

## **Affect and Cognition in Party Identification**

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*Despite the centrality of party identification in understandings of political behavior in the United States, there is an unacknowledged disparity between our theories and measurement of the phenomenon. The traditional method of measuring party identification relies on supplying cognitive cues by explicitly asking respondents to “think” about their partisanship. The Michigan theory of party identification, in contrast, assumes that partisanship is primarily affective. Using a survey experiment, we explore the effects of asking respondents to feel rather than think about their party identification. The new questions reveal that the electorate is more Republican than previously thought. Response timers show that respondents take longer to answer the new items, suggesting that they are surveying a wider and deeper array of considerations. These results serve to revive many of our traditional conceptions of how party identity works while also opening the door for new research questions.*

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Our aim is to reconcile the standard conceptualization of party identification with its measurement. While theory assumes that party identification is fundamentally affective, the standard battery of survey questions used to measure this concept over the last half century explicitly ask respondents to “think” about themselves, that is, to be cognitive. To better align measurement with theory, we alter the original questions to replace cognitive prompts with affective prompts. In a telephone survey experiment, we compare the two measurement strategies directly by randomly assigning respondents to receive either the old or new questions.

The new questions produce a more Republican distribution than do the old items. This “think Democratic/feel Republican” result helps explain the apparent

disjunction between short-term and long-term forces in American electoral politics. Specifically, this finding sheds light on why Republicans have performed so well in national elections during a time when the standard measures of partisanship would predict comfortable Democratic victories. We also find that respondents take longer to report their party identification when the new affective prompts are used. We posit that this delay indicates that respondents are culling a deeper pool of considerations that reflect their long-term affective attachments, a process more consistent with traditional theory.

Taken together, these findings encourage a departure from the current thinking about party identification. Rather than challenge the traditional view that partisanship is rooted in socialization experiences and attachments to reference groups as many revisionists have, we take the theory at face value. We then modify the operationalization of party identification to make the theory and measurement more congruent. Not only does this endeavor make logical sense but the substantive results yield new and interesting insights about party identification in the United States that should encourage additional exploration of the concept.

### Theory of Party Identification

The classic theoretical conception of partisan identity is found in Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes' *The American Voter*. According to the authors' oft-quoted conceptualization, party identification is "the individual's *affective orientation* to an important group-object in his environment" (Campbell et al., 1960, p. 121, emphasis added). This definition is remarkably specific in asserting that party identification is a psychological attachment to a partisan reference group. It is a bond that is fundamentally "affective," or emotional. This basic assumption about the nature of partisanship emerged before *The American Voter* was in print and has been continually noted in the contemporary era as well. For example, the precursor study to *The American Voter*, Campbell, Gurin, and Miller's *The Voter Decides*, defined party identification as "the sense of personal attachment which the individual *feels* toward the [partisan] group of his choice" (1954, p. 89, emphasis added). Years afterward, even so-called revisionists acknowledged that the original theory depicts "party ID as stable, *affectively based*, and relatively impervious to change" (Fiorina, 1981, p. 86, emphasis added). Even more recently, *The New American Voter* reaffirms that "party identification is a concept . . . positing that one's sense of self may include a *feeling* of personal identity with . . . a political party" (Miller & Shanks, 1996, p. 120, emphasis added).

Despite a continuing emphasis on emotion, even the strongest adherents of the Michigan school lapsed at times into calling party identification an "affinity," "preference," or "sense of being," terms that do not sound particularly dependent on emotion. Key's (1966) "standing decision" and Fiorina's (1981) "running tally" went further, implying that a healthy dose of cognition is involved in partisan

identity.<sup>1</sup> Miller's (1976) retrospective on the history of the concept goes as far as to not make any reference to emotion whatsoever. Because cognition is also mentioned in the literature, our approach is to remain agnostic. To the degree that affect and cognition are synonymous, the distinction between theory and measurement should not be of much consequence. Our goal here is to test that proposition.

### Measurement of Party Identification

Party identification can only be measured by asking respondents for self reports. Miller and Shanks reason that party identification is analogous to religious affiliation. One just knows that "I am Catholic" or "We are Jewish," in the same way that one knows that "I am a Democrat" or "We are Republicans" (Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, 2002; Miller & Shanks, 1996). Religious identities, like partisan ones, are therefore understood as psychological attachments to groups rather than as behaviors. Behavioral indicators are therefore inappropriate measures of identity because they capture a consequence of identification, not the concept itself (Burden & Greene, 2000; Campbell et al., 1960; Converse & Pierce, 1985; Finkel & Scarrow, 1985; Green et al., 2002; Keith et al., 1992; Miller & Shanks, 1996; Weisberg, 1999; Weisberg & Greene, 2003).

Since behavioral measures are inappropriate, the only way to measure party identification per se is to ask people to report it themselves. Since 1952 most academic surveys have asked the same party identification questions.<sup>2</sup> This simple battery has a long history and is the basis for most of what is known about individual party attachments over the past half-century. It is worth briefly reminding readers of the exact wordings of these questions. Every respondent is first asked:

"Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?"

Respondents who identify as Democrats (or Republicans) in this question are then asked:

"Would you call yourself a strong Democrat (or Republican) or a not very strong Democrat (or Republican)?"

Respondents who identify as Independents in the first question are then asked:

"Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party?"

<sup>1</sup> Rahn (1993) prefers the more psychologically appropriate term "heuristic."

<sup>2</sup> The Gallup party identification questions begin with the phrase "In politics today" rather than "Generally speaking." See Abramson and Ostrom (1991), Bishop, Tuchfarber, and Smith (1994), and McKuen, Erikson, and Stimson (1992) for a debate on how this difference matters.

Combining all of the possible responses to these questions creates a 7-point party identification scale that ranges from “Strong Democrat” on one end to “Strong Republican” on the other. Independents who do not lean towards either party are placed at the center position. Note that Independent Republicans and Independent Democrats are frequently referred to as “leaners” because they admit leaning toward one party or another.<sup>3</sup>

In hindsight it is striking that the party identification battery explicitly asks respondents to “think” about their partisanship since the original theory focused so heavily on affect. If party identification is something that is felt rather than thought, then the questions used to measure the concept ought to emphasize affect rather than cognition. It is this possibility we wish to explore with a new affective measure of party identification.

### **An Affective Measure of Party Identification**

What impact the divide between a party identification theory emphasizing affect and a measurement scheme that emphasizes cognition has is fortunately an empirical question. To explore this question, we modify the existing party identification measures to prime feelings rather than thoughts. However, changing measurement strategies too drastically would make it difficult to know precisely what factor is responsible for observed differences. To ensure valid comparisons, one should shift the emphasis from thinking to feeling while displacing as few words as possible.<sup>4</sup> If responses to the question change after it is reworded, they can then be attributed exclusively to the new wording since the rest of the text will be held constant. Therefore, in creating a new measure, we seek to retain the two central elements of the existing questions—a long time horizon and self-categorization (Converse & Pierce, 1985)—while prompting the respondent to base their responses on feelings rather than thoughts.

In an effort to meet these criteria, we crafted the following first item:

“Generally speaking, do you usually feel that you are a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?”

Note that the only difference between this question and the traditional one is that “think of yourself as” has been replaced by “feel that you are.” “Generally speaking” and “usually” are still present to invoke long-term dispositions rather than short-term preferences, and respondents are still asked to identify themselves. The response categories are also untouched so that the choice set remains the same for all respondents.

<sup>3</sup> Researchers disagree about the extent to which all pure Independents are essentially the same and how to treat “apolitical” respondents (Craig, 1985; Miller & Wattenberg, 1983; Wattenberg, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> For research that uses different questions, see Blais, Gidengil, Nadeau, & Neville (2001), Cowden and McDermott (2000), Dennis (1988), Green et al. (2002), Krosnick and Berent (1993), Weisberg (1982), and citations listed in footnote 2.

Still adhering to the traditional structure of the party identification battery, the follow-up questions are similarly modified to prompt affect instead of cognition. Respondents who identify as Democrats or Republicans are asked:

“Do you feel that you are a strong Republican (or Democrat) or a not very strong Republican (or Democrat)?”

Likewise, self-identified Independents are asked:

“Do you feel that you are closer to the Republican or the Democratic Party?”

In comparison to the traditional question, the only changes made are that “Would you call yourself” has been replaced by “Do you feel that you are” in the former and “Do you think of yourself” has been replaced by “Do you feel” in the latter.

At this point our experiment reveals an apparent inconsistency in the NES wording. The first question asks respondents to “think,” as does the question asking independents whether they lean toward a party. But the question asking respondents for the strength of their attachments uses the term “call.” Asking what respondents “call” themselves is not as explicitly cognitive as asking them how they “think” of themselves. For consistency’s sake we introduce the term “feel” in all three questions. Therefore we might expect any effects of this rewording to be less significant on the leaner question than the identification and strength questions (Green et al., 2002, p. 58).

### Why Question Wording Matters

It is an understatement to say that this wording change is subtle. The slight change in wording surely stacks the deck against finding differences. The distinction between cognitively and affectively defined party loyalties would have to be great for any differences to result from such a modest experimental manipulation. At the same time, however, even seemingly trivial changes to the wording of a question can lead to substantively meaningful changes in responses (Schuman & Presser, 1981; Tourangeau, Rips, & Rasinski, 2000; Zaller, 1992).

Depending on which considerations are primed by a survey question, different types and numbers of attitudes will be used to respond (Zaller, 1992). When people are primed to define their partisan identities in terms of affect, we would expect them to draw disproportionately upon emotional material. This requires one, perhaps unconsciously, to comb through numerous socialization experiences and feelings about party images and the groups associated with them (Green et al., 2002). These responses should come rather easily, though perhaps not quickly due to the large amount of complex material that needs to be accessed and processed in order to form an affect-based response (Bassili & Scott, 1996). In contrast, when respondents are asked to identify their party loyalties by thinking, affective bonds should be a smaller part of the raw material brought to the task.

Instead of drawing from deeply rooted attitudes as theory would suggest, individuals will grope for more immediate and accessible behavioral cues from which they can infer what their partisan identities are.

We have two expectations about the effect these different ways of reporting partisan identification will have. First, self-perception theory (Bem, 1970) suggests what kind of individuals will be especially susceptible to our wording changes.<sup>5</sup> The theory posits that those with ambiguous prior attitudes will be most likely to cast about for observations of their own behavior from which they might infer opinions, a kind of attribution theory applied to the self. Without strong opinions that are immediately accessible, individuals will sometimes review their own actions to decide where they must stand. While self-perception might be a natural mode of attitudinal inference for many respondents, it leads to an inappropriate dose of behavior in the standard party identification measure.

Second, the effects of our wording change can also be inferred from response times. People take their identities quite seriously and should therefore view the party identification batteries with more care than other items (Green et al., 2002). However, we hypothesize that respondents will take even longer to report their party affiliations when affect is emphasized. Commensurate with the traditional conception of partisan identification, we assume that affective prompts will encourage respondents to answer based upon consideration of a wide range of memories and experiences that are more comprehensive, less reflective of immediate behaviors, and less haphazard. Indeed, as Bassili and Scott (1996) suggest, individuals should take longer to answer survey questions when they are required to comb their considerations more completely. The responses to our new questions might therefore come less quickly than the more accessible responses based on cognitive cues. These effects are not necessarily concentrated among those with weak predispositions but rather those with discrepant thoughts and feelings.

This hypothesis runs against the conventional wisdom in psychology on attitude accessibility (Bassili, 1995). The standard view is that response times should be faster for emotional responses than cognitive ones; gut-level issues should be more accessible than those that require thought. However, we expect that this general relationship might not hold in the case of party identification because theory suggests a particular form for the "affective attachments" people harbor. They are not fleeting, immediate, or whimsical mood-states but rather long-term psychological associations. In addition, Bassili and Krosnick (2000) lend credence to our seemingly unorthodox hypothesis by demonstrating that response times are not always indicators of attitude accessibility or importance. Bassili and Scott (1996) concur, arguing that interpretations of latency can vary depending on what type of survey question is being examined.

<sup>5</sup> One might also turn to cognitive consistency theories such as Festinger's cognitive dissonance, although in practice it can be difficult to separate these alternatives from self-perception (Fazio, Zanna, & Cooper, 1977).

In short, we expect that wording changes will lead to changes in responses. The strongest partisans will be least affected by a change in emphasis from thought to feeling, but question wording will matter greatly for respondents with weaker partisan predispositions. We also expect that it will take respondents a longer time to answer our new questions because affective cues will prompt them to construct their answer from a deeper set of attitudes and experiences.

### Survey Experiment Data

We make use of a survey experiment to compare the two variants of the party identification battery. Both sets of questions were included in a telephone survey of a representative sample of adults in Ohio during the fall of 2001. Half of the sample was randomly selected to receive the traditional questions while the other half received the new items. For these questions only we included latent response timers. The timers automatically and unobtrusively record how long a respondent takes to answer a question. The remainder of the 30-minute survey asked a variety of questions about the economy, terrorism, demographics, and other issues.<sup>6</sup>

An experiment embedded within a survey offers dual benefits. Just as in a classic laboratory experiment, randomization of subjects ensures that *internal validity* is high. Random assignment guarantees that any differences between the two types of respondents are due only to question wording differences. The appendix provides evidence that the manipulation alone is responsible for all of the observed effects. Table A1 shows that assignment to conditions was in fact random. More importantly, the experimental effect is strongest for the first party identification question and weakens for the follow-ups, only one of which originally asks respondents to “think.” *External validity* is also high because subjects are drawn from a representative sample. Although it is not a national sample, the respondents in this study live in a diverse Midwestern state that is nearly a political microcosm of the nation as a whole.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the survey experiment draws upon the strengths of both traditions, following a new trend that takes advantage of the methodological leverage that survey-based experimentation offers (Piazza, Sniderman, & Tetlock, 1989; Sniderman & Grob, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> The terrorism and economic measures are of interest, but are the property of a media client who purchased them and are thus unavailable to us. Only the demographic measures are accessible.

<sup>7</sup> It is reasonable to generalize from Ohio to the nation on both electoral and broader demographic grounds. Electorally, Ohio tends to be a bell-weather state, voting for the winning presidential candidate in all but two elections since 1896. In terms of demographics, the state matches up well with the nation. To take but a few examples, 2000 Census data indicate that the median age was 35.3 nationally versus 36.2 in Ohio, the percent black was 12.3 nationally versus 11.5 in Ohio, and the median household income was \$37,005 nationally versus \$36,029 in Ohio. The only notable demographic difference is that the state has a significantly smaller Latino population than the nation. Table A1 in the Appendix provides information about sample characteristics.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Seven-Point Scale

	Think	Feel	<i>n</i>	<i>p</i>
Strong Republican	16.8%	22.9	139	<b>.02</b>
Weak Republican	16.8	18.5	124	.28
Independent Republican	8.8	9.1	63	.45
Pure Independent	7.2	8.5	55	.25
Independent Democrat	7.7	10.0	62	.15
Weak Democrat	21.8	14.1	127	<b>&lt;.01</b>
Strong Democrat	20.9	17.0	134	<b>.09</b>

Note. *p* values in final column are based on difference of means (one-tailed *t* test).

### A More Republican Electorate

Before looking at the distribution of responses to our new questions, it is useful to recall that traditional measures of partisan identity suggest an overwhelming Democratic advantage in the electorate. According to recent NES surveys, Democrats outnumbered Republicans 35% to 25% in 2000 and 32% to 29% in 2004.<sup>8</sup> An almost identical Democratic advantage appears in other partisan evaluations such as reported likes/dislikes about the parties and feeling thermometers. By these indicators it seems that the distribution of party identification ought to favor the Democrats.

The Democratic advantage in partisan identity ends, however, when our new affective measure of party identification is employed. Respondents are substantially more Republican in their identifications when affect rather than cognition is primed. The left side of Table 1 shows that using responses to the standard “think” prompts, Democrats outnumber Republicans (as defined by the first party identification question) by almost 10 points. This is comfortably similar to the gap found nationwide. But the “feel” measure reverses this difference to a 10-point *Republican* advantage. The overall relationship between the two variables is statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 12.18, p = .058$ ).

Individual row differences tend not to be significant in the center of the scale due to a small number of cases in each. The two ends of the 7-point scale have the largest number of cases and the greatest percentage differences, making them more likely to be significant (Strong Republicans  $p = .02$ , Weak Democrats  $p = .004$ , Strong Democrats  $p = .09$ ).<sup>9</sup> While this is a not a precise test of Bem’s theory—such a test may not even be possible—it suggests that the effects

<sup>8</sup> These are unweighted responses. Using sample weight produces an even larger Democratic edge in both surveys. A similar gap emerges even if leaners are coded as partisans.

<sup>9</sup> These results hold up regardless of whether one uses weighted or unweighted data and whether one uses listwise deletion of cases or multiple imputation to eliminate missing data. For simplicity we report the raw data.

are largest among those who shift between the “strong” and “weak” partisan categories. Further probing of this result in future work may shed light on the “intransitivity” problem that has plagued the 7-point party identification scale (Keith et al., 1992; Petrocik, 1974).

The pro-Republican shift is similar if one recodes leaners as partisans. Using this alternative coding, we still see a Democratic majority of 8 points in the traditional measure. But in the “feel” conditions Republicans actually become the majority party, outnumbering Democrats by 9 points. Regardless of how leaners are considered, Republicans outpace Democrats when survey questions emphasize feelings instead of thoughts.

The asymmetric effect of the new questions is hard to deny. The stronger Republican tendencies revealed by the feel question were even reflected in presidential vote-choice models (unreported here but available from the authors) where the intercept was significant and in favor of the Republicans in feel condition but insignificant in the think condition. In an interesting parallel, Eagly, Mladinic, and Otto (1994) find in an experimental setting that while cognitive beliefs shape attitudes toward both major parties, affect only seems to influence attitudes toward the Republicans.

The natural inference from this finding—that *thinking* about politics favors the Democratic Party and *feeling* it favors the Republicans—is striking and not entirely explainable. It at least suggests, however, that a subset of the population is Democrats in their heads but Republicans in their hearts. We thus conditionally support the recent findings of Green et al. (2002) that revive the more traditional Michigan-style approach to the study of partisan identity and point to the ubiquitous importance of partisanship in American politics. However, we might take issue with their assumption that partisan hearts and minds are necessarily one and the same for everyone. We admit that, for many citizens, affect and cognition about their party attachments will be reinforcing. But our data show that a sizable segment of the population harbors discrepant thoughts and feelings. Partisan hearts are what the original conception of party identification stressed, and these turn out at least in the contemporary era to be more Republican than are partisan minds.

The observed shift in the Republican direction is interesting in its own right, but it might also help researchers better understand the apparent disjunction between mass partisanship and election outcomes. Since we began to measure partisan identity through social surveys some 50 years ago, Republicans have often won the presidency although Democrats seemed to be the largest voting bloc. These differences were due, the story goes, to a variety of factors including weakened partisanship, differing party nomination rules, greater ideological diversity among Democrats, superior Republican presidential candidates, an issue ownership differential, the incumbency advantage in Congress, and voter desire for divided government (Fiorina, 1996; Jacobson, 1990; Mayer, 1996; Petrocik, 1996; Sigelman, 1990; Wattenberg, 1991).

Each of these arguments has merit, but even together they do not fully account for the chronic disconnect between long-term and short-term forces in electoral politics (Campbell et al., 1960). Party identification is considered the best example of a long-term force. Issues of the day, social conditions, candidate characteristics, and even attitudes toward the parties are important short-term forces. Short-term forces are what allow for election outcomes to deviate from simply reflecting mass partisanship (Campbell et al., 1960; Converse, 1966). However, even after distinguishing between long- and short-term forces, the postwar era remains something of an enigma. An analysis based on the “normal vote” (Converse, 1966; Petrocik, 1989) would have predicted generous Democratic victories in every presidential election from 1952 onward.<sup>10</sup> However, Republicans won eight of the 13 presidential contests between 1952 and 2000.<sup>11</sup> Aside from perhaps the 1964 and 1996 contests, every election over the last 50 years would have been “deviating” by this standard. Erikson summarizes the puzzle well, concluding on the basis of macro evidence from the NES that “Republicans perform better than they ‘should’ in presidential elections.” Why this has happened with such regularity remains a “mystery” since “Republicans have done well in the presidential elections for reasons that we summarize only as the effect of dummy variables for the election years” (2002, p. 279). Our results open the possibility that it is not only the elections but the measures of mass partisanship themselves that are in need of reexamination.

In short, a theory of long- and short-term forces alone would suggest that short-term forces have always favored Republicans to the point where they became long-term forces, and deviating elections transformed into maintaining elections. However, in this case party identification becomes a useless concept since every contest is a “deviating” election and the deviation always goes in the same direction. This argument is difficult to accept. We therefore propose that much of the apparent disjunction between party identification and election results could be due to improper measurement of the former rather than continuing surprises in the latter. At the same time, we point out that an individual-level correspondence between party identification and voting behavior is not the same as parallel trends at the aggregate level. Moreover, any tainting of the identity measure by past behavior is likely to be lagged and thus not a perfect predictor of the vote. In addition, the most partisan of respondents are also most likely to vote and least likely to be affected by the question wording experiment.

<sup>10</sup> And differences in the voting rates of Democrats and Republicans are not responsible for much of this disjunction (Citrin, Schickler, & Sides, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Had it not been for Watergate opening the door for Carter’s outsider victory in 1976, some analysts predicted continued Republican dominance of the White House from the Nixon era onward (Phillips, 1969). Note that even narrow Democratic wins are more Republican than a normal vote analysis would suggest.

### Response Times

A secondary issue to consider is what impact question wording has on how long it takes respondents to report their party identifications. The computer interviewing software allowed us to record how long it takes a respondent to deliver an answer after a question has been asked. These latent response timers have the benefit of both objectivity and unobtrusiveness. The length of time between the end of the question and reporting of the response is automatically recorded without the respondent's knowledge. Such measures are standard in the field of psychology (Fazio, 1990) and have recently been used successfully in political science to assess attitude importance and accessibility (e.g., Bassili & Krosnick, 2000; Huckfeldt, Sprague, & Levine, 2000; Mulligan, Grant, & Mockabee, 2003). Indeed an entire issue of *Political Psychology* was dedicated to this topic.

We posit that response times should reflect the degree to which questions encourage respondents to seek differing sources and amounts of material before they respond. As outlined earlier, we suspect that the "feel" questions encourage respondents to access more material before answering. We expect slower responses to the new questions as respondents will dig more deeply for material on which to base their responses.

Data on response times are presented in Table 2. Here we present mean times (measured in seconds) as well as the standard errors of those means. There are three rows in the table representing the three items in the party-identification battery, the first measuring which category (Republican, Democrat, or Independent), the second asking Independents whether they lean toward a party or not, and the third asking partisans for the strength of their attachments. Note that the branching format means that each respondent was timed on the category question and then again on either the strength or leaning questions depending on the initial response.

**Table 2.** Latent Response Times

Question	Think	Feel	<i>p</i>
Category (3-point scale)	10.95 sec (.325 sec) <i>n</i> = 416	11.82 sec (.442 sec) <i>n</i> = 390	<b>.053</b>
Leaning (Independents only)	9.88 sec (.490 sec) <i>n</i> = 131	10.58 sec (.590 sec) <i>n</i> = 140	.181
Strength (Partisans only)	7.01 sec (.271 sec) <i>n</i> = 285	7.84 sec (.422 sec) <i>n</i> = 250	<b>.045</b>

*Note.* Each cell contains the mean response time, standard error, and number of respondents. *p* values in final column are based on difference of means (one-tailed *t* test).

We should first point out that the data exhibit a high level of face validity. The typical respondent takes about nine or 10 seconds to answer each item. Response times increase between the initial question and the follow-up, when respondents have become familiar with the format. In addition, we find that strong partisans are quicker to respond than those in the middle of the scale (Bassilli, 1995).

The data are also largely consistent with our hunches about affect and cognition. For all three question types, response times are longer in the feel condition, though only significantly so for the category and strength questions. It is actually heartening that there is no difference for the leaner questions since the original prompt used the term “call” rather than “think”; in this case there is not as sharp a divide between the cognitive and affective prompts. But for the other two questions where “think” was replaced with “feel,” respondents took about 10% longer to answer. This is a statistically as well as a substantively significant effect given subtlety of our wording experiment.<sup>12</sup>

It is of course possible that the differing response times are due to other factors we have not considered. For example, perhaps the new questions take longer to answer because they are not easily understood or seem awkward to the interviewers or respondents. We are skeptical of this interpretation because our response timers account for the time between the end of the question and the offering of a response. Thus, any potential interviewer difficulties are not captured in this measure. Moreover, the percentage of “don’t know” responses and refusals is no higher in the “feel” condition, suggesting that respondents are not having a harder time interpreting and responding to our new questions. If anything, our experiment is biased toward null results because the manipulation is so modest.

## Discussion

Party identification has seen a renaissance of late. Much of the literature over the past several decades has been a critique of the original Michigan theory. However, these works have also assumed that the measurement of partisanship is not worth examining. We take a different approach by adopting what Adcock and Collier (2001) call the “AHM” approach: “Assume the *hypothesis*, *evaluate the measurement*.”

Upon assuming the Michigan theory of party identification as an affective social identity, the traditional means of measurement are something of a curiosity. We thus recognize for the *first time* that while the traditional conception of party identity is an affective attachment, the traditional party identification ques-

<sup>12</sup> Because the response times have skewed distributions, we replicated the results using two standard practices: taking logarithms of the response times and removing extreme outliers. Neither strategy changes the basic results. We note also that an experimental condition dummy variable is a significant predictor of response times even after controlling for measures of sophistication such as interest in politics, education, and strength of partisanship.

tions explicitly asks respondents to “think.” A natural way to identify the effects of this wording choice is to compare differing cues in an experimental setting. By doing so we hope to breathe new life into an old concept. Our data show that a measurement approach stressing affect rather than cognition can produce results that conform more to theoretical expectations. We also find that measurement techniques better grounded in theory also help us address old problems such as the puzzle of Republican success in presidential elections.

That said, these findings should be viewed as the beginning of a new exploration of partisanship rather than as the conclusion of an existing research agenda. Specifically, future research might address three sets of questions. One is the divergence and convergence of affective and cognitive measures of partisan identity. Such phenomena could be analyzed both across respondents and across time. Our theoretical perspective offers some predictions on the former by suggesting that those with weaker partisan attitudes will consistently be more likely to respond to the question wording experiment. We find that much of the movement occurs between the “weak” and “strong” categories, lessening the intransitivity problem somewhat by redistributing some respondents from the former to latter. In terms of divergence or convergence across time, a panel study that reinterviews the same subjects using the same questions would allow us to assess such questions as whether one measure or the other is more reliable over time. This method of study would also allow us to see if one set of questions is more or less sensitive to current events (for example, events like the 9/11 attacks) than others. This sort of inquiry is especially intriguing because it would apply new data and research methods to some of the earliest theoretical questions about the stability of party identification (Converse, 1964).

Second, researchers might employ introspective measures to unpack more precisely the factors that are causing longer response times in the “feel” condition. For example, how might our understanding of party identification as a *simplifying* lens through which individuals view politics (e.g., a “perceptual filter”) change when affective measures lead to *longer* response times? At least in the case of party identification, response times are more a measure of importance and depth rather than of attitude accessibility (see Bassili & Krosnick, 2000; Bassili & Scott, 1996). The open-ended “stop and think” questions employed by Zaller (1992), the introspective explanations used by Wilson and colleagues (1991, 1995), and the semantic batteries employed by Greene (1999, 2000, 2002) strike us as particularly useful starting points for exploring these and other related dynamics further.

A final set of questions would assess how the old and new measures of party identification relate to other attitudes and behaviors. While our limited survey instrument and modest sample size do not permit a full-blown analysis of these relationships here, this type of inquiry is vital for evaluating the self-perception basis we attribute to the differences between the measures. Existing understandings of phenomena such as “intransitivities” in the party identification scale (Keith

et al., 1992; Petrocik, 1974), the relationship between partisanship and partisan behavior (Rahn, 1993), the strengthening of partisanship with age (Campbell et al., 1960), and group differences in partisanship ought to be reconsidered with a measurement strategy that is more faithful to the original theoretical orientation. This is not to argue that the standard items should be quickly discarded, however. Retaining them continues the valuable National Election Studies (NES) time series of core items that now covers more than half a century. At the same time, it would be illuminating to expand the bounds of studies like the NES through splitting samples and administering multiple sets of questions experimentally as we have.

In conclusion, our contribution has been to demonstrate that there is a genuine difference between measures of party identification built on affective versus cognitive foundations. We acknowledge that all opinions are a mixture of *both* affect and cognition. And we understand that party identification is at its root just that, an identity (Green et al., 2002; Greene, 1999). However, by supplying citizens with affective and cognitive cues when asking about this identity, we have generated new and important insights about partisanship. Given the subtlety of the experimental manipulation, this is no small feat. Having established the plausibility of affective measures, a new research agenda front has been opened. Although we cannot yet be certain what specific connotations the terms “think” and “feel” bring to mind, we have at the very least offered findings and theoretical expectations that may be subject to further empirical scrutiny. The revelations derived from our new battery of questions should encourage researchers to replicate the results in different contexts and more deeply explore the politics and psychology behind the differences.

## APPENDIX

The data used in this study come from the October 2001 Buckeye State Poll-Special Survey, an omnibus statewide telephone survey of 806 adults using a random-digit-dialing sampling procedure. The survey lasted roughly 30 minutes and, in addition to our brief experiment, covered a range of topics from the economy to terrorism to standard demographic questions.

This survey was administered about a month after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. However, we do not anticipate that this historical intervention affects our results in any serious way. First and foremost, to the extent that events as significant as these are an issue, they should influence respondents in both conditions equally due to random assignment. Furthermore, while the events of September 11 certainly led to a short-term rally of public support behind the president and the government, there is only modest evidence from media surveys that Republican identification experienced a slight uptick in late 2001 into early 2002 (Hetherington & Nelson, 2003). In addition, in analysis unreported here, we find only limited evidence that the attacks moved “macropartisanship” slightly in the

Republican direction. This small move occurred mostly at the expense of Independents rather than Democrats.

We have evidence that the random assignment needed for the experiment to work was successful. In other words, *all* of the differences between “thinkers” and “feelers” are due *solely* to the manipulation of affective and cognitive prompts. Table A1 reports means for most of the variables in the survey that one might think are connected to party identification. Simple two-sample *t* tests are computed to determine whether the means differ across the think and feel conditions. Only for party identification measures are the differences between the groups statistically significant. Even for variables that are tightly connected to partisanship such as ideology and vote choice, respondents who received the think and feel questions are indistinguishable. One finds identical patterns of statistical significance if a nonparametric measure such as  $\chi^2$  is used.

**Table A1.** Demonstration of Random Assignment

	Think	Feel	<i>p</i>
Party Identification Scale (7-point scale)	4.21	3.74	<b>.006</b>
Party Identification: Category (3-point scale)	2.09	1.90	<b>.003</b>
Party Identification: Strength (strong = 1)	.49	.55	.20
Party Identification: Leaning (leans = 1)	.70	.69	.92
Ideology (7-point scale)	4.40	4.25	.17
College Educated	.54	.56	.53
Male	.40	.38	.57
Black	.09	.07	.18
Married	.47	.43	.26
Age	46.7	47.8	.36
Protestant	.45	.48	.48
Newspaper Reading (days per week)	4.77	4.77	1.00
Interest in Politics (most or some of the time)	.71	.74	.43
Has Children	.40	.40	.92
Voted for Gore in 2000	.46	.41	.23
Voted in 2000 Election	.75	.74	.85
Usually Don't Vote (describing how one votes)	.08	.05	.24
Read Newspaper Regularly (over 4 days per week)	.58	.60	.62
Ideologically Extreme (1, 2, 6, or 7 on scale)	.27	.30	.28
Usually Vote for Different Parties	.55	.53	.52

*Note.* Significance levels are based on two-tailed *t* tests.

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