
8. Measuring the direction and strength of partisan identity

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Partisanship powerfully and consistently explains a wide range of political outcomes including vote choice, voter turnout, campaign engagement, motivated reasoning, emotional reactions to candidates and campaigns, and policy attitudes (Brader and Tucker, 2009; Brader et al., 2013; Green et al., 2002; Huddy et al., 2015). While the effects of partisanship persist across countries – including in complex multi-party European settings (see Bankert et al., 2017; Bartle and Bellucci, 2009; Holmberg, 2007; see also Chapter 4 by Carius-Munz) – differences in measurement between surveys and countries have made cross-national comparisons of partisanship difficult. In this chapter, we review various measures of partisanship used in national and cross-national election studies to investigate their consequences for the identification of partisans and their ability to predict political outcomes. Using examples from national surveys conducted in the United States, United Kingdom (in Great Britain), Sweden and the Netherlands, we demonstrate that partisanship direction should be measured inclusively to include even the weakest identifiers, and its intensity measured by multi-item scales that access the full range of partisan intensity.

In the United States (US), partisanship is traditionally measured using the American National Election Study (ANES) question which asks, ‘Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?’ Those who say they are an independent or reply with ‘Other’ are asked the follow-up question, ‘Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party?’ In *The American Voter*, Campbell et al. (1960), used this question to show that partisanship is stable, acquired early in life, and is best characterized by a set of beliefs and feelings that culminate in a ‘psychological attachment’ to a political party. This conceptualization is affective in nature, yet the traditional measure uses the word ‘think’ which suggests a cognitive, rather than affective, tie to a party. This disconnect between theory and measurement has generated an ongoing debate over the degree to which partisanship reflects an enduring affective attachment or a dynamic, cognitive evaluation of the parties that changes with party performance and platform (Burden and Klorstad, 2005; see also Chapter 9 in this volume by Rosema and Mayer).

INSTRUMENTAL AND EXPRESSIVE MODELS OF PARTISANSHIP

Ambiguity in the American version of the partisanship question has contributed to the emergence of two competing views of partisanship that vary in the emphasis they place on its cognitive and affective bases (Arceneaux and Vander Wielen, 2013; Lupu, 2013). From an instrumental perspective, partisanship is based on a running tally of party

performance, ideological beliefs and proximity to the party in terms of one's preferred policies (Fiorina, 1981). This conception of partisanship is grounded in cognitive evaluations and suggests that partisanship fluctuates in response to current political events. The instrumental view is consistent with the word 'think' in the original partisanship survey question.

In a competing expressive, or identity approach, partisanship is an enduring psychological identity strengthened by social affiliations to gender, religious, and ethnic or racial groups (Achen and Bartels, 2016; Green et al., 2002). These social affiliations with a party and its associated groups promote an emotional attachment to the party, generate stability over time in partisan identification and vote choice, and diminish its reactivity to short-term events (Huddy et al., 2015; Mason, 2018). This view is more in line with the original conception of partisanship as a stable psychological attachment and is reflected in the 'Generally speaking, do you usually . . .' opening to the ANES party identification question. The expressive view of partisanship is also reflected in the question used in the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) which asks, 'Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?' The word 'close' in this question suggests an affective attachment to a party and is consistent with partisanship as a social identity.

The two theories of partisanship differ in their conception of partisanship and generate different measures. The instrumental approach suggests a cognitive measure of partisanship that fluctuates in direction and strength with ongoing political events. From this perspective, partisanship should be measured in the present time, and prime cognitive party evaluations with phrases such as 'think' and 'support'. In contrast, the expressive or identity approach leads to a measurement of partisanship as a long-standing attachment, as suggested by phrases such as 'generally speaking', 'usually' and 'habitually', and by including words that denote an affective, psychological attachment such as 'feel', 'attached to', 'close to' and 'adherent of'.

In his review of partisanship measures, Johnston (2006) documents wide variation in partisanship question wording across surveys and election studies (see also Chapter 9 in this volume by Rosema and Mayer). Specifically, he highlights national variation in measures of partisanship in terms of their time horizon (for example, 'generally', 'usually', 'habitually' or no reference), the words used to connote partisan attachment (for example, 'think of', 'adhere to', 'attached to', 'feel close to', 'support'), whether parties are explicitly named, and whether the question prompts for non-partisanship (that is, 'independent', 'no party', 'don't think in these terms'). This variation in question wording means that some partisanship questions are more consistent with an expressive view of partisanship, some with an instrumental, and others reflect a mix of expressive and instrumental components.

These differences in question wording make it difficult to compare rates of partisanship or to assess the magnitude of its political effects across countries. It also complicates the ability to adjudicate between an instrumental and expressive model of partisanship. Consistent with growing evidence for an expressive approach to partisanship both in the United States and in European multi-party systems, in our research we measure partisanship direction and strength as a social identity (Achen and Bartels 2016; Brader et al., 2013; Green et al., 2002; Huddy et al., 2018; Huddy et al., 2015). For direction, this means focusing on the affective and identity components of partisanship and stressing its

long-term nature. For strength, this translates into the use of a multi-item identity scale (Bankert et al., 2017; Huddy et al., 2015), which is grounded in social identity theory and is a better predictor of political outcomes than more traditional measures of partisan strength (Bankert et al., 2017).

MEASURING PARTISAN DIRECTION

No matter how partisanship is measured, questions always begin by asking survey respondents to indicate a party preference, or direction. In the US, the ANES question is traditionally used. The CSES question was developed to standardize the partisanship question for all electoral systems, including multi-party systems. These two questions are presented in Table 8.1 along with examples of major alternatives in question wording. As seen in Table 8.1, the CSES question includes both ‘feel’ and ‘think’, conflating affective and cognitive partisan ties. Most questions push non-partisans to nominate a party, whereas some do not. The word used to describe the connection varies and sometimes different words are used to indicate initial partisanship and those who lean towards a party, as in the 1998 Dutch question.

Several features of questions tapping partisan direction reduce levels of self-reported partisanship. First, omitting a list of names of parties in the question tends to reduce partisanship. The standard ANES question lists the parties, whereas the CSES ‘close’ question does not allowing for a direct comparison when both questions are asked in an election study. The decline in partisanship between a question that does and does not include a list of parties varies by country. It is not especially dramatic in the US but can be far greater in other countries (Baker and Renno, 2019; Barnes et al., 1988; Blais et al., 2001; Casto Cornejo, 2019; Sanders et al., 2002). For example, Blais et al. (2001) compared the standard ANES-style question in the US, United Kingdom (in Great Britain), and Canada with the common CSES question (‘Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?’). In Canada, partisanship dropped from 69 per cent in response to the traditional measure to 38 per cent for the CSES question. In Britain, it declined from 89 per cent to 49 per cent. There is a far less dramatic decline in the US. This decline in partisanship in the absence of named parties is consistent with good survey research practices which involve naming a list of objects to be included in behavioural questions to jog the respondent’s memory (Sudman et al., 1996). By implication, this suggests listing all parties by name in a partisanship question to prompt affiliation with major and minor parties among weak identifiers.

The inclusion of a specific non-partisan option is a second factor that consistently reduces levels of partisanship. Typically, when the partisanship question includes a phrase such as ‘. . . or do you not identify with a political party?’, levels of partisanship decline (Baker and Renno, 2019; Bartle, 1999). This situation is more complex in the US where ‘independent’ is offered as a clear option in addition to Democrat and Republican. Many people take it but are pushed back towards partisanship when they are asked whether they are closer to one of the two parties. As noted, respondents to the CSES-style ‘close’ question who say they are not close to a party are also asked if they are closer to one. There is further evidence that a question containing a single partisanship scale with a clear midpoint, such as a seven-point scale that ranges from strong Republican to strong

Table 8.1 *Sample partisanship questions*

Nature of partisan affiliation in question	Parties listed by name	Push non-partisans?	Sample question wording
Think–adherent (and attracted)	No	Yes	Many people think of themselves as adherents to a particular political party, but there are also people who do not think of themselves as an adherent to a political party. Do you think of yourself as an adherent or not as an adherent to a political party? IF NOT AN ADHERENT: Is there a party to which you feel more attracted than to other parties? (Netherlands, Dutch Parliamentary Election Study 1998)
Feel–adherent (and close)	Yes	Yes	Many consider themselves adherents of a particular party. There are also many who don't feel they are adherents of any party. Do you consider yourself to be, for example, a Social Democrat, a Conservative, a Social Liberal, a Liberal supporter, a Socialist People's Party supporter or something else? Or don't you feel as though you are an adherent of any party? IF AN ADHERENT: Which party is it? IF NOT AN ADHERENT: All the same, is there a party, which you feel closer to than other parties? (If yes) Which party? (Denmark, Danish Election Study 2011)
Feel–attached	No	Yes	Do you generally feel attached to a particular party? IF ATTACHED: Which party is that? IF NOT ATTACHED: All the same, is there one of the parties which you feel more attached to than the other parties? Which party? (Denmark, Danish Election Study 1998)
Identify	No	No	Which political party do you identify with? (Americas Barometer 2017)
Think–close (and feel–close)	No	Yes	Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party? IF NONE: Do you feel yourself a little closer to one of the political parties than the others? IF CLOSE OR CLOSER TO ONE: If close or closer to one: Which party do you feel closest to? (CSES)
Think (and close)	Yes/No	Yes	Generally speaking, do you think of yourself a Conservative, Labour, Liberal, or what? IF NONE OR DON'T KNOW: Do you generally think of yourself as a little closer to one of the parties than the others? Which party? (UK, British Election Study 1992)

Table 8.1 (continued)

Nature of partisan affiliation in question	Parties listed by name	Push non-partisans?	Sample question wording
Think (and close)	Yes	Yes	Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as [a Democrat, a Republican / a Republican, a Democrat], an independent, or what? IF INDEPENDENT, NO PREFERENCE, OR DON'T KNOW: Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or to the Democratic Party? (US, American National Election Study 2016)
Support			Do you support any specific party, are you a member, or do you have a job in a party? (Israel, Israeli National Election Study 2015)

Democrat in the US, also decreases partisanship because a greater number pick the scale midpoint (Green and Schickler, 1993).

Relatedly, there is evidence that measurement error is higher in studies that allow respondents to opt out of the partisanship question (Baker and Renno, 2019). Baker and Renno's (2019) findings are also consistent with good survey research practice to omit the middle option and a 'don't know' filter in attitudinal survey questions, because they attract people with weak preferences. People with weak attitudes choose a midpoint when offered, but provide valid responses that are consistent with the choices of other respondents when a midpoint is omitted (Alwin and Krosnick, 1991; Schuman and Presser, 1981). In that sense, offering a midpoint worsens the reliability of attitudinal measures. Similar conclusions are drawn about offering 'no opinion' (or in this case 'no party'). Those who take the 'no opinion' option have weakly held beliefs that are distributed in the same way as the population at large (Krosnick et al., 2002). This is consistent with psychological evidence that most people have weak positive or negative feelings about almost all objects (Olson and Fazio, 2008; Ryan, 2017). Based on this psychological evidence, we argue that partisan direction should be measured as inclusively as possible, and its strength assessed separately from its direction.

The inclusive measurement of partisanship is akin to what often happens in practice when people are asked to pick a religion or an ethnic group. An atheist raised in the Catholic Church may pick 'Catholic' from a list of religions in a survey question, but also acknowledge that their Catholic identity is not especially important. Nonetheless, even a weak Catholic identity may provide information that distinguishes a weak Catholic from a weak Protestant. It is important to note that our advice to measure partisanship even at weak levels is controversial, and opposed by several researchers who believe that partisanship requires a higher bar (see Blais et al., 2001; Sanders et al., 2002). From their perspective, partisanship is meant to predict vote choice, and be strong, stable and enduring. However, by failing to measure weak partisan preferences we run the risk of wrongly estimating the effects of partisanship across its full range of intensity, especially when

Table 8.2 *Partisanship by question format in the 2012 ANES (%)*

		CSES question			
		Democrat	Republican	Independent	Other
Traditional	Democrat	82	1	15	1
ANES	Republican	3	78	14	5
Question	Independent	11	9	74	6

Notes: Entries are row percentages. Democrats and Republicans include those who lean or are closer to a party. The data are weighted using panel weights. The traditional ANES question is measured pre-election, and the CSES question is measured post-election.

Source: American National Election Studies (ANES) and Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES).

the focus shifts from electoral choice (a discrete choice) to include political activity and engagement (behaviours graded in intensity).

To demonstrate differences in levels of estimated partisanship with variation in its measurement, we turn to the 2012 American National Election Study. In 2012, the ANES included both the standard partisan question in the pre-election survey and the CSES ‘close’ question in the post-election survey, allowing us to compare partisanship levels when parties are and are not named. As a reminder, the typical ANES question lists the parties, allows for a non-partisan option (‘independent’) and then pushes independents to choose a party. In comparison, the CSES question does not list parties but asks whether there is a party to which the respondent is close, allows for non-partisanship in the ‘no’ response, and pushes non-partisans to choose a party. We expect higher levels of partisanship in response to the traditional ANES than the CSES question which does not list the parties by name. That is what we find (see Table 8.2). In the 2012 weighted ANES data, 86 per cent of respondents are partisans in response to the traditional question whereas 74 per cent are partisans in response to the CSES question. This difference is sizeable and implies that the CSES question underestimates the number of partisans.

Crossing the two partisanship questions underscores the tendency of the CSES question to underestimate partisanship. Roughly 80 per cent of Democrats and Republicans listed the same party in the two waves, and 74 per cent of independents retained their independent status. In addition, roughly 15 per cent of initial partisans were coded as pure independents on the CSES question, and 10 per cent of partisans in the CSES were coded as pure independents on the traditional ANES question. When considered as a percentage of the total panel, 3 per cent were independent in the pre-election survey and partisan in the post-election survey, compared to a much larger 13 per cent who were partisans in the pre-election survey and pure independents in the post-election survey.

The consequences of partisan misclassification in response to the CSES question can be seen in Table 8.3, which compares the effects of partisanship on vote choice by question format. When pure independents identified by the traditional and CSES question are compared, CSES independents look more partisan. They are somewhat more likely to vote for a major party candidate than traditional independents (52 per cent versus 43 per cent), more likely to vote overall (56 per cent versus 50 per cent), and less likely to vote for a third-party candidate (4 per cent versus 7 per cent).

Table 8.3 Vote choice in 2012 ANES by partisanship question (%)

	Vote Obama	Vote Romney	Vote other	No vote
Traditional question (more inclusive)				
Democrat (47%)	74	6	1	19
Republican (40%)	6	73	2	19
Independent (14%)	23	20	7	50
CSES question (less inclusive)				
Democrat (41%)	77	4	1	18
Republican (33%)	4	80	1	15
Independent (23%)	28	24	4	44
Other (3%)	15	37	25	23

Note: Row percentages.

Source: American National Election Studies (ANES).

The US is a special case because of its current high levels of partisanship. We turn to a second example in the Netherlands, to further demonstrate the value of assessing partisan direction in a more inclusive fashion. Data are drawn from members of the Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences (LISS) panel with respondents interviewed as part of the 2012 pre- and post-election Dutch parliamentary election surveys (Bankert et al., 2017). The LISS contains 5000 households, entailing 8000 individuals, drawn as a true probability sample of households in the national population register maintained by Statistics Netherlands. The pre-election survey was conducted in August 2012 and the post-election survey was conducted in September 2012 following the 12 September election.¹

In the pre-election survey, LISS panelists were asked whether they thought of themselves as an adherent of a political party, and if so which party. If they were not an adherent, they were asked if they were more strongly attracted to one party, and if so to which party. Roughly 65 per cent of respondents were an adherent or attracted to a political party. We increased the number of partisans with a third question asking those without a party which party they had voted for in the last election. This increased the number of partisans to 91 per cent, expanding the percentage of respondents identifying with one of the five major parties (VVD, CDA, and PVV on the right and SP and PvdA on the left²) from 49 per cent to 70 per cent. The number of specific partisans identified by the two approaches is listed in Table 8.4. As seen, the percentage associated with each party does not vary much between measurement approaches, suggesting that those who voted for a prior party but did not claim to be an adherent or attracted to a party hold much the same partisan affiliations as others.

We compare vote choice among those who were an adherent or attracted to a party with the more inclusive set of respondents identified by these two questions plus prior vote choice. As seen in Table 8.4, the per cent of in-party voting is somewhat higher when partisanship is defined less inclusively (omitting past vote). In-party vote is roughly ten points higher among the less inclusive group of partisans, in contrast to the more inclusive

Table 8.4 *Post-election vote choice by pre-election partisan direction in the Netherlands (%)*

Pre-election party:	Post-election vote			Pre-election party:	Post-election vote		
	Own party	Another party	No vote		Own party	Another party	No vote
more inclusive				less inclusive			
VVD (20%)	77	18	5	VVD (15%)	85	12	3
SP (15%)	51	43	6	SP (11%)	54	41	5
Labour (14%)	80	11	9	Labour (10%)	89	6	5
CDA (11%)	62	32	6	CDA (8%)	74	22	4
PVV (10%)	53	35	12	PVV (5%)	66	23	11
D66 (8%)	54	41	5	D66 (6%)	59	35	6
Green (5%)	31	62	7	Green (3%)	41	54	5
Christian Union (3%)	69	27	4	Christian Union (3%)	74	23	3
SGP (1%)	85	13	2	SGP (1%)	87	11	2
Animals (1%)	41	48	11	Animals (1%)	49	42	9
Non-partisan (9%)	–	39	61	Non-partisan (35%)	–	77	23

Note: Inclusive partisans are identified as having a party based on one of three questions: ‘adherent’, ‘attracted’ or party last voted for. Exclusive partisans are based on one of two questions: ‘adherent’ or ‘attracted’. Entries are percentages of each party: People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), Party for Freedom (PVV), Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), Socialist Party (SP), Democraats 66 (D66), Reformed Political Party (SGP).

Source: LISS panel, August 2012 and 2012 elections modules.

group of partisans affiliated with the larger parties such as Labour and the VVD. In that sense, defining partisanship less inclusively (and omitting weak partisans) increases the accuracy of the predicted vote. However, the inclusive approach provides a more accurate picture of non-partisans. An additional 25 per cent of ‘non-partisan’ respondents are classified as partisans when pushed to provide a partisan direction, and their partisan choice is meaningful. Admittedly, they vote at lower rates for their party than those who are adherents or attracted to a party. Nonetheless, among these ‘non-partisans’ a majority of VVD (55 per cent) and Labour (59 per cent) affiliates vote for the party they voted for previously. In-party voting rates were lower among other ‘non-partisan’ partisans but still provided useful information. In-party voting ranged from a low of 12 per cent among ‘non-partisan’ Greens to a high of 41 per cent among PVV ‘non-partisans’.

Pushing respondents to adopt a partisan direction also helps to improve models of voter turnout. A majority (61 per cent) of those who remain non-partisans (who lack partisanship and did not vote for a prior party) failed to vote in the 2012 Dutch election. By comparison, only 23 per cent of ‘non-partisan’ who did vote for a prior party failed to vote. These findings may be inflated because partisanship was identified among ‘non-partisans’ with a question about prior vote. Nonetheless, findings mirror those observed in ANES data in which independents identified by the more inclusive traditional question were less likely to turn out to vote than independents identified by the less inclusive CSES

question. In sum, we recommend pushing respondents to indicate their party preference even in multi-party systems characterized by weak partisanship. Such information can be used in conjunction with information about the strength of partisan identity to improve voter turnout and vote choice models.

Partisanship is higher in the ANES when respondents are asked the traditional rather than the CSES question. However, even the standard partisanship question may underestimate partisanship. Research by Klar and Krupnikov (2016) suggests that making partisan conflict salient leads respondents who are most concerned about social desirability to shun a partisan label. The researchers also note that the number of political independents in US politics has been rising in tandem with partisan polarization, and find that many of these individuals are ‘undercover’ or ‘closet’ partisans. Such closet partisans support a party but avoid the label, further complicating the assessment of partisan direction. This is consistent with Baker and Renno’s (2019) conclusion that questions that fail to encourage partisanship (by not listing parties, or providing an explicit non-partisan option) increase measurement error in partisanship. Similar problems may arise in other polities where citizens experience bias against reporting partisan loyalty.

In the United States, some number of Latino immigrants also avoid the partisan label, but for different reasons. A higher percentage of non-citizen Latino immigrants (36 per cent) than naturalized immigrants (19 per cent) or US-born reported that they were not partisans in the 2012 Latino Immigrant National Election Study (LINES) and ANES studies (Sears et al., 2017). At the same time, most hold strong partisan preferences as assessed by their relative feelings towards the parties (Huddy et al., 2016; Sears et al., 2017). This raises questions as to whether someone with a partisan preference qualifies as a partisan. Sears et al. (2017) report that Latino immigrants who lack partisanship still have stable party preferences between pre- and post-election interviews. They also find that party preferences are directly tied to a preference for that party’s candidate, and predict campaign-related activity among those who lack an explicit partisanship. The stronger a Latino immigrant’s preference for one party over another, the more likely they were to take part in the campaign; for example, by trying to persuade others how to vote (Huddy et al., 2016). In general, Latino immigrants who lack partisanship but have a party preference look very similar to weak partisans (Sears et al., 2017).

The underassessment of partisanship has a potential solution. Most election studies ask respondents to report their positive feelings towards each major political party, which can be used to determine a partisan preference. Some researchers have used party ‘thermometer’ ratings, in combination with standard partisan measures, to improve the measurement of partisanship (Goren, 2005). This step has typically been taken to improve the assessment of partisan strength. From our identity-based perspective, partisans should always exhibit at least a mild preference for their party over others as evidence of pervasive in-group bias (Mullen et al., 1992). In-group bias is not a measure of identity, but it is a closely related outcome (Converse and Pierce, 1985). We do not suggest replacing partisanship with a measure of partisan preference. However, for some groups, a preference may provide a useful alternative measure that improves the assessment of partisan direction and allows partisan identity strength to be assessed in subsequent questions.

Indeed, Rosema (2006) advocates for this approach in multi-party European systems characterized by low levels of partisanship (see Chapter 9 in this volume by Rosema

and Mayer). He finds that party preference assessed by comparative party ratings is a good indicator of vote choice, referring to this as an attitudinal model. Guntermann (2017) also employs party ratings to assess partisan preferences in Spain where partisanship is especially low, and found that those with a party preference adopted their preferred party's stance on an issue when confronted with competing party views (see Chapter 25 in this volume by Guntermann). Garry (2007) used party ratings in Northern Ireland to assess negative and positive partisanship and found that a positive rating for a given party was a better predictor of vote intention than the standard CSES partisanship question. From our perspective, partisan preference is a potentially weak identity that fosters some degree of in-party bias, and can be used to predict partisan behaviour.

We return to the 2012 ANES data to assess this claim. As noted, both the traditional and CSES partisanship question identify pure independents, although the traditional question identifies fewer. We analysed thermometer ratings of the Democratic and Republican parties in the pre-election survey to identify pure independents who rated one party at least ten points higher than the other. In this way, we were able to reclassify 47 per cent of pure independents based on the traditional measure and 60 per cent of pure independents based on the CSES measure as having a party preference. This reclassification is politically meaningful. As seen in Figure 8.1, the number of independents who lack a partisan preference is similar across question type (7 per cent and 9 per cent) once non-partisans are assigned a party preference. Based on the original CSES question, a majority of pure independents voted for a major party candidate, and a minority failed to vote. In contrast, once those with a preference are assigned to a political party, a minority of pure independents vote for a major party candidate (39 per cent and 46 per cent), and a majority fail to vote (55 per cent and 51 per cent).

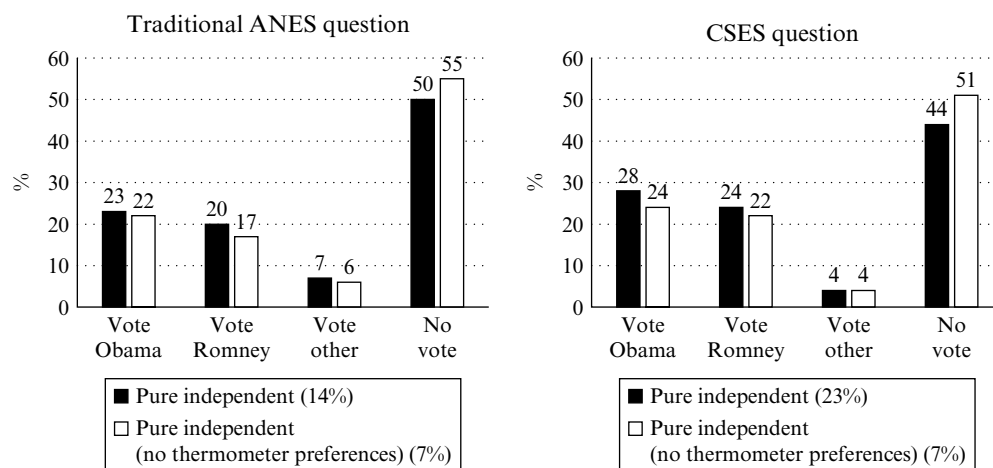


Figure 8.1 *Vote choice among independents with and without a party preference, 2012 ANES (%)*

MEASURING PARTISAN STRENGTH

Once someone's partisan direction is determined, it is equally important to assess partisan intensity. Standard measures of partisanship do not measure the full range of partisan identity strength. At best they identify three or four levels of intensity. The traditional ANES partisanship question assesses three levels (that is, independent leaners, not so strong, strong) as does the standard CSES question (not very close, somewhat close, very close). To better test an expressive identity approach to partisanship we measure partisan identity as a multi-item scale that captures an internalized sense of party identification. Measuring gradations in social identity strength is crucial to identifying individuals who are most likely to vote for their party, practice defensive reasoning and take political action (Huddy, 2001, 2013). We borrow this approach from social psychologists, who typically measure social identities with multiple items to create a fine-grained scale of identity strength. Typical scale items assess a subjective sense of group belonging, the affective importance of group membership and the affective consequences of lowered group status (Ellemers et al., 1999; Leach et al., 2008).

There is some precedent and empirical support for measuring partisanship in this way. Steven Greene (2002, 2004) developed a ten-item scale of partisan social identity, based on Mael and Tetric's (1992) Identification with a Psychological Group Scale, which had good measurement properties and was a better predictor than the standard partisanship measure of a range of political variables, including political involvement. Green et al. (2002) also measured partisanship with three questions including items similar to those included in Greene's (2002) scale.

In the US, we developed a four-item scale to assess partisan identity in a random sample of New York State residents, college students, opt-in Internet panelists (YouGov) and respondents recruited from political blogs. These groups were chosen to capture differing levels of partisan identity and political engagement (Huddy et al., 2015). The partisan identity measure is based on a scale used to assess national identity (Huddy and Khatib, 2007; Theiss-Morse, 2009). Questions are worded for a specific party based on a respondent's answer to the initial standard partisanship question. Respondents were asked the importance of being a Democrat/Republican, how well the term 'Democrat' or 'Republican' described them, how often they said 'we' or 'they' when talking about Democrats/Republicans, and the extent to which they thought of themselves as a Democrat/Republican. As expected, partisan identity was stronger among the more actively engaged blog than YouGov sample, and both groups had somewhat stronger identity than student and New York State respondents, with identity ranging from a high of 0.68 in the blog study to a low of 0.51 among New York State residents, on a 0–1 intensity scale.

We developed a longer eight-item battery for inclusion in election studies conducted in the United Kingdom (2014–15), Sweden (2013–14), the Netherlands (2012–13), and Italy (2011–13) based on the Identification with a Psychological Group (IDPG) scale used by Greene (1999, 2002, 2004; see also Bankert et al., 2017). These four countries were chosen on an opportunistic basis and reflect a range of multi-party systems. Before asking the partisan identity scale, all respondents were asked about partisan direction. Unfortunately, the partisan direction question was asked differently in each country, complicating national comparisons. The partisan identity scale was asked of anyone with

Table 8.5 *Partisan identity items in the United Kingdom (%)*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
1. When I speak about this party, I usually say 'we' instead of 'they'.	6	16	45	23	9
2. I am interested in what other people think about this party.	11	56	20	5	7
3. When people criticize this party, it feels like a personal insult.	5	21	47	21	7
4. I have a lot in common with other supporters of this party.	9	50	14	4	23
5. If this party does badly in opinion polls, my day is ruined.	2	12	51	29	6
6. When I meet someone who supports this party, I feel connected with this person.	5	46	28	10	12
7. When I speak about this party, I refer to them as 'my party'.	4	14	51	25	7
8. When people praise this party, it makes me feel good.	6	41	30	12	12

Note: Entries are row percentages. All items were combined to generate the partisan identity scale and recoded from 0 (low) to 1 (high). Partisan identity scale (8 items) \bar{x} (standard error) = 0.43 (0.19)

Source: BES Online Panel, Wave 3, May–June 2014.

a partisan preference, including those who were pushed to adopt partisanship. Items in the partisan identity scale refer to 'we', felt commonality, and a connection to other party supporters, along with negative feelings when the party is criticized or does badly in the polls (for exact item wording, see Bankert et al., 2017). Item wording and responses are listed in Table 8.5 for Wave 3 of the UK online election study.

Differences in the stem partisanship question make it difficult to directly compare levels of partisan identity across countries. In these data, partisanship was higher in Sweden (91 per cent) and the UK (86 per cent) than in the Netherlands (61 per cent) and Italy (49 per cent). This roughly mirrors the rank ordering of countries in recent data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES 2015 and 2017) although CSES levels of partisanship are somewhat lower in the UK (74 per cent in 2015) and Sweden (85 per cent in 2014) than observed in our data. Differing levels of partisanship in response to the partisan direction question means that partisan intensity was assessed for a differing percentage of respondents in each country. As noted earlier, partisan identity was assessed on a large proportion of the Dutch sample by including those who were not partisans but had voted for a party in the last election. In the UK and Italy, the partisan identity scale is roughly normally distributed and has a mean value of roughly 0.5 (on a 0–1 scale) but is skewed toward lower values in the Netherlands and Sweden (Huddy et al., 2018).

The eight-item scale shows remarkably similar measurement properties across countries in an item response analysis conducted on the partisan identity scale (Bankert et al.,

2017). The scale better measures partisan identity across its range than the traditional single-item of partisan strength, and exhibits scalar invariance indicating that scale values mean the same thing in each country. Based on this analysis, we created a reliable eight-item scale and a shorter reliable four-item scale from items 3, 6, 7 and 8 in Table 8.5.

In the US, the four-item partisan identity scale better predicted campaign activity than the standard measure of partisan intensity or a measure of ideological party agreement (Huddy et al., 2015). Similar findings are obtained in our European data based on analyses using the eight-item scale. Participation was measured somewhat differently in the Netherlands (party involvement, meetings/hearings, contact a politician, political discussion), Sweden (contact politician/civil servant, donated money, attend rally), and the UK (various online party-related activities). Nonetheless, partisan identity was a significant predictor of political engagement in all three countries and had far stronger effects than the standard measure of partisan strength. The effects of partisan identity on participation were strongest in Sweden and weakest in the Netherlands, but significant in all three countries. The intensity of ideological party agreement had a significant but smaller effect on political participation, providing limited additional support for the instrumental model.

The partisan identity scale also helps to identify aspects of partisanship that are difficult to reconcile with an instrumental model of partisanship. Consider motivated reasoning, which we define as biased processing of information designed to protect the party's status. From within an identity model, strong identifiers should be more likely than weak identifiers to engage in defensive reasoning when confronted with information that challenges the party's position. That is what we find (Huddy et al., 2018). In the UK, the partisan identity scale was linked to greater confidence in electoral victory in the BES online panel in Wave 4 conducted right before the 2015 election. Strong Labour and Conservative identifiers were far more likely than weaker partisans to believe their party would win an electoral majority in the general election, even though strong and weak partisans would have been exposed to similar pre-election poll results. The election was expected to be close, helping to explain why strong partisans from both parties believed they would win. But it does not explain why strong partisans were more confident of victory than weak partisans.

Similar results were obtained in Sweden and the Netherlands. In Sweden, respondents were contacted roughly nine months before the 2014 national election and those who identified with a political party were asked about the likelihood that their party would be part of the governing coalition. Partisan identity boosted confidence that one's party would be included in the government coalition, whereas ideological intensity had no effect on electoral confidence. Members of the two largest parties (Social Democrats on the left and Moderates on the right) along with Christian Democrats (part of the existing coalition) were the most confident and Swedish Democrats were the least confident that they would be part of a future government. Despite these party differences, strong partisans of all parties were more confident than weak partisans of electoral victory.

Respondents in the 2012 Dutch Parliamentary Election Study were asked whether they thought their party would be included in the government. This question was asked after the vote count was known but the make-up of the governing coalition was still being negotiated. The People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) had received a plurality of the votes, followed by the Labour Party (PvdA). The major question hanging over parliamentary negotiations was whether any of the minor parties would join the

governing coalition. Ultimately, a VVD–Labour centrist government was formed in November, minus the inclusion of any of the minor parties. Among Christian Democrat and SGP partisans, the two key minor parties, strongly identified partisans were far more confident than weak partisans that they would be part of the governing coalition, as further evidence of partisan motivated reasoning designed to elevate party standing even after electoral votes had been tallied.

In sum, the partisan identity scale helps to improve estimates of in-party voting and sheds additional light on other aspects of political behaviour. It predicts levels of political activity, including contacting a politician and working on a campaign. A strong partisan identity enhances defensive reasoning and boosts confidence in an electoral victory under conditions of uncertainty. This occurs when electoral outcomes are uncertain before (UK, Sweden) and after (Netherlands) an election.

Most election surveys do not include a multi-item partisan identity scale, making it difficult to estimate the true effects of partisan intensity on political behaviour. There is a possible alternative, as noted earlier. Many election studies ask respondents to rate the parties on a scale that typically ranges from 0 (dislike) to 10 (like), serving as a measure of in-group bias (Mullen et al., 1992). As shown earlier, such ratings can be used successfully to gauge weak partisan preferences among Americans. We examine whether in-party ratings can be also used as a proxy for a strong partisan identity. The relationship between partisan rating and partisan identity strength is not perfect but it may provide more information than a simple four-point rating of felt closeness to the party. In that sense partisan ratings could be used to enhance the assessment of partisan identity strength and thus provide a better indication than traditional measures of partisan behaviour, including campaign activity and degree of motivated reasoning.

We put this suggestion to the test in two datasets: the online BES panel and data from the Swedish Citizen Panel described earlier. In these data, party ratings range from 0 (dislike) to 10 (like). Partisans are given a score of 0 if they rate their party at 5 or below, making the scale comparable to the partisan identity measure which does not allow for a negative rating of one's party. Partisans thus have six possible levels ($\leq 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10$); many fewer than on the partisan identity scale, but a few more points than the standard intensity measure. All partisan intensity measures are rescaled to 0–1 in the following analyses.

We examined the association between voting for one's party, political attention and political participation in the BES panel in Wave 6 (May 2015) as a function of three different partisan intensity measures collected in Wave 3 (roughly eight months before the 2015 election). We regressed in-party voting, attention and participation separately on partisan identity, the traditional three-point partisan strength, and party rating plus controls for gender, age, education, race, income and England (versus Scotland or Wales).

Partisan identity has far stronger ties than either the traditional strength measure or in-party rating with political attention and participation (Tables A1 and A2 in the Online Appendix), as seen in Figure 8.2. As partisan identity ranges from its lowest to highest value, political attention increases from just above 0.6 to 0.9 on the 0–1 attention scale, a greater increase than observed for either of the other two partisan intensity measures. Likewise, political participation increases from just below 0.2 to 0.6 across the range of partisan identity, a far greater increase than observed across the range of the other two partisan intensity measures. In contrast, the link between vote choice and the three meas-

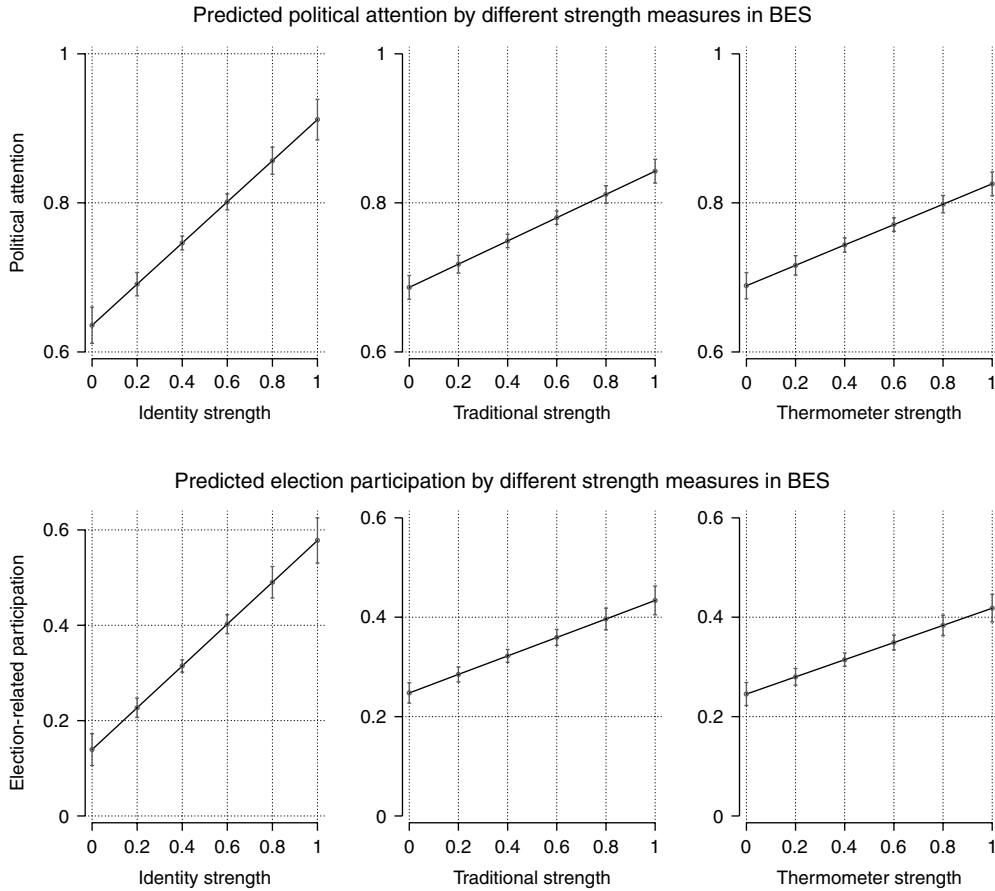


Figure 8.2 Levels of political attention and participation by measures of partisan strength in Great Britain

ures of partisan intensity was significant and roughly equivalent in magnitude (Table A3 in the Online Appendix). Ideological intensity is also a significant predictor of political activity but does not predict in-party voting or attention, and its effects are far smaller than those of partisan identity (see Tables A1–A3).

We conducted a similar analysis in Sweden, regressing the likelihood of voting for one’s party some nine months before the 2014 election on three different measures of partisan intensity plus a measure of ideological intensity (consistent with the left–right direction of the party), employment status and education.³ Results largely mirror findings in the UK. Once again, partisan identity is far more strongly linked to attention and political activity than the other two measures of partisan strength (Tables A5 and A6 in the Online Appendix). As seen in Figure 8.3, political interest and campaign activity increase dramatically across the range of partisan identity. In contrast, all three measures are comparably related to in-party voting although effect sizes are somewhat larger for identity and liking than the traditional measure (Table A6). It is also worth noting that ideological

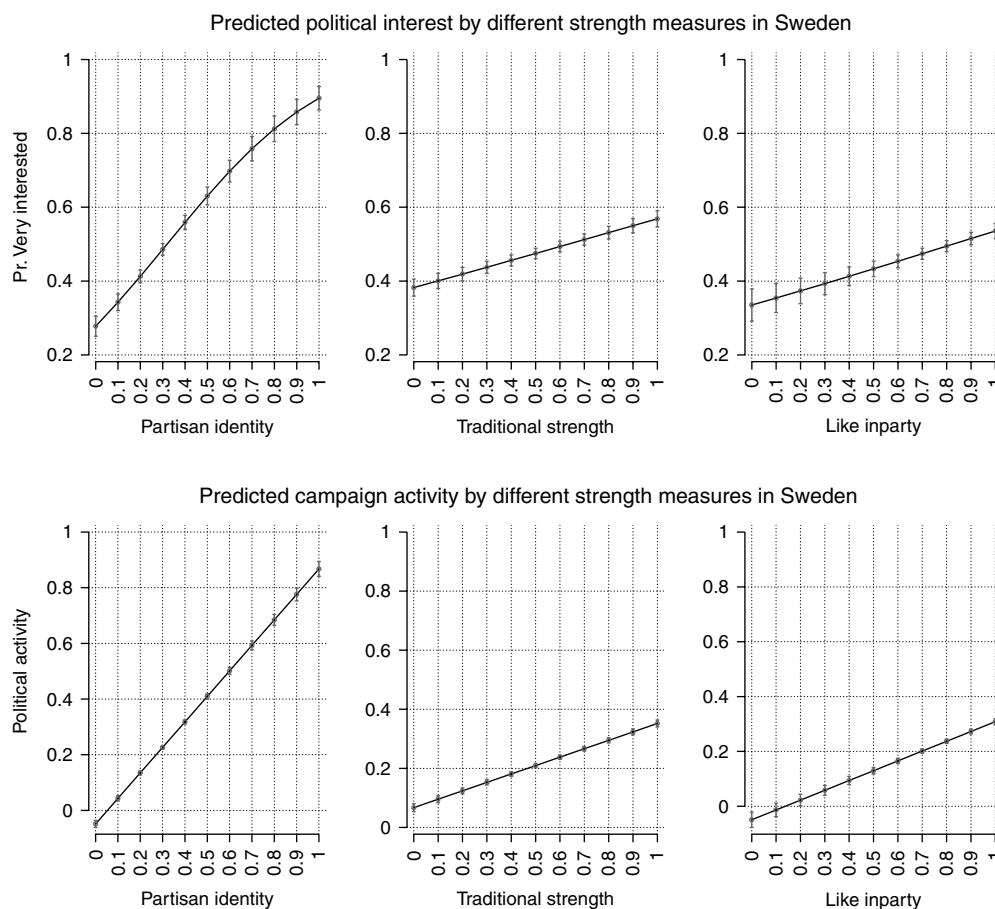


Figure 8.3 *Levels of political interest and participation by partisan intensity in Sweden*

intensity is a more consistent and significant predictor of in-party vote, participation and interest in Sweden than in the UK. But once again, its effects are smaller than those of partisan identity.

In sum, an improved measure of partisan intensity sheds considerable light on political behaviour. Our findings suggest that past analyses that employ the traditional three- or four-point measure of partisan strength have likely underestimated the influence of partisanship on political interest and campaign-related activity. One other thing is clear in these analyses: holding a strong ideological position consistent with one's party's left-right orientation is a less good indication of partisan voting, political behaviour or defensive reasoning than a fine-grained measure of partisan identity. This provides further theoretical support to an expressive or social identity-based approach to the measurement of partisan direction and intensity.

CONCLUSION

We have assessed current measures of partisan direction and strength from the perspective of an identity model of partisanship. Our first conclusion is that partisan direction can and should be measured as inclusively as possible, even if very weak. This likely involves asking a question that lists the parties, makes it as easy as possible for someone to qualify, and pushes those without partisanship to identify a party to which they feel some affinity. This then allows for the assessment of partisan strength across its full range and ensures that weak partisans are not misidentified as non-partisans.

Our second conclusion is that there is considerable value in measuring partisan identity with a multi-item scale. In our data, partisans in the UK, Netherlands, and Sweden exhibit many of the same expressive attitudes and behaviours observed among American partisans, even if levels of partisanship are lower in Europe than the US. Strongly identified partisans vote for their party, take political action during a campaign, engage in defensive reasoning and exhibit affective polarization (Huddy et al., 2018). Levels of partisanship may vary across different democracies, but once acquired partisan identities exhibit many of the same properties including stability over time (Huddy et al., 2018). When weak they do not generate especially partisan behaviour; when strong they influence a range of political behaviours including democratic engagement.

In Europe, declining levels of partisanship hint at the potential for destabilized politics as weak identifiers abandon their parties (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2002). Current political events in the Netherlands, France and Italy suggest that the decline in partisanship has led to greater electoral volatility, an increase in personality-centred elections, and heightened economic voting (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2002; Kayser and Wlezien, 2011). In the absence of strong partisanship, voters are more susceptible to new political parties that defy the traditional left–right cleavages and produce – as in the case of Italy – a ‘tri-polar’ (Bellucci and Maraffi, 2014) shaped political system dominated by the older left–right cleavage and a newer anti-politics dimension. In the 2013 Italian National Election Studies (ITANES) data, more than 50 per cent of Italian respondents reported no party identification, hinting at the power of novice political parties such as Grillo’s 5 Star Movement to recruit supporters (Bankert et al., 2018).

Ultimately, weak partisanship in Europe and elsewhere is a cause for concern. There are clear problems with intense partisanship, as current American politics so amply reveals. Partisans practice motivated reasoning, ignore well-grounded arguments, exhibit hostility and intolerance of out-partisans, and focus on winning or losing elections at the expense of pursuing a well-thought-out policy agenda. Nonetheless, partisan identity also generates enthusiasm for politics, maintains system stability and motivates political engagement. In the absence of partisan identities, cynicism and disengagement are likely to proliferate, and new political forces including anti-politics groups can gain ground against more traditional parties, sowing instability and extremism. Countries such as Italy, with volatile and unstable parties, provide ripe ground for the emergence of neo-nationalist anti-politics parties such as the 5 Star Movement. In the past, this type of marginal political party was held in check by voters’ stable attachments to established parties. The absence of stable and enduring partisan identities creates an opening for anti-politics forces and the potential destabilization of Western democracies.

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NOTES

1. 4500 individuals responded to both waves (5195 in the pre-election survey and 5225 in the post-election survey). For documentation and data, see <http://www.lissdata.nl/lissdata/>. The 9/12 and 12/12–13/1 waves contained additional items needed for this analysis.
2. The five largest parties are People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), the Party for Freedom (PVV), Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), Labour (PvdA) and the Socialist Party (SP). Minor parties include the Greens, Democrats 66 (D66), Christian Union, Reformed Political Party (SGP), Party for the Animals, 50Plus and Democratic Political Turning Point (DPK).
3. All measures are from Wave 5 of the 2014 Swedish Internet panel. Interest is measured as a single item which assessed level of interest in politics in general and ranged from 'very' to 'not at all'. Participation is based on a series of four questions asking respondents how likely they would be to donate, volunteer for a candidate or party, wear a button advertising the party, or try to convince others how to vote, rated on a scale from 1 (not at all likely) to 4 (very likely).

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