

A SOCIAL GROUP THEORY OF MASS

PARTISANSHIP

By

DANIEL A. CICENIA

(Under the direction of Paul-Henri Gurian)

ABSTRACT

This study uses Social Identity Theory to examine the nature of partisanship in the American electorate. My theory states that many voters now shape their political world through identification with a political social group. For such individuals, their worldview is shaped by a “social identity” with similar like-minded voters who share a very deep and personal policy concerns, centering on a category of issues that most affects the social group’s interests. The key component for group identification is the individual’s self-awareness of membership, and their psychological attachment to the group and its policy demands (Conover, 1984). In fact, the individual’s identification with this issue’s policy demands and like-minded cohorts is so strong that it supplants the individual’s positions on other non-related issues and eventually their partisan identification. Data from the 2000 American National Election is used to test this theory. A test was run to determine whether social group identifiers are more likely to be strong partisans than demographic groups typically aligned under the New Deal party system. Additionally, a test was run to determine whether voters who identify with multiple groups, with one associated with each party were more likely to be weak partisans and independents.

INDEX WORDS: Political Behavior, Social Identity Theory,
American Political Parties, Realignment, Voting

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DANIEL A. CICENIA

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By

DANIEL A. CICENIA

Approved:

Major Professor: Paul-Henri Gurian

Committee: Audrey A Haynes

Jeffery D. Berejikian

Electronic Version Approved:
Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2004

DEDICATION

To my mother, for her love and unyielding support.

To my father, for his example and kind heart.

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Individual achievement is rarely attained without the inspiration, guidance, and support to others. To some, I use this opportunity to say goodbye, to others, I say hello and thank you for all your advice, guidance, moral support, and inspiration. First and foremost, I thank both my parents for their love, support, and encouragement throughout my entire life.

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“Every now and then, somewhere, some place, sometime, you are going to have to plant your feet, stand firm, and make a point about who you are and what you believe in.

When that time comes you simply have to do it”

- Pat Riley

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On November 8, 2000, more than 100 million Americans voted to elect the 43rd President of the United States. Although these voters were united by their participation in one of the most central aspects of a democratic system, the results of that election revealed a stark display of a deep divide among American voters. The broadcast and cable networks on election night displayed maps revealing a nation divided into “Red State America” and “Blue State America,” separated along urban vs. rural, northern vs. southern, minority vs. non-minority and religious vs. secular lines.

Many scholars, pundits and casual observers suggest this is a competition between two competing worldviews: the Traditionalists versus the Progressives. Traditionalists believe America’s problems are caused by an overall moral deterioration in America. Their prescription for problems such as abortion, crime, homelessness, and pornography is a return to Judeo-Christian moral values.

The competing worldview that of the Progressives, is that the economic and political system designed in a way that disadvantages several segments of society. According to the Progressives, the advantages enjoyed by the more privileged and connected elements of society, can often stifle the aspirations and dreams of female, minority, immigrant, and gay Americans. Progressives seek to “right these wrongs” by implementing reforms that correct the inequalities

within the economic and political system, in addition to curbing excesses of corporations. Thus, much of the analysis surrounding the 2000 election suggested a showdown between these overarching worldviews. Table 1 reveals how various segments of the population, some of them associated with one of these worldviews, voted during the 2000 Presidential election.

Although this analysis appears plausible on the surface, I posit that the result of the 2000 election was the reflection of a more deep and systematic phenomena in the American electorate. Recently, scholars have asserted that partisan ties within the American mass public have strengthened since the early 1990s (Bartels, 1999; Hetherington, 2001; Green et al., 2002). The form of this change in the American party system is different than any in the history of the republic. Previous alignments divided the mass public along sectional differences or economic class (Beck, 1979; Sundquist, 1983; Aldrich, 1992). Thus, the current partisan divide is less likely to be the product of economic class or parent-to-child socialization, and more likely to be caused by identification with a specific Social group who has specific policy demands on the political system.

Table 1: Groups and the 2000 Presidential Vote

	Bush	Gore
Men	53	42
Women	43	54
Whites	54	42
Blacks	8	90
Hispanics	31	67
Married with children	56	41
Single/Divorced	38	57
Live in cities w' more than 500,000 people	26	71
Live in rural areas	59	37
Members of the Religious Right	80	18
Gays and Lesbians	25	70
Gun owners	61	36
Union Members	34	62

*Voter News Service, November 7, 2000

In this thesis, individuals who strongly with a “social group” that have salient demands on the political system are likely to use their group identification as a basis for strong partisanship. For such individuals, their worldview is shaped by a “social identity” with similar like-minded voters who share a very deep and personal policy concerns, centering on a category of issues that most affects the social group’s interests. The key component for group identification is the individual’s self-awareness of membership, and their

psychological attachment to the group and its policy demands (Conover, 1984). In fact, the individual's identification with this issue's policy demands and like-minded cohorts is so strong that it supplants the individual's positions on other non-related issues and eventually their partisan identification.

This process of social group identification begins when an individual has strong policy demands on the political system that are specific to a category of issues. The issue category is of such salience to the voter and his/her like-minded cohorts; it has primary importance in relation to all other issues in the public debate. This attachment between the voter and these specific policy demands is so strong, s/he will identify with like-minded voters who share the same policy concerns (Conover and Feldman, 1984: Conover, 1984).

For the purpose of this study, an aggregation of these like-minded voters is what constitutes a social group. Although some social groups may have some homogeneity in terms of demographics, they are defined by their identification with their intensely shared issue demands. Several social groups associated with post material or cultural concerns have manifested themselves in the American political system over the past three decades. Examples include:

Environmentalists, Feminists, Gays and Lesbians, Religious Fundamentalists, and Gun Owners. Due to the scope of this study, a small piece of this phenomenon will be tested. This thesis will focus on the impact of Feminist and Fundamentalist identification on mass partisanship. Therefore, it is expected that individuals who highly identify with Fundamentalists will be likely to have a

stronger identification with the Republican party. Similarly, individuals who highly identify with Feminists will be likely to have a stronger identification with the Democratic Party.¹ It is also expected these relationships will exhibit a stronger partisan identification than economic and demographic groups associated with the New Deal party system.

Social group identifiers should not be confused with single-issue voters. Single-issue voters are guided by one issue in their political behavior, and can exhibit varying levels of sophistication (Conover, Gray, and Coombs, 1982). A single-issue voters often manifest themselves with the most salient or obscure issue on the political agenda (Carmines and Stimson, 1980). To contrast, Social group members identify with like-minded voters who share policy demands on the political system. The individual's interest is in concert with the group's interest (Conover, 1984).

What happens when individuals identify strongly with more than one social group? Obviously, individuals who strongly identify with two groups aligned with the same party (e.g., Feminists who also identify with Labor Unions), will have their partisanship reinforced. However, I will also demonstrate in this thesis that individuals who highly identify with groups that are associated with opposite parties (e.g., a Fundamentalist who also identifies with Labor Unions),

¹ Theoretically, a similar relationship is expected with other social groups such as environmentalists, gays, or gun owners. An empirical test of this relationship requires a study more elaborate in scope.

will be less likely to be strong partisans, and more likely to be weak partisans or independents.

For the purpose of this paper, individuals who have a high level of identification with two social groups who compete in the political system will endure a conflict of values that causes the lack of, or weak level of partisan identification. A rigorous discussion in the public opinion literature exists as to whether value preferences are non-ordered or hierarchical (Jacoby, 2004). Such an argument is certainly beyond the scope of this study. However, when these two group identifications are at a high level and of such magnitude to the individual's personal identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), internal value conflict will occur.

For individuals, when their core values are in conflict, ambivalence occurs (Feldman and Zaller, 1992; Craig, et. al., 2002; 2003, McGraw, et. al., 2003). For this paper, an individual whose core value of traditional order defined by a Fundamentalist identification (closely allied with Republicans), and the core value of economic equality defined by an identification with Labor Unions is closely allied with Democrats), will produce a strong value conflict, and s/he will not be able to identify strongly with either party. A similar phenomenon should occur for individuals who highly identify with Feminists and highly identify with Big Business. In this scenario, the core value of equality associated with Feminism and the Democrats is in direct opposition with the core value of individualism associated with Big Business and the Republicans. These results

should be repeated among individuals who highly identify with both Fundamentalists and Feminists as well.

The following is a brief outline of how this study is carried out. Chapter 2 is a discussion of Social Identity Theory, spawned by Henri Tajfel in the Social Psychology literature. The literature on value conflict and ambivalence is covered in this chapter as well. Chapter 3 focuses on the integration of cultural politics into the American party system over the past two decades. Partisan elites play a primary role in disseminating the issue positions of their party to the mass public (Conover, Gray, and Coombs, 1982; Carmines and Stimson, 1989). These points deserve discussion since they help to explain how the social groups tested in this study were politicized into the American party system. Chapter 4 is the Hypothesis statement. Chapter 5 is a full description of the methodology, data, and an analysis of the model. This thesis concludes in Chapter 6 with final conclusions and implications.

CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL GROUP IDENTIFICATION

For many members of the American electorate, their worldview is shaped by a “social identity” with similar like-minded voters who share a very deep and personal policy concerns, centering on an issue category that most affects the social group’s interests. Social groups are the sum of these individuals. Social Identity theory is rooted in the works of Henri Tajfel, a Social Psychologist whose close to a half-century of work covered subjects such as: individual and group identification, group norms, and intergroup relations (Turner, 1982).

The first facet of Social Identity theory consists of who we are in terms of our group memberships (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Specifically, an individual will identify with groups that s/he perceive belonging to. That is objective identification. A key point here is that in social identity theory, group membership is something that is a genuine and vital part of the person. It is at the very core of their personal identity, however it should not be confused with personal identity. The critical point is that when the individual thinks of themselves as an individual and when they think of themselves as a member of a group, these are distinct parts of the overall self-concept. When one thinks of himself or herself as an individual it is their “personal identity”, when they think of themselves within the social group, it is the “social identity.” Both are within the overall self-concept (Turner, 1987).

Another key point within Social Identity theory is how members of a specific group compare their group to other groups. In this paper (and social identity theory in general), the group the individual belongs to is referred to as the 'ingroup' whereas the group the individual does not belong to is referred to as the 'outgroup.' Tajfel and Turner (1979) assert that group members compare their group with others, in a way of defining their group in a positive light, and therefore viewing themselves in a positive way. That is, people choose to compare their groups with other groups in ways that reflect positively on themselves. In such a case, the individual views the 'ingroup' as having a 'positive distinctiveness' while the 'outgroup has a negative distinctiveness.' This is explained by the assumption that individuals are motivated to see their own group in a superior light to the 'outgroup'. Negative distinctiveness is where groups try to minimize perceived negative differences between themselves and the 'outgroup,' so that their group is viewed in a favorable light (Doosje, Ellemers, and Spears, 1999).

Another component in Social Identity Theory is social threat. When two groups are in conflict in a social setting, especially a conflict over scarce resources, a sense of social threat occurs (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Branscombe et. Al., 1999). Miller et al., (1981) argue that group consciousness has four parts: "Group Identification", a "polar affect" where one has a positive feeling towards members of their own group and negative feelings toward members of "out-

groups," "polar power," which refers to beliefs about the power of one's group relative to other groups.

Social threat has a direct implication for this thesis. To be specific, Fundamentalist identifiers have policy demands on the political system that are in direct conflict with individuals who identify with Feminists. Fundamentalists adhere to a worldview that subscribe to a social order that is in direct conflict with that of Feminists. Policies in areas such as abortion, gender roles, and equal pay are basically mutually exclusive and almost impossible for political compromise.

Applications of Social Identity Theory in the American Politics literature

The application of theories from Social Psychology has increased in Political Science over the past 25 years. Pamela Conover and Stanley Feldman were two of the most prominent scholars of American politics to apply Social Identity theory. Conover and Feldman (1981) argued group attitudes are the primary means by perception of identity conflict is structured. Conover (1984) described group identification as a "schema," which provides a link between an individual's self-perception and the larger political system. Conover's formal description of group identification is: "a self-awareness of one's objective group membership and identification."

Implications for Feminists and Fundamentalists

The two social groups tested in this study, Feminists and Fundamentalists are clear examples of this phenomenon. The Fundamentalist movement (or Christian Right) is often described as a conservative social movement that mobilizes a religious doctrinal worldview into the political system. Other active social movements such as the feminist and gay rights movements directly oppose the agenda of the Fundamentalist movement. The Fundamentalist movement is considered as a 'defensive reaction' by their adherents to protect their view of traditional order and morality in society (Green, Guth, and Wilcox, 1998). Its demands on the political system are opposition to abortion rights, opposition to gay rights, and the education of children in a fundamentalist Christian worldview. Jelen (1993) found that support for Fundamentalism is primarily driven by religious theology and attitudes towards cultural minorities.

Political fundamentalism's main adversaries (the Feminist and Gay rights movements) view politically mobilized Fundamentalism as an agenda that seeks to impose a narrow religious worldview on all Americans and force society to live by their standards (Jelen, 1992; Rozell and Wilcox, 1996). Bolce and De Maio (1999) finds segments of American voters who hold negative attitudes towards Christian fundamentalists. The authors cite "cultural progressivism" as a significant predictor of this phenomenon.

Crosspressured Group Identifications

What happens in situations where individuals have high levels of identification with two groups that are associated with each party? (e.g., an individual who identifies strongly with Fundamentalists and also identifies strongly with Feminists) Such an individual will have weaker partisan ties or lack any partisan affiliation. The scenario I just described is a cross-pressured voter whose social group identifications pull him/her in opposite directions toward each party. Within these cross pressures is a deep conflict in core values.

For the purpose of this paper, individuals who identify strongly with two social groups that compete in the political system, endure a conflict of core values, thus predicting a weakened, or even the lack of partisanship. As mentioned earlier, there is disagreement in the public opinion literature as to whether value preferences are non-ordered or hierarchical (Jacoby, 2004). This paper does not pose an argument in that debate. However, when two competing group identifications are at a high level and of such magnitude to the individual's personal identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), internal value conflict will occur. In the next few paragraphs I will describe core values, ambivalence, and its consequences.

Core Values and Ambivalence

Converse (1964) argued the American public is incapable of forming a sophisticated ideology, thus inconsistent attitudes should be expected in American public opinion. More recent research suggests this lack of consistency is not due to a lack of sophistication, but more of a conflict of competing values, sometimes referred to as ambivalence. Specifically, ambivalence is described as “an individual’s endorsement of competing considerations relevant to evaluating an attitude object” (Lavine, 2001: 915)².

According to Feldman (1988), core values among the American public typically are equality of opportunity, economic individualism, and attitudes towards free enterprise. Many scholars have demonstrated when an individual’s core values are in conflict, attitudinal ambivalence occurs (Feldman and Zaller, 1992; Craig, et. al., 2002; 2003, McGraw, et. al., 2003). Recent research demonstrates when core values are in conflict, attitudinal ambivalence can occur on attitudes towards issues such as welfare (Feldman and Zaller, 1992), racial policy (Alvarez and Brehm, 1997), abortion (Craig, et. Al., 2002), and gay rights (Craig, et. al., 2003). Hitlin (2003) believes that core values are at the very essence of identity.

In this study, individuals who identify with two social groups whose policy demands compete in the political system will experience psychological

² The literature on attitudinal ambivalence is a growing one in the literature. There are many definitions for, and perspectives on attitudinal ambivalence. For a full discussion on this controversy, see (Craig et al., 2002)

ambivalence. In a study of evangelical women, Wilcox (1989) found attitudes within this group that are both pro and anti-feminism. In a test run by Alvarez and Brehm (1995), it was found that respondents who highly value women's rights AND religion had greater statistical error among abortion policy choices than those who only highly value either one. Such a scenario is an expected consequence of attitudinal ambivalence, political choices that are extremely difficult, resulting in response instability and a wide variability in policy considerations (Alvarez and Brehm, 1995).

CHAPTER 3: SOCIAL GROUPS AND THE AMERICAN PARTY SYSTEM

Individuals who identify strongly with a “social group” with salient demands on the political system are likely to use their group identification as a basis for strong partisanship. Although this thesis tests a small piece of this argument, I will discuss in this section the process for how this phenomenon occurred.

For many in the electorate, their worldview is shaped by a “social identity” with similar like-minded voters who share a very deep and personal policy concerns, focusing on a category of issues which most affect the social group’s interests. The key components for group identification are the individual’s self-awareness of membership, and their psychological attachment to the group and its policy demands (Conover, 1984). In fact, I assert the individual’s identification with this issue’s policy demands and like-minded cohorts can be so strong it supplant the individual’s positions on other non-related issues and eventually their partisan identification.

Comparison With Earlier Party Alignments

This relationship between group identity and partisanship is distinct from previous party divisions in American political history. Previous alignments divided the mass public along sectional differences or economic class (Beck, 1979:

Sundquist, 1983; Aldrich, 1992). I posit the current alignment in Democratic and Republican identification is less likely to be the product of economic class or parent-to-child socialization, and more likely to be caused by identification with a specific Social group who has specific policy demands on the political system.

Although not empirically tested in this paper, the next several paragraphs are a descriptive account of the political events and elite that produced the polarization of social group identifiers in recent decades.

Byron Shafer (1985) was one of the first scholars who attempted to explain how the American party system developed from one based on economic concerns to a system based increasingly on cultural concerns. Shafer argued that the industrial growth and economic insecurities from 1892-1964 were the driving forces behind the economic class divisions. In contrast, the post 1968 era represented a deep cultural division. Shafer suggests in a post-industrial era the New Deal agenda may be complete, thus producing a divide along this new value dimension. This is consistent with Inglehardt's theory of Post Materialism which states that the increased affluence and educational attainment in Post-World War II western democracies facilitated a systematic "value change" which transformed these nation's party systems (Inglehart, 1971 and 1982).

Elite Actors as a Partisan Cue

Recent literature suggests political events can play a major role in this process, and to political socialization in general. (Sears and Valentino, 1997)

Specifically, salient political events such as wars, major protests or riots, landmark Supreme Court rulings, socialize younger voters during their formative years, shaping their construction of their political world when they enter the electorate. For Feminists and Fundamentalists events such as the *Roe v Wade* decision, debate over the Equal Rights Amendment, and the passage of the Hyde Amendment are examples of such mobilizing events (Wilcox and Norrander, 2002).

Elite cues made during the last decade have served as signals to Fundamentalists and Feminists in the form of clear issue positions across a number of issues that are salient to the group identifier. These elite cues have been an impetus for the group identifier's cognitive partisan evaluations. Many scholars point to the 1992 campaign as a watershed event where the polarized stances of the two parties on cultural issues became most salient (Lipset, 1993, Dalton, et al., 1998).

The 1992 Republican convention that year is still considered a controversial event for the open opposition speakers and delegates regarding issues surrounding abortion, homosexuality, and single parenting. Banners held by many delegates read the phrase "Family Rights For Ever, Gay Rights Never"³, attempting to imply a direct trade-off between equality for gays and maintaining traditional family roles. Individuals who identified strongly with social groups who are highly affected by such policies, specifically Christian fundamentalists

³ Source: Associated Press. August 17, 1992

responded to the cues made by party elites. The following quote from Patrick Buchanan at the 1992 Republican National Convention has been widely touted as a pointed moment. It came when the Republican Party made a clear indication that it was about to take a hard conservative line on cultural issues:

“Yes, we disagreed with President Bush, but we stand with him for freedom to choose religious schools, and we stand with him against the amoral idea that gay and lesbian couples should have the same standing in law as married men and women. We stand with President Bush for right-to-life, and for voluntary prayer in the public schools, and against putting American women in combat. . . . My friends, this election is about much more than who gets what. It is about who we are. It is about what we believe. It is about what we stand for as Americans. There is a religious war going on in our country for the soul of America. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we will one day be as was the Cold War itself. And in that struggle for the soul of America, Clinton & Clinton are on the other side, and George Bush is on our side.”⁴

That same year, the Democrats positioned themselves as the culturally progressive party, making cues that stressed the core values associated with equality and tolerance their convention. One controversy at the convention included banning pro-life Pennsylvania Governor Bob Casey from speaking at the podium (White, 2002). The following quote from Bill Clinton’s 1992 acceptance speech is a stark example of the contrast between the two parties at the elite level in 1992.

⁴ Source: Associated Press. August 17, 1992

"For too long, politicians have told the most of us that are doing all right that what's really wrong with America is the rest of us. Them. Them the minorities. Them the liberals. Them the poor, them the homeless, them the people with disabilities, them the gays. But this is America. There is no them; there is only us. One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty, and justice, for all."⁵

The previous examples of speeches from the 1992 conventions illustrate how the parties were clearly staking out positions in this conflict, or what Hunter (1991) terms, "culture war." The Democrats made a clear stand as the culturally progressive party, making cues that stressed the core values of equality and tolerance. Individuals who identify strongly with social groups who are highly affected by such policies such as feminists, gays, and minorities will respond to such elite cues, thus aligning themselves with the party they perceive as protecting their social group's demands on the political system.

This phenomenon reached a climax in the electorate with the results of the 2000 election. A multitude of studies have demonstrated how the 2000 election results characterized a deep conflict in relation to culture and values based issues (Layman, 2001; and White, 2002). The clear and distinct positions each party took during the 1990s both in rhetoric and policy, positioned each party as either a benefactor or antagonist of the policy needs of their group. To illustrate, individuals who self-identify with each of the groups in Table 2 were asked to rate Democrat and Republican party performance on issues related to

⁵ Source: Associated Press July 17, 1992

their group. The results displays the Democratic Party's performance advantage or disadvantage among each group.

Table 2: Democratic Performance Advantage among groups

	Democratic performance % - Republican performance %
Labor Union Members	+43
Gays and Lesbians	+43
African-American	+41
Hispanics	+22
Working Women	+20
Senior Citizens	+15
City Dwellers	+12
Married Men	-10
Suburbanites	-15
White-collar workers	-29
Gun Owners	-39

** Penn, Schoen & Borland Associates (2003)

James Davison Hunter is often credited with coining the phrase “culture war” to describe this conflict. Hunter describes the core of this conflict as being one of identification with core values. To quote the author, these attitudes are, “not merely attitudes that can change on a whim, but basic commitments and beliefs that provide a source of identity, purpose, and togetherness for people who live by them.” (Hunter, 1991:41)

Group Identification and Mass Electorate

This thesis intends to demonstrate a small piece of this phenomenon. At the individual level, a strong social identity with Fundamentalists and Feminists predicts a strong level of partisanship.

Previous research into the relationship between various types of groups and Parties has focused primarily on the relationship between voters' feelings towards groups and the parties (Miller, Wlezien, and Hildreth, 1991; Weisberg, Haynes and Krosnick, 1995). In a recent book, Green, et. al. (2002), provide an argument that partisanship is a form of social identification. Although the authors provide no direct empirical test, its theoretical foundation provides some support for my thesis. Implicit in the author's arguments is that partisanship is a separate social category, similar to religious affiliation, where individuals choose their party based on a self-judgment and perceptions of the parties as being 'like them.'⁶ They draw this parallel that just like religious affiliation, partisanship is formed relatively early and life, and is stable. The author's description of partisan groups in the following way;

“Although not as organized as religious groups or as embedded in daily life as class groups, partisan groups nonetheless represent vivid points of social orientation for the electorate. Even people who do not identify with partisan

⁶ This is in stark contrast to the rational choice models of partisanship, where voters will evaluate parties based on platforms or evaluations of performance in office (Downs, 1957; Fiorina, 1981).

groups know enough about them to recognize that they do not view them as objects of attachment” (Green, et. al., 2002:83).

My argument is theoretically consistent with, yet distinct from Green’s. I claim that a strong identification with a social group is the causal mechanism impacting the strong attachment to parties. Specifically, my theory posits that an individual’s strong social group identification is the antecedent to the strong social identification with a party. As stated earlier, an individual’s social group identification can be so strong, it will supplant any other demographic affiliation. Consistent with Conover and Feldman (1981), group identification is the ‘prism’ the individual frames their political world. Therefore, the American party system is currently taking the shape of coalitions of such “Social groups.”

For the purpose of this study, Social groups consist of individual voters who share a “social identity” with similar like-minded voters who share very deep and personal policy concerns, often centering on a specific category of issues. The explanation of Social Groups and how they manifest themselves in the political system brings us to the following questions. What exactly are Social Groups? How does an individual identify with these groups? Why have certain Social Groups (such as Feminists and Fundamentalists) become political? How have these groups impacted the American political system? What happens when individuals identify with groups that are aligned with more than one party?

According to Conover and Feldman (1981), the transition that brings the individual to a personal identification with the group occurs when an individual places their personal issue demands in concert with the social group's issue demands. The individual's identification with the group's policy demands and their like-minded cohorts is so strong, it supplants the individual's positions on other non-related issues and eventually their partisan identification. Therefore, my thesis states that individuals who have a strong identification with a social group are more likely to be strong party identifiers. In this research, I will test the hypothesis that individuals who have a stronger identification with the social group Fundamentalists are more likely to be Strong Republicans. Similarly, individuals who have a stronger identification with the social group Feminists are more likely to be Strong Democrats.

A group identity will not only determine an individual's issue positions, but also how they receive elite cues within the political debate (Zaller, 1992). Huckfeldt, Beck and Dalton (1998) provide interesting evidence for how an individual's social network can serve as a filter on the flow of political information they receive. For instance, elite cues are often made that a particular issue position represents "American values." Individuals who identify themselves, as a "Fundamentalist" will define the term "American values" in a fashion diametrical to someone who identifies him/herself as a "Feminist." Similarly, a "Labor Union" identifier will define that term diametrical to

someone with who identifies with “Big Business.” This is due to a profound value cleavage that separates opposing Identity groups.

I will also intend to demonstrate that individuals who highly identify with two social groups, one associated with each party (for example, an individual who identifies with Fundamentalists and with Labor Unions), are less likely to be strong partisans, and more likely to be weak partisans or independents.

For the purpose of this paper, it is argued that when an individual highly identifies with more than one group, each group will receive equally high levels of priority. In this scenario, the individual’s core values are in conflict, thus causing ambivalence (Feldman and Zaller, 1992; Craig, et. al., 2002; 2003, McGraw, et. al., 2003). Therefore, since the core value of traditional order as defined by Fundamentalists is closely identified with the Republicans and Democrats as defined by Labor Unions closely define the core value of economic equality, such individuals will be unable to identify strongly with either party.

A similar phenomenon should occur for individuals who have high levels of identification with Feminists and with Big Business. In this scenario, the core value of equality associated with Feminism and the Democrats is in direct opposition with the core value of individualism associated with Big Business and the Republicans. For both of the above scenarios, the individual’s core values are in conflict, thus causing ambivalence (Feldman and Zaller, 1992; Craig, et. al., 2002; 2003, McGraw, et. al., 2003).

Likewise, individuals who highly identify with Fundamentalists and highly identify with Feminists. In this scenario, the core value of traditional order associated with Fundamentalists and the Republicans is in direct opposition with the core value of social equality associated with Feminists and the Democrats.

CHAPTER 4: HYPOTHESIS

1. Individuals who identify strongly with a “social group” whose salient demands on the political system are likely to use their group identification as a basis for strong partisanship. For the purpose of this study, two groups, Fundamentalists and Feminists are tested.
 - a. Specifically, the stronger an individual’s attachment with the social group Fundamentalists, the more likely they will have a stronger identification with the Republican Party. Similarly, individuals who have a stronger attachment with the social group Feminists are more likely to have a stronger identification with the Democratic Party.
 - b. Identification with Fundamentalists or Feminists will have a greater impact on party identification than economic and demographic categories typically associated with the New Deal party system.
2. Individuals who have higher levels of attachment to two Social Groups, one associated with each party (for example, a Fundamentalist who also identifies strongly with Labor Unions), are more likely to be Independents or weak partisans.

CHAPTER 5: METHODS AND ANALYSIS

Design

This study uses data from the 2000 American National Election Study. The ANES is a biennial survey conducted by the ICPSR at The University of Michigan since the early 1950's. The ANES contains a large battery of questions relating to voter attitudes, behaviors, and other personal characteristics. A national probability sample of 1807 respondents was interviewed for the 2000 study. There were 1485 valid cases to test the main hypothesis for this paper. A valid case is one where the respondent has provided a valid answer (answering each question), for each variable included in the model.

As stated earlier, the first hypothesis asserts that individuals who have a strong identification with a social group are more likely to be strong partisans. The main Independent variables to test this hypothesis are the following social groups, Fundamentalists and Feminists. It is expected that individuals who highly identify with the social group fundamentalists, will exhibit strong partisanship with the Republican Party, while individuals who identify strongly with the Feminist group will show strong partisanship with the Democrats. Two economic social groups, Big Business and Labor Unions are control variables. These controls are included to determine if social groups based on cultural demands (Fundamentalists and Feminists), demonstrate a more statistically

significant impact on party identification than social groups based on economic demands (Big Business and Labor). This is consistent with hypothesis 1.

According to Conover (1984), social group identification consists of both 'objective membership' and 'psychological attachment.' An index of standardized Z-scores was used to derive variables for each Social group. A combination of attitudinal and self-identification questions were used to construct each identity group in a fashion consistent with Conover's (1984) definition of group identification. Specific questions used to construct each variable are included in Appendix 1. Other control variables include Age, Education, Race, Marital Status, and Gender, and Education.

Hypothesis 2 states that individuals who identify strongly with social groups associated with opposing parties, are more likely than single-group identifiers to be Independents or weak partisans. The main independent variables used to test this hypothesis are operationalized using an interactive of the social groups tested in model 1. Specifically, the social group Fundamentalists was combined with the social group Labor Unions. Likewise, the social group Feminists was combined with the social group Big Business to create an additional crosspressured variable for the same model. An additional model is run to determine the interactive effect of identification with Fundamentalists and Feminists. These models are a test to determine whether individuals who exhibit high levels of identification with social groups associated with each party do indeed become weak partisans or independents. The demographic groups, Age,

Education, Race, Marital Status, Gender, and Education were also used as control groups to test Hypothesis 2.

The Dependent variable is strength of partisan attachment. Since party is asked on a seven point ordinal scale in the ANES, separate models were needed to test for party and for strength of partisanship. The original seven point party question was collapsed into a three point ordinal scale for each model.

Specifically, partisan leaners were recoded with strong partisans to constitute the Democrat and Republican segments, while independent leaners were recoded with strong Independents to constitute the Independent segment. Thus, Democrats were given the code '-1', Independents classified as '0', and Republicans '+1'. This is consistent with the literature on the measurement of party identification that states that 'Independent Leaners' can be classified as Independents and 'Partisan Leaners' can be classified as partisans. (Weisberg, 1983; Keith, et. Al., 1986; Miller, 1991)

Likewise, it was also necessary to derive a variable to test strength of partisanship. A three-point ordinal scale was developed for this variable as well. Strong Democrats and Strong Republicans were recoded into a segment called 'Strong Partisans' and given a code of '-1'. Respondents who were weak identifiers with either party, or were Independents who slightly leaned towards either party were recoded into a segment called 'Weak Identifiers' and given a code of '0'. Strong Independents remained as such and were given a value of '+1'.

Ordinal Logistic regression was used to test whether Feminist and Fundamentalist group identifiers are more likely to be strong partisans than typical demographic groups. Additional tests were run to determine whether individuals who strongly identify with two groups, one associated with each party (i.e., strong identification with Fundamentalists and Labor Unions), were more likely to be weak partisans and independents.

Results

The first hypothesis states that individuals who have strong social group identification are more likely to be strong party identifiers. This relationship between social group and party identification is tested in Table 3a; the relationship between social groups and strength of partisanship is tested in Table 3b. The Wald score in Logistic regression demonstrates the level of significance for each independent variable. This is calculated by dividing the estimate by the standard error. According to Agresti (1990), the Nagelkerke R-square approximates an OLS type R-square and provides the most relevant value for the total variance in the Dependent variable.

The positive coefficient for Fundamentalists indicates that individuals at higher levels of the Fundamentalist index have a higher probability of being a strong identifier with the Republican Party. The negative value for Feminists shows those respondents who are at higher levels of the Feminist index decreases the probability of being a Republican or an Independent. This result

supports hypothesis 1. Several control variables in Table 3a demonstrate a statistically significant relationship with party at the 99% confidence level. Table 3a has a Nagelkerke R-square of .254.

Table 3b demonstrates no relationship for Fundamentalists or Feminists and Strength of partisanship. Since Fundamentalists and Feminists were expected to be weak partisans or independents, this model does not produce evidence in support for hypothesis 1. Segments more likely to be strong partisans at the 99% confidence level include African American, younger, and less educated voters. This is followed closely by Business and Labor group identifiers who almost make the 99% threshold. Table 3b has a Nagelkerke R-square of .072 and should be observed with caution since it accounts for a small variance in the dependent variable.

Table 3a: Social Groups and Party

Variable Name	Estimate	Standard Error	Wald Statistic	Significance Level
FUNDAMENTALISTS	.068	.017	15.497	.000
FEMINISTS	-.170	.019	77.049	.000
BUSINESS	.128	.027	21.946	.000
LABOR	-.147	.021	48.027	.000
RACE	-1.403	.184	58.139	.000
AGE	-.019	.003	32.199	.000
MARRIED	-.017	.033	.266	.606
EDUCATION	-.017	.037	.209	.648
INCOME	-.003	.016	.035	.851
GENDER	-.301	.103	8.452	.004

R-Square: .254
N= 1485

Table 3b: Social Groups and Strength of Partisanship

Variable Name	Estimate	Standard Error	Wald Statistic	Significance Level
FUNDAMENTALISTS	-.015	.017	.759	.384
FEMINISTS	.017	.019	.748	.387
BUSINESS	-.069	.028	6.211	.013
LABOR	-.049	.021	5.517	.019
RACE	-.678	.169	16.023	.000
AGE	-.022	.003	42.332	.000
MARRIED	.005	.034	.020	.889
EDUCATION	-.141	.038	13.538	.000
INCOME	-.002	.017	.009	.925
GENDER	.076	.105	.525	.469

R-Square: .072
N=1485

Tables 4a and 4b are a test of hypothesis 2. Specifically, individuals who identify strongly with two social groups, one associated with each party, are expected to be weak partisans or independents. Similar to the tests of the first hypothesis, Table 4a is a test of party, Table 4b is a test of strength of partisanship.

The negative estimates for both Fundamentalist-Labor and Feminist-Business groups indicate that respondents who are at higher levels for both indices, decreases the probability of being a Republican or an Independent. It should be

noted the results for the Feminist-Business group is statistically stronger than that of the Fundamentalist-Labor group. One possible explanation may be that identifiers in the Feminist-Business category are not as cross-pressured as those in the Fundamentalist-Labor category. This may be due to overtures made by the Democratic Party to the business community during the past decade. An additional finding shows African American and older voters demonstrating a lower probability of identifying with Republicans or Independents at the 99% confidence level.

As expected, Table 4b shows no relationship between either cross-pressured group and strength of partisanship. The estimates and Wald statistic for both groups are flat. However, it appears that younger voters, non-blacks, and those who are less educated are all less likely to be Independents and more likely to be strong partisans. Tables 4a and 4b have Nagelkerke R-squares of .106 and .066 respectively. These models should be observed with some caution since the R-squares account for such a small variance in the dependent variable.

Table 4a: Cross Pressured Group Identification and Party

Variable Name	Estimate	Standard Error	Wald Statistic	Significance Level
FUNDAMENTALIST-LABOR	-.011	.005	4.033	.045
FEMINIST-BUSINESS	-.019	.007	6.924	.009
RACE	-1.429	.176	65.803	.000
AGE	-.010	.003	10.627	.001
MARRIED	-.074	.032	5.290	.021
EDUCATION	.034	.034	.997	.318
INCOME	.033	.015	4.919	.027
GENDER	-.295	.099	8.815	.003

R-Square: .106

Table 4b: Cross Pressured Group Identification and Strength of Partisanship

Variable Name	Estimate	Standard Error	Wald Statistic	Significance Level
FUNDAMENTALIST-LABOR	.008	.006	2.238	.135
FEMINIST-BUSINESS	.010	.007	1.942	.163
RACE	-.725	.166	19.112	.000
AGE	-.023	.003	45.946	.000
MARRIED	.022	.034	.413	.521
EDUCATIO	-.145	.036	16.231	.000
INCOME	-.010	.016	.433	.511
GENDER	.104	.104	1.002	.317

R-Square: .066

Tables 5a and 5b are an additional test of hypothesis 2. These models test the interactive effect of high levels of identification with both the Fundamentalist and Feminist social groups. Table 5a is a test of party; Table 5b is a test of strength of partisanship.

The negative estimate for the Fundamentalist- Feminist variable indicate that respondents who are at higher levels for both indices, decreases the probability of being a Republican or an Independent. This is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Consistent with the findings in model 4a, African Americans and older voters show a lower probability of identifying with Republicans or Independents at the 99% confidence level.

A most interesting finding is in Table 5b. In this model, individuals who highly identify with both Fundamentalists and Feminists have a higher probability of being weak partisans. This result is at the 99% significance level, and exhibits stronger relationship than any other variable in the model. This result supports hypothesis 2. To contrast, individuals in this model who are older, better educated, or African American have a lower probability of being strong partisans. These relationships are also significant at the 99% confidence level.

Tables 5a and 5b have Nagelkerke R-squares of .100 and .078 respectively. Similar to what was observed with the earlier crosspressured models, these should be observed with some caution since the R-squares account for a small variance in the dependent variable.

Table 5a: Fundamentalists vs Feminists - Party

Variable Name	Estimate	Standard Error	Wald Statistic	Significance Level
FUNDAMENTALIST-FEMINIST	-.009	.004	4.463	.035
RACE	-1.412	.176	64.148	.000
AGE	-.010	.003	10.570	.001
MARRIED	-.070	.032	4.813	.028
EDUCATION	.027	.034	.612	.434
INCOME	.035	.015	5.449	.020
GENDER	-.291	.099	8.604	.003

R-Square: .100
N=1485

Table 5b: Fundamentalists vs. Feminists - Strength of Partisanship

Variable Name	Estimate	Standard Error	Wald Statistic	Significance Level
FUNDAMENTALIST-FEMINIST	.020	.005	19.771	.000
RACE	-.802	.167	23.046	.000
AGE	-.023	.003	45.508	.000
MARRIED	.021	.034	.377	.539
EDUCATION	-.131	.036	13.065	.000
INCOME	-.010	.016	.433	.511
GENDER	.120	.105	1.307	.253

R-Square: .078
N=1485

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

This thesis contributes to a new theory explaining how the American electorate may be shaping at the beginning of the 21st Century. The results of this research demonstrate that a high level of social group identification does indeed have a significant impact on mass partisanship. However, it appears demographic segments traditionally associated with the two parties have maintained strong levels of partisanship as well. Some of the most interesting results involve the tests of cross pressured groups. The models found both crosspressured groups leaning towards the Democratic Party. Among the crosspressured segments, the Feminist-Business group demonstrated a stronger relationship towards the Democrats. One possible reason for this finding are the overtures the Democratic Party has made to the business community over the past decade. Individuals in this category may feel they can choose the Democrats and be true to their core value of equality (Feminists), without sacrificing their core value of individual opportunity (Business). Individuals who identify highly with both Feminism and Big Business may just not be as crosspressured as the Fundamentalist-Labor group.

Questions for future research include the impact of value conflict among voters who identify strongly with two social groups, with each group associated with a different party. In this study, each cross-pressured group trended towards

the Democrats, however more research still needs to be done. The literature on value conflict and ambivalence is a growing one that is currently taking shape in the field. When do individuals make a distinct choice between equally unordered value preferences and when do they opt out of the system? If voters choose one value preference in this scenario, what types of events or elite cues contribute to such a choice? One implication of such a scenario is cognitive dissonance. Specifically, when an individual makes a choice between two equal values, they are choosing one important core value at the expense of an equally important competing value, where the individual is unsatisfied with their decision and is prone to make the opposite choice at the next election. Any inquiry into this may require a project of much greater scope.

An electorate with a large share of voters who identify with such social groups present a multitude of opportunities and challenges for candidates, parties, and interest groups alike. Some of the 2004 presidential campaigns provide an example of an effective communications strategy aimed at social groups Internet resources such as the 'blogs' and meetup.com provide opportunities for like-minded individuals to discuss candidates, policy and even mobilization efforts. Howard Dean's 2004 presidential campaign is a particularly clear example of an effective communications strategy aimed at social groups associated with the Democratic primary. I believe it is precisely this strategy that

propelled Dean's campaign from an unknown longshot to front-runner during the 2004 invisible primary.

How these trends will manifest themselves as we proceed deeper into the 21st century is uncertain. One implication for an electorate shaped by coalitions of social groups, are new kinds of political communities. Political communities in the 21st century may no longer be defined in the traditional sense where political communications and mobilization networks were based on geographic location and social class. Instead, 21st century political communities may be shaping into one based on individuals who share a social identity, as well as the same issue demands on the political system. The ties binding these groups and the political coalitions they form will be of psychological proximity rather than physical proximity.

APPENDIX A: VARIABLE DESCRIPTIONS

Table A1: Fundamentalists

Variable Number	Variable Name	Scale	Reverse Order
V000903	Are you a born again Christian?	2 point dichotomous	Yes
V001317	Thermometer: Fundamentalists	100 point interval	No
V001322	Thermometer: Christian Coalition	100 point interval	No
V01530	New Morals are causing societal problems	5 point ordinal	Yes
V01532	Less problems if we emphasized traditional morality	5 point ordinal	Yes
V001531	Should adjust views	5 point ordinal	No
V001533	Should tolerate others more	5 point ordinal	No
V000694	Equal role for women	5 point ordinal	Yes
V000760	Moral climate since 1992	5 point ordinal	Yes
V000694	Abortion: Self placement	4 point ordinal	Yes
V000705	Partial birth/Late Term abortion question	4 point ordinal	Yes

Table A2: Feminists

Variable Number	Variable Name	Scale	Reverse Order
Var00008	Feel Close to Feminists?	2 point dichotomous	Yes
V01530	New Morals are causing societal problems	5 point ordinal	No
V01532	Less problems if we emphasized traditional morality	5 point ordinal	No
V001531	Should adjust views	5 point ordinal	Yes
V001533	Should tolerate others more	5 point ordinal	Yes
V000694	Equal role for women	5 point ordinal	No
V000760	Moral climate since 1992	5 point ordinal	No
V000694	Abortion: Self placement	4 point ordinal	No
V000705	Partial birth/Late Term abortion question	4 point ordinal	No

Table A3: Big Business

Variable Number	Variable Name	Scale	Reverse Order
Var00010	Feel close to Business	2 point dichotomous	Yes
V00504	Invested in the Stock Market?	2 point dichotomous	Yes
V001313	Thermometer: Big Business	100 point interval	No
V000105	Social Class Summary	6 point ordinal	No

Table A4: Labor Unions

Variable Number	Variable Name	Scale	Reverse Order
Var00007	Feel Close to Labor Unions	2 point dichotomous	Yes
Var00015	Feel Close to Working Class	2 point dichotomous	Yes
V000990	Union Household	2 point dichotomous	Yes
V001312	Thermometer: Labor Unions	100 point Interval	No
V000105	Social Class Summary	6 point ordinal	Yes

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