

# **The effects of political involvement and cross-pressures on multiple party identifications in multi-party systems – Evidence from Germany**

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**Abstract:** Despite being part of the original concept in “The American Voter”, multiple party identifications have rarely been analyzed. Based on a 2016 survey that is representative of the German electorate, we investigate the determinants of multiple party attachments in Germany. With the help of a new measurement instrument for multiple party identifications, we can show that multiple attachments are a common phenomenon in Germany: Nearly 30 percent of the respondents and more than half of all party adherents identify themselves with more than one party. Political interest and education as facets of political involvement have a significant effect on the likelihood of holding a multiple attachment within ideological camps. Cross-pressures lead to a higher probability of having multiple identifications between political camps.

## **1. Introduction**

Since the seminal work of Campbell and colleagues in the 1960s, party identification has become one of the most used concepts to explain voting behavior (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller 1954 [1971]; Campbell et al. 1960). From an orthodox perspective, party identification is seen as a long-term, relatively stable attachment towards a political party that is acquired during primary socialization. In Germany, with its relatively stable party system, this perspective is also common and is widely supported empirically (Arzheimer 2006). The standard indicator for party identification – regularly included in election studies since the 1972 German federal election (Berger 1973) – allows a longitudinal tracking of the extent and development of party identification in Germany. While it is rather common in the US context to think of an exclusive attachment towards either the Republican or the Democratic party, this is less clear for European multi-party systems where it is possible and likely that citizens could develop attachments towards more than one party (Weisberg 1980; Johnston 2006). However, research into multiple party identifications is rare (van der Eijk and Niemöller 1983; Schmitt 2009; Garry 2007), mainly due to a lack of appropriate measurement instruments.

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Recent studies from Germany point to the existence of multiple party identifications (Mayer 2017). What is missing is a more detailed study of the extent to which multiple party identifications occur in the electorate and at the determinants that lead to such multiple attachments. With the recent integration of a new measurement instrument for capturing multiple party attachments in the GESIS panel, a mixed-mode representative survey for Germany, we now have a validated instrument and representative data to further investigate in which combinations multiple identifications occur and how they could be explained. For the latter, we use determinants that we have deduced from the discussion about the concept of political involvement and considerations of sociological cross-pressures. Germany offers an ideal case to test our assumptions about the predictors of multiple political partisanship as it has a moderate pluralistic party system without any crucial divides (Ismayr 2009, 465). It has also had a long period of stability, and until 2017, the last relevant party entering the party system was the Left party in the 1990s. Furthermore, Germany contains parties from all major party families such as the Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, Socialists, Liberal Democrats and GREENS.

In the next section we outline both the theoretical framework for multiple identifications and how political involvement and cross-pressures might influence the development of such attachments<sup>2</sup>. Section three describes the data and operationalization, especially the new measurement instrument for multiple attachments. In the empirical section we first report the descriptive results of the extent to which multiple party identifications can be found in the German electorate, and whether political involvement and cross-pressures can explain these attachments. In the last section, we summarize the results and indicate the need for further research.

## **2. Theoretical framework: Dealignment, multiple identifications, political involvement, and cross-pressures**

The classic notion of party identification goes back to the “The Voter Decides” (Campbell et al. 1954) and “The American Voter” (Campbell et al. 1960). The theoretical foundations of party identification are based on reference-group theory in which the political party serves as the group to which the individual develops “[...] an identification, positive or negative, of some degree of intensity” (Campbell et al. 1960: 122). In this sense, party identification is used “to

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<sup>2</sup> In the paper, we use identification and attachment synonymously.

characterize the individual's affective orientation" (Campbell et al. 1960, 121) towards a political party.

In the first work of the Michigan group, "The Voter Decides" (Campbell et al. 1954, 115), the possibility of multiple party identifications was ruled out for the US two-party system. However, no reference to multiple party identifications can be found in "The American Voter" (Campbell et al. 1960), published six years later. Multiple party identifications seem highly unlikely in a polarized two-party system such as the US, where partisans of the two parties strongly oppose each other (e.g. Mason 2015). However, multi-party systems are usually characterized by coalition governments, where several parties cooperate, sometimes across ideological lines, in grand coalitions; hence "[...] especially in multi-party systems multiple identifications [should] not be surprising" (Weisberg and Hasecke 1999, 727). In these cases, voters have, with various degrees of intensity, affective attachments towards more than one party.

Currently, in many Western democracies, there is a coherent empirical trend that the proportion of citizens who identify with a political party, as well as the strength of their identification, is decreasing. This development is often labeled as "dealignment" (Dalton 2013, 29). The consequences of dealignment are controversially interpreted. According to Dalton, the decrease of the proportion of party adherents and the simultaneous increase of highly educated and politically interested citizens lead to the fact that the cognitively mobilized part of the electorate no longer needs party attachments to structure the political sphere. However, studies at the individual level have shown a positive effect of education and political interest on the development of party identification (Dassonneville, Hooghe, and Vanhoutte 2014; Albright 2009; Arzheimer and Schoen 2016). Furthermore, it has been shown that – at least for Germany – party identification is still the most important determinant of the voting decision, especially when its indirect effects, via other short-term variables, are adequately modeled (Schultze 2016).

The idea that people may develop attachments to more than one party is not novel (Weisberg 1980, 36). Western European multi-party systems, which are less polarized and which enable coalition governments, should make multiple party attachments even more likely than in the US. To explain long-term party attachments, only determinants that are on the same causal stage or that exist prior to party identifications can be taken into account. Considering the causal relationship of the determinants of voting behavior, according to Miller and Shanks in "The New American Voter", party attachments are influenced by political predispositions as well as

stable social and economic characteristics (Miller and Shanks 1996, 192). For our purposes, the explanation of multiple party attachments, the number of possible determinants, is therefore limited. Within the concept of political involvement, we focus on the level of political predispositions, whereas cross-pressures represent relatively stable social-structural characteristics.

Political involvement can be conceptualized in different ways, e.g. van Deth measures it by using subjective political interest, the frequency of political discussion, and the ascribed importance of politics for the respondents (van Deth 2008, 194–95). In communication research, political involvement is considered to be a two-dimensional concept that consists of a cognitive and a motivational component (Reinemann et al. 2013). The cognitive dimension is operationalized through education or political knowledge, and the motivational component is regularly measured by political interest (Reinemann et al. 2013, 42). In this interpretation, the concept is very similar to the concept of cognitive mobilization mentioned by Dalton (1984). In this study, we draw on this two-dimensional concept of political involvement. Political involvement is considered a relatively stable personal characteristic (Schmitt-Beck 2000, 56) or predisposition (Plischke and Bergmann 2012, 494). This means that highly politically involved people should have a greater ability to incorporate and process political information.

We assume that multiple party attachments, especially, are positively linked to education and political interest. What could be the underlying mechanism of this relationship? For an explanation, we modify the so-called “involvement hypothesis”: Highly politically involved citizens perceive more discrepancies and contradicting positions in the political agenda of parties than lesser involved citizens. Developing an attachment towards a party could be one possible way to deal with this complexity (Ohr, Dülmer, and Quandt 2009, 543). Engagement with the agenda of the parties should also result in a higher chance of holding a multiple identification. Generally, parties do not cover the entire policy positions of individuals. The examination of other parties’ policy stances could lead to a further attachment with a party that complements the already preferred party. Because of the cognitive effort that is necessary to find a complementary party, multiple party attachments should be more likely for cognitively mobilized people. Following this logic, we can assume that multiple party attachments should exist more often with parties of the same ideological camp that share similar values and goals than with parties that have a greater ideological distance.

Another possible determinant for multiple party attachments is belonging to different social groups whose members normally support different parties. The idea that social-structural

characteristics have an influence on electoral behavior has been prominent since the study of Lazarsfeld et al. (1948 [1969]). Following this perspective, people who live in a homogenous environment should develop a stronger party attachment than people in a heterogeneous setting with contradicting views. Combining this perspective with cleavage theory by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) allows the deduction of more explicit expectations for which party loyalties should be developed. In Germany, at least to some extent, the socio-economic as well as the secular-religious divide are still important for the voting decision (Debus 2012; Elff and Roßteutscher 2011, 2016). In addition, the value conflict between materialists and postmaterialists also matters (Poguntke 1993, 58–60). The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian sister party the Christian Social Union (CSU), are centre-right parties that combine Christian-conservative values with a preference for a social market economy, whereas the Social Democratic Party (SPD) can be placed on the centre-left of the socio-economic dimension (Niedermayer 2013). In 2013, the CDU/CSU and SPD formed a “Grand Coalition” which replaced the former Christian-liberal government (CDU/CSU/FDP). The Free Democratic Party of Germany (FDP) is a liberal party on the centre-right of the socio-economic dimension, while on the socio-political dimension it promotes libertarian values (Ismayr 2009). In the 1980s, the GRÜNEN (GREENS) entered the German parliament and has been a stable force within the German party system ever since. The GREENS are placed on the centre-left of the political spectrum (Stöss, Haas, and Niedermayer 2006). After German reunification, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) entered the German party system as the legal successor to the ruling party of the GDR. In 2007, it merged with the WASG, a leftist splinter group of the SPD, and now forms Die Linke (The Left). While the Left party still receives single-digit vote shares in the West, it has increasingly become a stable factor in East Germany (Niedermayer 2013). Frequently, the German party system is grouped into ideological camps, with the CDU/CSU/FDP forming the conservative/centre-right camp, and the SPD, the Left party and the GREENS forming the centre-left camp (Stöss, Haas, and Niedermayer 2006). Concerning our analyzed cross-pressures, they include group memberships that are traditionally linked to different parties, e.g. workers/labour union members tend to the SPD and Left party; practising Christians rather vote for the CDU; self-employed voters are more likely to favor the FDP, whereas voters with postmaterialist views are more likely to prefer the GREENS (Ismayr 2009). Obviously, belonging to social groups does not determine the development of a corresponding party attachment, but has a positive influence on it (Richardson 1991).

Concerning multiple party attachments, we expect that people who belong to more than one of these social groups are more likely to hold multiple identifications to reduce the cross-pressures

of the conflicting group memberships. Because of the contradictory nature of these groups, we expect that people who are exposed to cross-pressure are also more likely to hold multiple attachments to different ideological camps, according to their social circles.

### **3. Data and operationalization**

The data used here originates from the surveys that were conducted within the framework of the GESIS panel in Germany. This data source is a mixed-mode access panel that is based on a random sample of the German population aged between 18 and 70 years. The initial recruitment of the respondents was carried out in 2013. A randomly drawn sample of 22,000 addresses was contacted and about 7,600 face-to-face interviews were realized. Of those, 6,210 people agreed to participate in a panel. However, only 4,961 took part in the first questionnaire. In wave 15 (2016), 3,689 people were still part of the panel, of those, 3,329 (>90% response rate) participated, at least partially, in the survey (see GESIS 2016). Because of the representative nature of the surveys, we are able to draw strong conclusions about the distribution of multiple party attachments in the German electorate.<sup>3</sup>

The common operationalization of party identification in Germany with a single survey question does not allow the measurement of multiple attachments. Only a few studies have investigated multiple attachments and their consequences. These studies analyzed either the prevalence of multiple party identifications (van der Eijk and Niemöller 1983; Garry 2007) or its effect on vote choice (Schmitt 2009). No measurement instrument has been established so far, as all previous studies used different operationalizations: van der Eijk and Niemöller 1983 used a follow-up question to the standard measure – “Are there any other parties to which you feel attracted?” – and showed that about one third of all Dutch voters (and half of all political partisans) identify with more than one party. Schmitt (2009) used data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), where all parties mentioned in the answers to the question “Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular political party?” were recorded. This is a more difficult operationalization as the question wording does not refer to multiple parties, so only strong multiple identifiers would be recorded by this question to name more than one party, despite the single-party cue. Therefore, the resulting percentages are considerably lower than those reported by van der Eijk and Niemöller (1983); Schmitt (2009) found fewer than 11 percent of all voters in Germany holding multiple party identifications.

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<sup>3</sup> However, due to the cross-sectional nature of the data, we are not able to test causal relationships, but can only assume how our explanatory variables, chosen because of their causal position before party identification, might cause multiple party attachments.

Garry (2007) combined two items (for group belonging and affect, asking whether participants supported or opposed, or felt close to or distant from a certain party) that had been asked for all major Northern Ireland parties in an electoral survey.

In this study we draw on the “Identification with a Political Party” (IDPP) scale by Mayer (2017) that was validated in two earlier studies (Mayer 2015, 2017). This scale is based on the concept of social identity and distinguishes between three dimensions of identification: cognitive, affective, and self-stereotyping. For the operationalization, among others, questions from the “Identification with a Psychological Group” scale (Mael and Tetrck 1992) – which is established in social psychology – were adapted. By using confirmatory factor analysis, the three-dimensionality of party identification was confirmed. Finally, the variables with the highest factor loading for each dimension were selected (Mayer 2017, 124-5).

The IDPP measure was included in the 15<sup>th</sup> wave of the GESIS panel that was in the field between June and August 2016 (N=3,329). The wordings of these items are the following: “I am a convinced supporter of [party name]” for the cognitive dimension; “successes of [party name] are my successes” for the affective dimension, and “I have a number of qualities typical of [party name]-supporters” for the self-stereotyping dimension. These questions were asked for all major German parties<sup>4</sup> that are part of the federal parliament or state governments on a seven-point rating scale, and were then combined to mean scales. Respondents are classified as having an attachment towards the party if the average scale score is higher than 4 (“partly yes, partly no”), and if data for more than one of the three questions is not missing.<sup>5</sup> The distribution for the single items is displayed in Table 1 in the Appendix.

For the measurement of political involvement, we make the assumption – as previously argued – that involvement has at least a motivational and a cognitive dimension. Operationalized by using formal education (cognitive) and self-ascribed political interest (motivational), the concept has similarities with the theory of cognitive mobilization by Dalton in terms of the selected indicators, although Dalton uses an additive index of both variables (Dalton 2012, 38). However, previous studies showed that the effects of education and interest are not additive (Ohr, Dülmer, and Quandt 2009; Schultze 2016), so they will be treated separately in our analyses. Education was recoded to distinguish the respondents as having a low, medium or

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<sup>4</sup> The parties CDU and CSU were grouped together, as they traditionally do not compete against each other on the state level and always form a faction in parliament.

<sup>5</sup> For the question on the qualities of a typical adherent, more than 20 percent of respondents answered “Don’t know” which indicates that this may be a harder question to answer. To test the robustness of our results, we replicated all analyses with an operationalization that does not restrict the number of missing data per party scale and obtained very similar results.

high level of formal education, according to their achieved school leaving certificate. Political interest was measured on a five-point scale ranging from 1 “very weak” to 5 “very strong”.

We rely on the previously discussed cross-pressures that are often used in German electoral research, namely religious workers/labour union members, religious self-employed, and post materialistic workers/labour union members (e.g. Arzheimer 2006; Weßels 1991). We use information about the respondents to identify people who are at least seldom engaged in a religious community. For the socio-economic divide, we define the relevant groups as being a worker (self-assessment of the respondents) or a member of a trade union and being self-employed. Because Inglehart’s Materialism–Postmaterialism scale is not available, we draw on eight available statements on postmaterial value orientations, measured on a six-point rating scale that will be summed up. Respondents who have at least an average of five on this six-point scale are classified as postmaterialists or mixed types with a tendency to postmaterialism.

By identifying these groups, we are able to examine those respondents who are part of conflicting cleavage groups. In our study, this means that they are (1) worker and/or member of a trade union as well as religiously active (10.9 percent); (2) self-employed and religiously active (2.1 percent), or (3) worker and/or member of a trade union and postmaterialist (6.4 percent). Of the respondents, 12.6 percent have at least one of these cross-pressures, and 3.4 percent of the sample have two or more. Due to the small number of cases for each cross-pressure combination a further differentiation is not possible for the empirical analyses.<sup>6</sup>

## 4. Results

First, we analyze the distribution of the proportion of party identifiers. According to the new measurement instrument, about 57 percent of all respondents ( $N=2,073$ ) identify with at least one political party (see Table 1). Multiple party attachments occur frequently: More than half of all party adherents identify themselves with two or more parties. About two thirds of all multiple party identifications are within political camps, mainly the centre-left camp. One third of multiple party identifications are between political camps. Here, the most frequent combinations are multiple attachments with the two parties of the governing coalition and with three different parties. These results show that multiple party identifications are a common

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<sup>6</sup> We include cross-pressures as factor variables in the analyses as we assume that the effect of having one or more than one cross-pressure is not linear.

phenomenon in the German electorate and that this could not be revealed by the standard measurement instrument that uses only one question.

**Table 1: Distribution of (multiple) party identifications – all combinations**

	%	N
<b>No party identification (No PID)</b>	43.1	894
<b>Single party identification (SPID) with</b>		
CDU/CSU	10.7	221
SPD	5.4	112
GREENS	5.5	113
FDP	2.2	46
Left Party	3.8	78
Subtotal	27.5	570
<b>Multiple party identifications within political camps (MPID within)</b>		
CDU/CSU-FDP	4.9	101
SPD-GREENS	6.3	130
SPD-Left Party	0.9	18
GREENS-Left Party	3.9	80
Triple identification left camp	3.4	70
Subtotal	19.3	399
<b>Multiple party identifications between political camps (MPID between)</b>		
CDU/CSU-SPD	2.7	55
CDU/CSU-GREENS	1.8	38
CDU/CSU-Left Party	0.1	3
SPD-FDP	0.1	3
FDP-GREENS	0.3	7
FDP-Left Party	0.2	5
Triple identification between camps	4.8	99
Subtotal	10.1	210

In the theoretical section of this paper, we argued that political involvement leads to multiple party identifications (MPID) within ideological camps, whereas the existence of cross-pressure should foster multiple attachments between political camps. Therefore, both types of multiple party identification will be analyzed separately in the following analyses. However, due to the low number of cases for the specific party identification combinations, no further distinction is possible here.

Second, we analyze the relationship between education and political interest, and party identification types (see Table 2). No significant differences can be found for the proportion of single party identifiers (SPID) for the three educational levels. However, multiple party identifications within political camps are less common for respondents with lower or medium educational levels compared with respondents with a high educational attainment ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 2: Party identification types by education, political interest, and cross pressures (column percentages)**

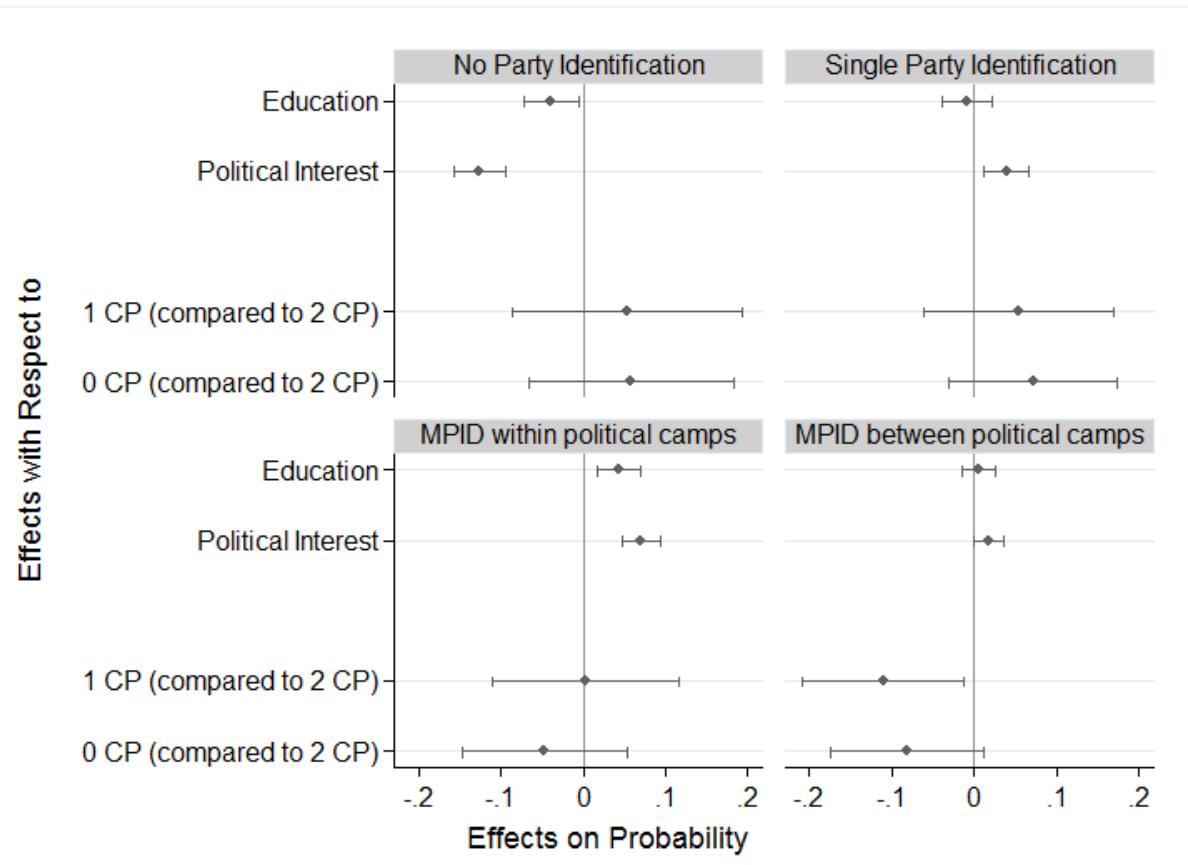
	Education			Political interest			Cross pressures (CP)		
	<i>low</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>	<i>no CP</i>	<i>1 CP</i>	<i>2+ CP</i>
<b>No PID</b>	43.4	51.3	37.4	69.4	45.6	32.5	43.8	40.6	35.7
<b>SPID</b>	30.8	25.9	27.8	19.4	27.3	30.6	27.8	26.8	21.4
<b>MPID within camps</b>	15.8	14.4	23.6	7.5	15.9	26.2	18.3	24.1	24.3
<b>MPID between camps</b>	10.0	8.4	11.3	3.7	11.2	10.7	10.0	8.4	18.6

Political interest is positively related to all types of party identification. The percentage of party identifiers increases by between 7 (MPID between camps) and 19 percentage points (MPID within camps) from low to high political interest (all differences  $p < 0.001$ ). Except for multiple attachments between camps, the percentages also increase from moderate to high political interest. However, this difference is only significant for multiple party identifications within camps ( $p < 0.001$ ). Overall, we found multiple party identifications to be more likely for politically involved respondents. With increasing levels of education or political interest, the relationship between single and multiple party identification reverses: Whereas single party identifications are more common for respondents with lower education levels and/or low political interest, multiple party identifications occur more often for highly involved respondents. In addition, multiple party attachments should occur more often within political camps for highly involved respondents. Indeed, the percentages for multiple identifications within camps are clearly higher (24 and 26 percent) for highly educated and politically interested respondents, whereas only 11 percent of respondents report multiple attachments between political camps.

Third, we examine the relationship between cross-pressures and the types of party identification. Respondents who are exposed to contradictory group memberships have multiple identifications within political camps more often than respondents without cross-pressures (18 to 24 percent,  $p < 0.05$ ). Multiple identifications between political camps are more common for respondents with two and more cross-pressures (19 percent) than for respondents without cross-pressures (10 percent) or only one cross-pressure (8 percent). All differences are significant at the five percent level. Overall, sociological cross-pressures seem to foster multiple party attachments within political camps. Furthermore, two and more cross-pressures promote multiple identifications across political camps which fulfills our expectation that conflicting group memberships may increase multiple attachments between ideologically distant parties.

Last, we analyze the determinants of multiple political partisanship in a multivariate analysis. In accordance with Ohr et al. (2009), we estimate multinomial logistic regression models with

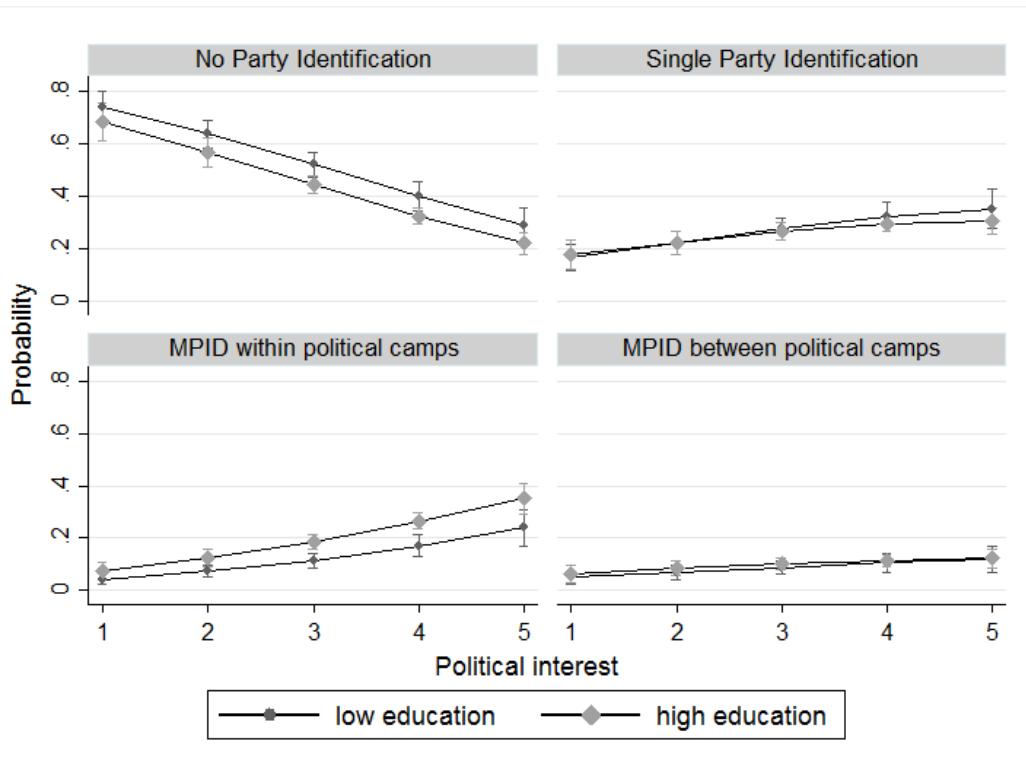
the type of party identification as the dependent variable. In addition to the indicators for political involvement and cross-pressures, we also control for age, gender, and current place of residence (East or West Germany).



**Figure 1 Marginal effects for main indicators by party identification type.**

Single party identification was chosen as a reference category to directly show differences between the determinants for single and multiple party attachments (see Table 2 in the Appendix for the regression values). For a more visual understanding of the results, we calculated conditional marginal effects for every key independent variable while holding all other variables at their means or modes (see Figure 1). Education as well as political interest have negative effects on the probability of having no party identification. Education – as expected – also has a significant positive effect on multiple party identifications within political camps. In the same manner, political interest has a positive significant effect on the probability of multiple party identifications within political camps. The existence of cross-pressures only affects multiple identifications between political camps. Compared with respondents with one or no cross-pressures, having two or more contradictory group memberships significantly

increases multiple attachments between camps. However, neither political interest nor education have an effect on holding multiple identifications between camps.<sup>7</sup>

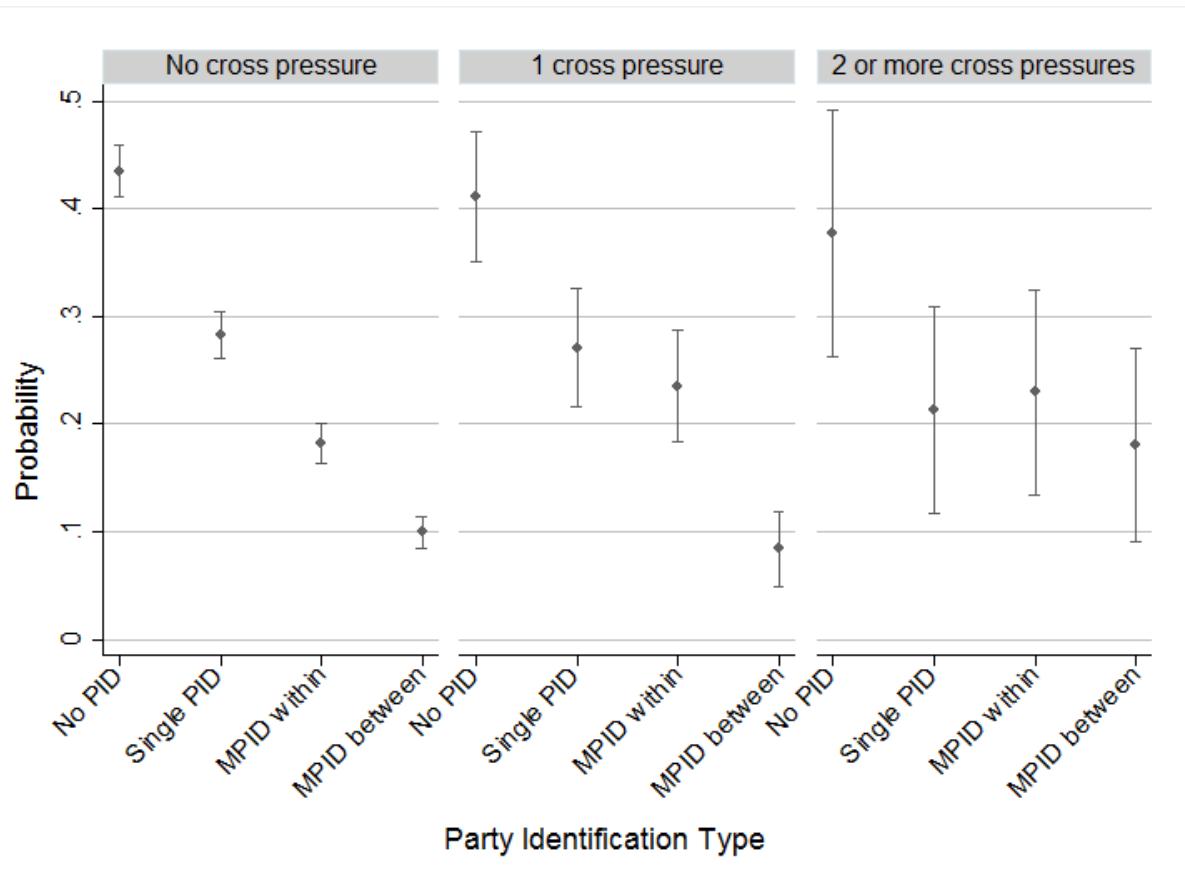


**Figure 2** Marginal effects for party identification types by education and political interest with 95% CI.

Finally, average marginal effects (AME) for the likelihood of belonging to an identification type are predicted, based on the indicators of political involvement (see Figure 2) and cross-pressures (see Figure 3). Low- as well as high-education-level respondents have a decreasing likelihood of having no party identification with increasing levels of political interest (-40 percentage points), even though the base level is higher for low-education-level respondents. The probability for single party identification slightly increases with political interest for both educational levels (+15 percentage points). Whereas the likelihood of having multiple attachments between political camps is rather low for both educational levels, it increases with

<sup>7</sup> One could assume that our grouping of party identification types, without acknowledging the ideological position of the identification party, could affect the results. Therefore, we replicated our analyses with an ordinal variable for the ideological position of the party/parties being attached to: value -1 for centre-left (SPD, GREEN, Left party), 0 for MPID between, and +1 for centre-right (CDU/CSU, FDP). See Table 3 in the Appendix. As there is little value in assigning an ideological value to the party for independents, we replicated the analyses only for voters with SPID or MPID. We found the same results for the key variables: education, political interest, and cross-pressures.

political interest up to 35 percent for high- but only up to 24 percent for low-education-level respondents.



**Figure 3 Marginal effects for party identification types by cross pressures with 95% CI.**

Cross-pressures were only found to be a significant predictor of multiple attachments between political camps. Indeed, whereas the likelihood of holding multiple identifications within political camps only rises by 5 percentage points, from 18 percent (no cross-pressure) to 23 percent (one and two or more cross-pressures), the probability of having multiple attachments with ideological distant parties rises by 8 percentage points – but only when two or more cross-pressures are present.

## 86. Conclusion

In this paper, we have analyzed the extent of multiple party attachments in the German electorate and how this can be explained. Our results show that about 30 percent of the respondents have multiple party identifications. Therefore multiple attachments are a frequent phenomenon in Germany. Furthermore, attachments within political camps are more common than between political camps.

For an explanation of multiple attachments, we used the concepts of political involvement and sociological cross-pressures. The indicators that we have deduced from these concepts are theoretical and empirically proven to be causally prior to party identification and could therefore serve as possible determinants. Based on multinomial logistic regressions, the results of the empirical analyses show that both components of political involvement – education and political interest – have a positive effect on multiple party attachments within political camps. However, no such effect could be found for the sociological cross-pressures. But conflicting group memberships have an effect on multiple attachments between camps, at least when two or more of such cross-pressures are present, whereas political interest and education do not have a significant effect in these cases.

We find multiple party identifications within political camps to be more likely for the politically involved. We can infer that party identification might fulfill different functions for different groups of political partisans. For less politically involved voters, single party identification could function in the classical notion as an emotionally based cognitive short-cut, acquired in primary socialization, that acts as a perceptual screen. This is more in line with the perspective raised by Mason (2015) for the US, where political partisans support parties in the same way as sport fans support their teams. However, politically involved voters could feel attached to parties mainly because of instrumental reasons: They feel close to several parties because the parties' stances agree with their political views.<sup>8</sup>

One could argue that the unique set-up of the German electoral system, which allows for a first and second vote in federal elections, fosters multiple party identifications, and our results therefore cannot be generalized for other multi-party systems. However, we argue that the electoral system might serve as an outlet for MPID rather than causing it – in “The American Voter”, the act of voting is analyzed as a consequence rather than as a cause of partisanship. Even though partisanship was found not to be as stable as thought by Campbell et al., partisanship still affects voting behavior, rather than the other way around (see Johnston 2006). Furthermore, van der Eijk and Niemöller (1983) reported similar results to ours in the Netherlands, a country with a purely proportional electoral system.

We have to take into account that the models presented here explain only a small amount of the variation in partisanship, so it would be useful for further studies to add more explanatory

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<sup>8</sup> We thank one of the anonymous reviewers for this suggestion.

variables to determine other facets that are theoretically connected to, and empirically correlated with, multiple party attachments.

A further explanation of multiple identifications, as well as the electoral consequences of adherents who feel close to more than one party, is a desideratum for future studies.<sup>9</sup> Based on the representative GESIS data that were used for the analyses here, we can draw strong conclusions about the extent of multiple attachments in the German electorate. However, the multi-topic nature of the GESIS survey does not allow more specific analyses due to a lack of appropriate variables useful for electoral research. For example, it would be interesting to further investigate the different types of multiple identifiers and how they differ in terms of the degree of certainty of their electoral decision, their volatility, and their vote switching. Even though it would need additional survey time, including a measurement instrument in election studies, that takes multiple party attachments into account, would be very valuable for the advancement of electoral research. As the measurement of multiple attachments has not been analyzed thoroughly in the past, it would be beneficial to test different operationalizations that need less survey time. As we could show, almost 60 years after “The American Voter” was published, there still remain open questions for party identification research to answer.

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<sup>9</sup> First analyses with a similar operationalization in an online access panel showed that multiple adherents are, for example, twice as likely than adherents of a single party to split the first and the second vote and are willing to use this peculiarity of the German electoral system as an outlet for expressing their multiple attachments (Mayer 2017, 277).

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