conclude that the voting decision, by itself and not as a surrogate for other factors, exerts little if any effect on sub-

⁶We can test for the importance of the $\text{Age} \times P(t-1)$ effect as we did in Table 1 for $\text{Age} \times E(t)$ by dropping the term and comparing the likelihood of the full and reduced models. In all but one year (1960) the results indicate that the model with $\text{Age} \times P(t-1)$ is statistically preferable to the model with $\text{Age} \times E(t)$ although the differences are not great. Since there is no theoretical reason to believe that the effect of issues changes with age whereas the effect of party does not, we prefer to keep the $\text{Age} \times P(t-1)$ effect presented in Table 2.

⁷The standard errors will not, however, be correct. Nelson and Olson (1978) report the results of a Monte Carlo experiment which suggest that the reported standard errors may actually be too large. Using these standard errors may therefore be a conservative procedure.

Table 2. Estimated Party Adjustment Models

Model	Evaluation (<i>t</i>)	Party (<i>t</i> -1)	Age × Party (<i>t</i> -1)
1960	1.193 (0.338)	0.221 (0.219)	0.013 (0.004)
1964	0.969 (0.214)	0.123 (0.119)	0.013 (0.002)
1976	1.044 (0.318)	0.509 (0.160)	0.006 (0.003)
1980	1.259 (0.496)	0.056 (0.126)	0.015 (0.002)
Model	Vote (<i>t</i>)	Party (<i>t</i> -1)	Age × Party (<i>t</i> -1)
1960	0.173 (0.079)	0.342 (0.174)	0.013 (0.003)
1980	-0.020 (0.124)	0.584 (0.169)	0.010 (0.002)

sequent identifications. We expect the forces that influence the vote and that might indirectly influence identifications by this method have already done so, as implied by the large current evaluations coefficient.

Past Party Influence

The weight accorded previous identification, and thus our assessment of the amount of stability in people's partisanship, is an important, but for most ages not a dominant, influence on current party preference. Table 2 shows the estimated coefficients for previous party and Table 3 their value for three different age levels. For the youngest voters, the weight of previous party is generally in the range of 0.45 to 0.55. By age 65, the weight is substantially greater, approximately 1.0. For the equations relating vote decisions to party identifications, the weight of past party

varies from approximately 0.7 for the young voters to approximately 1.2 for older ones.

Our results indicate considerable potential for shifting party identifications if the current party positions differ from people's preferences and from past positions, most notably for younger voters. Figure 2 summarizes these potential shifts for voters of different ages, evaluations, and previous party identifications. In constructing this figure, we use a composite equation taken from the four evaluation models,

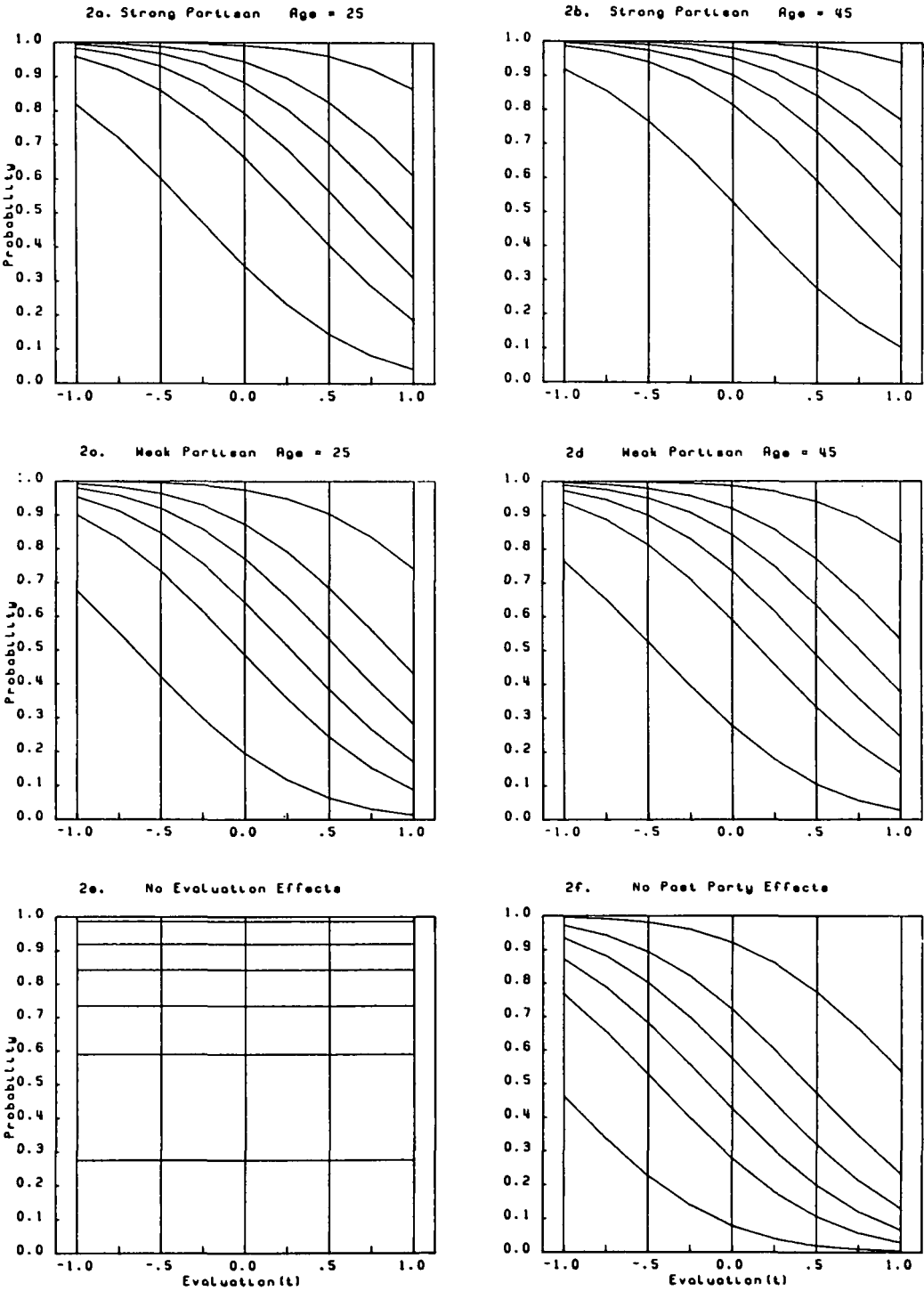
$$P(t) = 1.12E(t) + (0.23 + 0.013\text{Age})P(t-1).$$

The figure shows the probability of a person having a particular current party identification for different evaluations, given his or her age and previous identification. The vertical distances of each of the seven "spaces" show the probability of being in each of the seven ordinal partisan categories

Table 3. Lagged Party Coefficient for Different Ages

Model	Age			Evaluation
	25	45	65	
1960	0.55	0.81	1.07	1.19
1964	0.45	0.71	0.97	0.97
1976	0.66	0.78	0.90	1.04
1980	0.43	0.73	1.03	1.26
Model	Age			Vote
	25	45	65	
1960	0.67	0.93	1.19	0.17
1980	0.83	1.03	1.23	-0.02

Figure 2. Estimates of Current Party by Evaluation, Age and Past Party, and for No Evaluation and No Past Party Effects



—a strong Democrat, a weak Democrat, . . . , and a strong Republican—as one moves from the bottom to the top of the graph for a given evaluation. For example, Figure 2a indicates that a 25-year-old, previously strong Democrat with strongly pro-Democratic evaluations has approximately a 0.82 probability of remaining a strong Democrat, and approximately a 0.14 (0.96-0.82) probability of becoming a weak Democrat. In contrast, if confronted with strongly pro-Republican evaluations, the same individual has only a 0.04 chance of remaining a strong Democrat, and about an even chance of becoming at least an independent Republican. The distributions are computed for strong and weak Democrats, but we have selected values so this illustrative model is symmetric for Democrats and Republicans.⁸

For comparative purposes, we show what the distribution of predicted current party would be if current evaluations had no effect on the current party identification of a 45-year-old weak Democrat (Figure 2e), and if past party identifications had no effect on current party (Figure 2f). From these comparisons we see that for all individuals there is a definite impact of current evaluations, as all the distributions change markedly with differing evaluations, except of course Figure 2e. The importance of past identifications, particularly for older voters, is seen by comparing the distribution of current identifications for our 25 and 45 year olds with those of someone whose past partisanship has no influence on current identifications, shown in Figure 2f. Both former distributions are shifted upward in the partisan direction, indicating that for a given past party and current evaluation, people are more likely to hold to or to remain close to the previous identification than if past party has no effect. Comparing Figures 2a and 2b or Figures 2c and 2d, we see that for older persons, the distributions are shifted upward, indicating a greater propensity to stay with a previous identification. Thus, to obtain an equivalent shift in party identifications, the older person must have a stronger evaluation favoring the other party.

Implication of Results and Concluding Comments

The most significant implication of our analysis is that party identification is not the fixed, exo-

genous force organizing other political behavior that we thought at one time. Party identifications are subject to change as individual preferences change, assuming fixed party positions, or as a consequence of shifts in the party positions, if individual preferences are stable, or both. Identifications are more than the result of a set of early socializing experiences, possibly reinforced by subsequent social and political activity.⁹ They are a person's accumulated evaluations from previous elections and are dependent upon the events and the actions of political leaders during these elections and during subsequent terms in office. In this way, each campaign leaves its imprint, or residue, on individual identifications. The adjustment process is more evolutionary than implied by the pure spatial models, in that previous partisanship exerts a significant brake on shifts in party preferences, particularly as people age.

The definition of our evaluation variable argues that the impetus for change comes from shifts in people's perceived party proximities relative to their own preferences. Individual evaluations and thus aggregate partisanship may shift for a variety of reasons. New issues, or old issues that become more salient, may divide the electorate in new ways, such that regardless of the positions the parties are perceived to adopt, they will lose some of their past supporters and gain new ones. Alternatively, but less likely, numerous individuals' preferences may shift, leading to one or the other party gaining a competitive advantage. The positions adopted by one or both parties may shift, leading to shifts in voters' evaluations and thus to shifts in party strength. Such an event occurred between the late 'fifties and the mid-sixties on the civil rights' issue, with the Republicans shifting from being seen as equally, or slightly more, pro civil rights than the Democrats, to being seen as substantially less favorable to federal civil rights actions.¹⁰ Finally, shifts in partisanship will result if the incumbent party's performance is seen as

⁹Our model is quite consistent with the basic socialization work. At an individual's first election, the "previous party," denoted by $P(t-1) = P_0$, will be the partisanship derived from that person's politically socializing experiences. Our results merely contend that the political events in that first election will alter partisanship if evaluations differ from past party. This expectation is supported by the results of Franklin's (1982) analysis of data from the Jennings and Niemi socialization panel study. Franklin finds a substantial effect of issue evaluations, even when parent's partisanship, representing socializing influences, is included in the partisanship model.

¹⁰Voters clearly perceived these changes in party positions. In both 1960 and in 1964, respondents were asked which party was more likely to follow a pro-civil rights

⁸By symmetric we mean we could reverse the definitions of each graph in Figure 2 so that partisanship referred to strong and weak Republicans and so that evaluations moved from most Republican (+1.0) to most Democratic (-1.0) going from left to right. In doing this the probability strata go from strong Republican to strong Democrat as we move up the figure.

unsatisfactory, leading to less favorable evaluations, as described in the retrospective voting literature (see Fiorina, 1981; Key, 1966).

The nature and distribution of the resulting shifts in evaluations among the electorate determine whether we see aggregate shifts favoring one party or realignments or both. Unlike the traditional view, which led to the belief that realignments could not operate through conversion of partisan identifiers, but must instead be based on mobilization of new participants, our results argue that conversion is by no means a trivial aspect of party system change. Although previous partisan attachment acts to restrain change, it is like a sea anchor, which retards drift rather than arrests it entirely. If the tides of policy evaluation are strong enough, conversions can and will take place.

The continuity of aggregate partisanship and its susceptibility to shifts is related to the population's age distribution. Because evaluations have a relatively greater effect on the party identifications of the young than the old, a society with a younger electorate will exhibit less political stability than an older polity experiencing comparable political circumstances and events. Volatility in preferences, in the importance of different issues, or in perceived party positions will create less stable identifications and less continuity in all aspects of electoral behavior within the younger electorate.

This endogeneity of party identification found in this article has substantial consequences for our traditional notions of the development of political attitudes and perceptions and for our models of

individual electoral behavior. These relationships are made all the more complex by the continued findings that party identifications influence individual and perceived party issue positions (Jackson, 1975a, 1979; Markus & Converse, 1979). The proper model incorporating both sets of findings is quite simultaneous in structure, with substantial interactions among preferences, perceptions, and identifications. This simultaneity produces a very complex, dynamic but substantively interesting process in which these aspects of individual electoral behavior may be reinforcing at some times and not at others. In situations where one party consistently takes positions preferred by an individual, the subsequent evaluations will strongly favor that party, leading to a strengthened identification. This stronger identification means the individual is more likely to adopt positions on issues that are consistent with those of the party and to see the party as promoting policies he or she favors. The net result is a continued strengthening of identifications, greater clarity and consistency of preferences, and more sharply perceived differences between the parties. If this process continues for any length of time, the result is a very consistent-appearing voter with considerable stability among all political attributes.

The same relationships can also accelerate change. If for some exogenously determined reason, such as mentioned above, evaluations change and this structure begins to decay, the set of interactions will enhance and speed the process. The consequence of these exogenously produced changes is to alter individual evaluations and thus to weaken party identifications. This weakening, or possibly a more substantial shift in identifications, then begins to lead to new issue positions that are more consistent with identifications, and to altered perceptions of the parties' relative positions that more clearly reflect the emerging set of preferences, evaluations, and identifications. Thus the strong interconnections among the terms used to model individual electoral behavior imply a potentially dynamic process which is subject to considerable change or stability, depending upon the circumstances holding at a given time. Such a dynamic structure is quite different from the hierarchical party or preference-dominated system described by either of the conventional traditions.

With parties, or at least party leaders, being able to affect perceived relative party positions and the subsequent evaluations, one of the important forces determining the partisan alignment is the decisions of these leaders. Whether these forces are exogenous or not depends upon how closely such decisions, or the selection of leaders, are tied to the distribution of preferences. In either case, we argue that contrary to the view that

policy. For the school desegregation and fair employment and housing questions, these distributions are:

	School Desegregation		F E P C	
	1960	1964	1960	1964
Dem	0.13	0.50	0.20	0.54
No diff/ No op	0.70	0.44	0.62	0.39
Rep	0.17	0.06	0.19	0.07

Further, in the 1964 postelection interview, respondents were asked if they knew of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and what positions Johnson and Goldwater had taken. Of these people, 77% knew of the Act, and 96% of them said Johnson supported it, whereas 84% said Goldwater opposed it. Fewer than 1% of the respondents said Johnson opposed it, and fewer than 4% said Goldwater favored the legislation. (See also Pomper, 1972.)

party fortunes are largely dependent upon slow demographic changes or dramatic crises, the continual actions, decisions, and performance of party leaders affect partisan strength and provide the basis for competitive party strategies.

Appendix

Table A.1. Estimated Thresholds between Partisan Categories

Transition	1956	1960 (Pre)	1960 (Post)	1964*	1972	1976	1980 (Pre)
Strong Dem to weak Dem	-1.431	-1.532	-1.242	-1.570	-1.302	-1.194	-1.256
Weak Dem to indep Dem	-0.451	-0.443	-0.515	-0.549	-0.488	-0.473	-0.490
Indep Dem to indep	-0.171	-0.203	-0.196	-0.172	-0.158	-0.158	-0.180
Indep to indep Rep	0.171	0.203	0.196	0.172	0.158	0.158	0.180
Indep Rep to weak Rep	0.549	0.557	0.485	0.451	0.512	0.527	0.510
Weak Rep to strong Rep	1.324	1.422	0.995	1.283	1.035	1.128	1.121

*Thresholds for 1964 are based on second stage probit estimates. All others are first stage probit estimates.

Table A.2. Estimated First Stage Equation for E_t (OLS Estimates)

Variable	1960	1964	1976	1980
Constant	-.0874	-.3631	-.3728	-.0203
Father Dem	-.1935 (.0323)*	-.1074 (.0335)	-.1266 (.0195)	-.0610 (.0135)
Father ind	-.0219 (.0724)	-.0022 (.0689)	.0230 (.0366)	.0037 (.0227)
Born pre-1910	.0169 (.0574)	-.0363 (.0604)	.0159 (.0359)	.0117 (.0267)
Age	.0003 (.0020)	.0035 (.0017)	.0031 (.0008)	.0005 (.0005)
Nonwhite	-.1020 (.0586)	-.5492 (.0552)	-.2567 (.0325)	-.1829 (.0209)
Catholic	-.2676 (.0415)	-.1066 (.0413)	-.0612 (.0224)	-.0228 (.0157)
Jew	-.5501 (.0973)	-.4694 (.1009)	-.3033 (.0775)	-.1063 (.0399)
Urban	-.0477 (.0524)	-.0356 (.0531)	-.0198 (.0399)	-.0532 (.0257)
Rural	-.0032 (.0346)	-.0809 (.0436)	.0113 (.0276)	.0163 (.0252)
East	.0918 (.0392)	-.0450 (.0422)	-.0154 (.0240)	.0303 (.0170)
South	-.0336 (.0402)	.0339 (.0424)	.0461 (.0238)	.0224 (.0157)
Union member	-.1725 (.0363)	-.0970 (.0389)	-.0792 (.0219)	-.0336 (.0152)
Years of school	.0012 (.0062)	.0138 (.0066)	.0211 (.0043)	.0034 (.0031)
College grad	.0618 (.0626)	.0096 (.0631)	-.0660 (.0311)	-.0493 (.0227)
Income	.0023 (.0004)	.0010 (.0004)	.0004 (.0001)	.0003 (.0001)
R-square	.123	.121	.197	.126

*Standard errors are in parentheses.

Table A.3. Estimated First Stage Equations for P_t
(Probit Estimates)

Variable	1956	1960 (Pre)	1960 (Post)	1972	1976	1980 (Pre)
Father Dem	-1.0689 (.0904)*	-1.1501 (.0856)	-1.1133 (.0865)	-.8246 (.0602)	-.7891 (.0563)	-.7033 (.0520)
Father ind	-.3467 (.1990)	-.2807 (.1866)	-.1890 (.1895)	-.2970 (.1080)	-.1946 (.1013)	-.1149 (.0848)
Born pre-1910	.0880 (.1579)	-.0382 (.1491)	.1094 (.1523)	-.2003 (.1068)	-.1709 (.1002)	.1484 (.1001)
Age	-.0005 (.0055)	.0060 (.0051)	.0018 (.0053)	.0048 (.0024)	.0094 (.0022)	-.0021 (.0017)
Nonwhite	-.3686 (.1756)	-.4175 (.1595)	-.8310 (.1635)	-.7466 (.1006)	-.8023 (.0971)	-.6969 (.0826)
Catholic	-.4581 (.1118)	-.8253 (.1084)	-1.0600 (.1112)	-.2816 (.0670)	-.2234 (.0625)	-.1359 (.0588)
Jew	-.8941 (.2544)	-.7735 (.2495)	-1.5401 (.2630)	-.8752 (.2408)	-.7450 (.2171)	-.7542 (.1557)
Urban	-.4243 (.1430)	-.4598 (.1363)	-.2272 (.1410)	-.0846 (.1198)	-.1355 (.1129)	-.3091 (.0990)
Rural	.0097 (.0945)	.0295 (.0900)	-.0520 (.0922)	-.0764 (.0821)	-.0752 (.0772)	.1182 (.0934)
East	.5859 (.1063)	.5266 (.1015)	.6883 (.1050)	.0956 (.0713)	-.0093 (.0663)	.1713 (.0638)
South	-.6182 (.1142)	-.4979 (.1051)	-.5347 (.1062)	-.0440 (.0708)	-.1486 (.0662)	-.1174 (.0587)
Union member	-.4860 (.0996)	-.4673 (.0938)	-.5105 (.0965)	-.3151 (.0655)	-.3725 (.0618)	-.3202 (.0573)
Years of school	.0109 (.0175)	.0088 (.0163)	.0062 (.0170)	.0224 (.0128)	.0388 (.0120)	.0404 (.0119)
College grad	.0271 (.1725)	.2556 (.1617)	.1393 (.1654)	-.1178 (.0926)	-.0755 (.0867)	-.1256 (.0852)
Income	.0026 (.0012)	.0051 (.0011)	.0051 (.0012)	.0009 (.0002)	.0011 (.0002)	.0009 (.0002)

*Standard errors are in parentheses.

Table A.4. Estimated First Stage Equations for V_t
(Probit Estimates)

Variable	1960	1980
Father Dem	-.7784 (.0929)*	-.3736 (.0764)
Father ind	.0134 (.2064)	.0479 (.1296)
Born pre-1910	.0640 (.1663)	-.1516 (.1499)
Age	.0030 (.0056)	.0020 (.0026)
Nonwhite	-.5739 (.1672)	-.9203 (.1191)
Catholic	-1.6467 (.1259)	-.1061 (.0897)
Jew	-2.7452 (.3503)	-.4258 (.2490)
Urban	-.1057 (.1547)	-.2648 (.1532)
Rural	.1221 (.0994)	.2607 (.1439)
East	.5518 (.1183)	.0745 (.0976)
South	-.0906 (.1139)	-.1126 (.0870)
Union member	-.4215 (.1052)	-.4126 (.0861)
Years of school	.0296 (.0181)	.0288 (.0172)
College grad	-.0212 (.1842)	-.0251 (.1288)
Income	.0053 (.0013)	.0012 (.0003)

*Standard errors are in parentheses.

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