THE REPUTATION PREMIUM:

A THEORY OF PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND SPATIAL REASONING
Introduction

Arguably the deepest puzzle of democratic politics is how any substantial number of ordinary citizens can reason coherently about politics. Arguably we say, because many, possibly even most, experts would deny that there is any puzzle at all. They would parade you through a chamber of horrors. The first exhibit would be surveys of political ignorance featuring classic findings of how little citizens know about political institutions and public affairs; followed, no doubt, by a display of “non-attitudes,” illustrating how most citizens behave as if they are choosing sides on major issues by flipping a coin; followed, in turn, by a display of contemporary research on motivated reasoning showcasing the many species of bias in information processing; with the last exhibit quite likely charts documenting the rickety ‘structure’ of mass belief systems. Having conducted this tour of research demonstrating the ignorance of citizens about politics and the inconsistencies in their political thinking, these experts would repeat, there is no puzzle about how citizens can reason coherently about politics. The fact of the matter, regrettable but undeniable, is that all too many of them have trouble tying up their shoelaces, politically speaking.

Some statements of this thesis of citizen incompetence are extreme. But almost always a reasonable version of them can be formulated. Nor can one fall back on the excuse that the best-known studies are out-of-date. A farmer’s market
of fresh studies reconfirms the findings of the classic studies. What is more, there is
a super abundance of studies showing voters making choices that are frivolous, or
mean-spirited and intolerant, or against their own self-interest, or based on
reasoning so far-stretched that the word reasoning breaks loose from its moorings –
holding elected officials accountable for shark attacks is our favorite example.¹

It is all the same the purpose of this study to set out a theory of reasoning
about political choices. A substantial portion of the electorate, we shall
demonstrate, is capable of doing what they long have been supposed to be incapable
of doing – namely, reasoning coherently about politics. What is more, we will pin
down exactly what we mean by the term substantial. And when we say that they
reason “coherently,” we do not have in mind a mealy-mouthed standard of
coherence. On the contrary, the standard we will employ is choosing the best
strategy to realize their policy preferences all in all.

Yet our story is not one of democratic triumphalism. On the contrary, we
mean to offer a cautionary lesson on the risks of citizen competence. The
democratic dilemma that thoughtful researchers and public intellectuals have
focused on is, but how can voters choose well politicians to represent them when
they know so little about politics? This is a real dilemma. But there is a deeper
dilemma about representation, we believe. It is just because many voters choose

¹ See Achen and Bartels (2002). What these examples are examples of is another question. No one
has offered a theory defining the universe of choices relevant to judgments of citizen competence. To
our knowledge, at least, no one has raised the issues sampling and representativeness. This has the
unhappy consequence of leaving everyone free to pick examples consistent with their theory –
whatever their theory.
coherently that public officials have great latitude in choosing the policy hand that they want to play.

I. Our Story

The specific purpose of this study to propose a new theory of party identification – a reputational theory of party identification. We recognize that, if we were circulating an investment prospectus, we would face skeptical investors. The study of party identification has been the most exhaustively tilled row in the study of voting. What can be gained by ploughing it yet one more time?

A healthy supply – or should one say, a surfeit -- of theories of party identification are already on the shelf. There is the canonical theory of The American Voter. There also is the retrospective theory of party identification, the reference group theory of party identification, the performance/valence theory of party identification, not to neglect the group identity theory of party identification, to cite the most familiar names on the roster. Are we then about to tell you that that all this ‘conventional wisdom’ is wrong?

Not at all. On the contrary, we are going to present a good deal of evidence in favor of the longest-established theory of party identification. For that matter, we

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4. Clarke Sanders, Stewart and Whiteley (2005); also see Clarke Sanders, Stewart and Whiteley (2009).
5. Green, Schickler, and Palmquist (2002).
do not doubt that the standard measure of partisanship has a retrospective component. And there are important points of similarity between the theory that we are proposing and its conceptual next of kin, notably, reference group theory and social identity theories of party identification. Why, then, propose yet another theory of party identification?

Borrowing a familiar adage, we might answer that every generation gets the theory of party identification that it deserves. The ideological clash of the Republican and Democratic parties is the engine driving contemporary American politics, and a theory of party identification that encompasses ideas as well as feelings would seem suited to the time. That is one reason. But there is another. There has been something of a theoretical stalemate in the analysis of voting. Tugging at one end of the rope are behavioral studies of choice. Tugging at the other end is the spatial model of voting.

The behavioral and spatial approaches seem opposed at every salient point. The first is social psychological in orientation; the second is economic. The first centers on motivation; the second deploys the machinery of spatial reasoning. The first has publicized the scandalously skimpy fund of political knowledge that ordinary citizens possess; the second is generosity itself in estimating the information value that they extract from this skimpy fund. The first has become shorthand for vote choices made out of emotion and habit, with minimal if any consideration of policy. The second is the template of vote choices made rationally on the basis of candidates’ policy positions.

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7 Which is not the same thing as equating party identification with retrospective judgments.
It can hardly be surprising that the behavioral and formal approaches worked at cross-purposes for a generation. Time has passed, though, and they have settled down into (mostly) peaceful co-existence. Indeed, some proponents of one approach break bread with proponents of the other.\footnote{Showcase examples are the pioneering studies of Adams, Merrill, and Grofman (2005) and of Tomz and Van Houweling (2008; 2009). For other noteworthy examples of inclusive perspectives, see Clarke, Sanders, Stewart and Whiteley (2005; 2009).} It is our aim to join them.

(i) A Reputational Theory of Party Identification

In the spatial analyses of American politics now on the shelf, voters make their choices based on candidates’ policy positions. Some voters, we hypothesize, also take account of the programmatic outlooks of the parties. This idea surely has some plausibility. It has always required a generosity of spirit to credit the ordinary citizen with the information and interest to make the bevy of policy comparisons when so many compete for so many offices. As against the specific policy positions of individual candidates, the policy reputations of the parties are more stable over time; certainly more distinct at this moment in time; and, most importantly, integrate what otherwise would be a miscellany of policies into coherent political outlooks.

Our starting point, then, is a simple idea: that political parties as well as candidates are a source of relevant policy information to ground choices between candidates. Our aim is to work out what this intuition entails: Which voters make party-centered choices? How, exactly, do they combine candidate- and party-centered policy information? What electoral incentives do party-centered choices
offer to candidates? And what are the implications of these incentives for the logic of electoral competition and a theory of democratic representation?

Answering these and other questions is the task of the chapters that follow. Here we want to call attention to two centerpiece ideas of our account. The first is a reputation premium.

It is well settled that the more strongly voters identify with a party, the more likely they are to support a candidate of their party independent of her policy positions. It is similarly well settled that they do so out loyalty and habit; so much so that a vote based on party identification has become synonymous with a vote based on an emotional attachment to the party rather than a judgment about its policies. It is our claim, however, that a large number of party identifiers now also support a candidate of their party as on the grounds that her positions are consistent with the program of their party. And the more strongly they identify with their party, the more likely they are to support the candidate of their party.

This extra measure of support is on top of the support that these partisans would give because of their emotional attachment to their party. This extra measure of support also is on top of the support that they would give a candidate of their party because of the candidate’s own policy positions. And who will provide this extra support? Party identifiers who share the outlook of their party and understand the ideological logic of the party system. They do not have a philosophy of politics, to be sure. And even the well-informed among them are not all that well-informed. But they do not a good sense of their broad outlook. And they have a good sense of their party’s. So we refer to them as reputation-oriented or
programmatic partisans and the extra measure of support that they provide as a reputation premium.

Candidates of a party earn a reputation premium, we contend, if they take a position consistent with the programmatic outlook of their party. The crux of the matter, obviously enough, is the precise meaning of the relationship, “consistent with.” This relationship has a variety of meanings. The most obvious is this: a Democratic candidate who takes a liberal position has taken a position consistent with the programmatic outlook of the Democratic Party, just as a Republican candidate who takes a conservative position has taken a position consistent with the programmatic outlook of the Republican Party. We shall be arguing for a less obvious meaning of “consistent with,” on the paradoxical ground that this meaning is more obvious, in the sense of more readily and reliably noticeable, in the tumult of electoral competition.

We are proposing a party-centered theory of spatial reasoning. A natural premise of our theory is that the programs of the political parties are focal points for their supporters. So far as their programs are indeed focal points for policy-grounded choices, their supporters will take account of the positions of the candidates against their background knowledge of the programs of the parties. This comparison, we will show, yields a rule to determine whether candidates are taking positions consistent with the programmatic outlook of their party. In the American party system, the candidates are appropriately aligned if, but only, if the candidates line up vis-à-vis one another on the left-right dimension in the same order that their respective parties line up vis-à-vis one another.
This rule of judgment we call the Order rule. It is our claim that strong partisans treat the Order rule as both a necessary and sufficient condition for awarding a reputation premium to candidates of their party. It accordingly is a primary objective of our study to test the validity of the Order rule, both in its own right and as compared to alternative rules that in principle could be employed.

The theory we are proposing has strict limits. It is limited, for example, in the voters it applies to – it has nothing to say about independents, most obviously. It also is limited as well in the political eras to which it is most applicable, gaining traction the more polarized and cohesive the parties-in-government, losing it the more moderate and diverse they are.

We do not underline that our theory has limits out of modesty or defensiveness. On the contrary, on our scorecard, a theory gets high grades just so far as it can specify under what conditions the variables it asserts are related are in fact related and under what conditions they are not. The principal thrust of both our reasoning and testing is to specify both the conditions that voters must meet and the conditions that candidates must satisfy to collect a reputation premium.

(iii) Citizen Competence

Just so far as the theory and hypotheses that we will set out are valid, we will have identified conditions under which voters do what they have long been supposed to be incapable of doing – namely, making ideologically coherent choices over candidates and policies. To be sure, the rule that they follow to make ideologically coherent choices is not unconditional. On the contrary, we will
explicitly identify a set of conditions under which citizens do best by disregarding the rule.\textsuperscript{9} But these conditions occur only rarely in the world as it is. So the bottom line of our story is that, in the world as it is, substantial numbers of voters meet the conditions to choose the alternative on offer most likely to realize their policy preferences all in all. And they are not only capable of doing this. We shall show that they do do it.

This is the core of the story that we shall tell. It is a good news story about citizen competence, one might suppose. It is not. It is instead about a paradox of democratic politics. It has become a habit of thought among researchers on public opinion that things go wrong politically because voters have made the wrong choice. They may have made the wrong choice out of ignorance or gullibility or their susceptibility to emotional appeals. But the point remains that they wound up favoring a tax policy that went against their own interests or held incumbents responsible for shark attacks that ruined the summer business season.

It is always a mistake to underestimate the role of stupidity and habit strength in human affairs, we believe. But to concentrate only on the limits of human reasoning is a mistake, too. The democratic dilemma goes deeper. Things can go wrong, not only because voters lack the information and interest to make politically coherent choices, but precisely because they understand the politics of

\textsuperscript{9} There are two. The first is a failure of a Democratic partisan who knows and shares the outlook of her to pay a reputation premium when confronted with a choice between a liberal Democratic candidate and an even more liberal Republican candidate. The second is the mirror image choice for a Republican partisan who knows and shares the outlook of his party. In a political era in which party elites are ideologically polarized, these two choice situations approach the hypothetical.
their time and choose just the alternative on offer that they should to realize their policy preferences all in all.

The result is a paradox, we shall argue. Just so far as share voters identify with the party that truly represents their political outlook and make use of the most reliable predictor of policy outcomes at hand, namely, the policy reputations of the parties, they provide the leaders of their party with the freedom to move to the ideological extremes. From time to time, ambitious politicians have incentives to take advantage of this freedom. It can be a way for them to extract more resources. It can also be a way for them to express their true preferences. Either way, the dramatic disconnect in contemporary American politics between the electorate and those they elect to be their representatives is a product precisely of citizens exercising good judgment.

(iv) Research Strategy

Our strategy is to rely on randomized experiments. Lacy and Paolino's (1998) have done pioneering introducing this strategy in the study of spatial reasoning. We single out their work partly to underline that we are following their lead in using randomized experiments to investigate spatial reasoning. But we also single out their work to underscore we are going in exactly the opposite direction in experimental design. They place their subjects in as realistic setting as their imaginative minds can conceive. We place them in a highly artificial situation, as
you will see. The merit of their design strategy is obvious.\textsuperscript{10} They stake a strong claim to external validity. In contrast, it is not obvious that our design strategy has any claim to external validity.

How then can we claim that the results of our experiments reveal the choices that voters make and the processes by which they make them in the real world?

Our answer is that our experiments measure what they are supposed to measure thanks to – not in spite of – its artificiality. Our centerpiece hypothesis is that substantial numbers of voters place a high reliance on the policy reputations of the parties when choosing between candidates. What is the strongest test possible of this hypothesis? To place respondents in an ideal situation to make candidate-centered spatial choices and yet observe them making party-centered ones.

Our experiments accordingly are designed to present our respondents with all the information they need to make a candidate-centered choice. Their design insures that this information is unambiguous, immediately intelligible and highly salient. It also insures that they receive no information about personal characteristics of the candidates – their race, gender, previous experiences in

\textsuperscript{10}Since we have not hesitated to praise Lacy and Paolino’s design for its realism and to flay our design its lack of it. Perhaps we may be forgiven for remarking that the strength of a naturalistic design like Lacy and Paolino’s does impose some inferential costs. Respondents must infer spatial positions of candidates from nonspatial materials. But test materials have not been, and possibly cannot be, standardized and validated. Each set of newspaper stories or interviews is custom-created, study-by-study, as circumstances and hypotheses change. The gain in external validity of a naturalistic approach is thus a threat to internal validity. For example, Lacy and Paolino note that the moderate Democrat typically was seen as more liberal than the liberal Democrat “on issues of the economy, the environment, and education ...” (p.6). What is more, the moderate Republican was seen to be on the liberal side (slightly) on gun control, the economy, health care, and education (p. 7). Are these violations of transitivity and directionality features of spatial reasoning in realistic contexts? Or are they unintended byproducts of the use of imperfect study-specific test materials? The latter, as it seems to us, is more likely than the former, but on the evidence on hand, it is not possible to tell whether it the one or the other.
politics-- that might induce them to make a choice between the candidates on some basis other than their policy positions. And in one crucial test, there is no information about the parties under whose banner the candidates are running. In short, we stack the deck in favor of the candidate-centered Downsian model. If our experiments show that they nonetheless strongly rely on the policy reputations of the parties in choosing between competing candidates in this extreme situation, we have presented the strongest evidence possible that they do so in the real world – in a world, that is, where the party affiliation of the candidates often is the only information that they have to work with.

That, at any rate, is our argument.
CHAPTER 2:

A Reputational Theory of Party Identification and Spatial Reasoning

In this chapter, we outline a new theory of party identification and draw out its implications for a theory of spatial voting. So that all the conceptual gears and pulleys are in plain sight, we begin with the premises of our party-centered theory of spatial voting.

I. Premises

(i) Menu Dependence

Menu dependence is our starting point. Voters do not get their free and spontaneous choice of choices. They must choose from a menu of alternatives. And they present voters with many choices they must make, since not making one counts as a choice, too. Some mechanisms to help voters to make politically consistent choices are necessary. One mechanism, in our view the primary one, is the political party system. Hence our decision to develop a party-centered theory of voting.

Party government – or equivalently, governments of parties – has been the premise for a major advance in the study of spatial voting. This advance has been variously styled – “policy balancing” by Fiorina (1988, 1992), to cite the first of these studies, “overshooting” by Kedar (2009), to cite one of most recent. The underlying intuition is the same. Voters take account of the institutional logic of the
party system to vote strategically. Governments in which parties share control compromise over policy. By voting for a party other than the party closest to one’s preferences, one can thereby obtain policy outcomes closer to one’s preferences.

We, too, focus on the logic of institutional coordination. But we do so for just the opposite reason that they do. Their objective is to develop a theory of party defection. Ours is to develop a new theory of party loyalty.

Our fulcrum is the organization of the alternatives on offer by the party system. Three aspects of party-defined choice sets are of special interest to us: (1) the low dimensionality of policy spaces; (2) the problem of rational ignorance; and (3) top-down politics. All bring out the primary role of political parties in coordination of the alternatives on offer. The parties do so imperfectly, to be sure, and they do so in their own interests, not out of a spirit of civic beneficence. But to the degree that they organize the menu of alternatives, political parties condition both the choices made and the process of choosing them.

Two changes in the structure of American electoral politics point the way. The first is polarization at the level of party leaders. Democratic and Republican legislators have become increasingly cohesive and extreme in their positions. The second is sorting at the level of party supporters. Democratic and Republican identifiers have come increasingly to share the positions and outlook of their party. And with these two changes, we claim, has come a third – the growth of a programmatic form of partisanship.

Programmatic partisans identify with their party psychologically. But they also identify with its political outlook. Three rules of spatial voting follow from their
knowing and sharing the outlook of their party. First, programmatic or reputation-oriented partisans choose on the basis of the policy reputation of their party as well as the policy positions of the candidates. Under conditions we specify below, the result is a reputation premium – extra support for the party in proportion to the strength of their identification with their party. Second, candidates collect a reputation premium if, but only if, their policy position is consistent with the policy reputation of the party. We shall propose a spatial rule defining the relationship “consistent with.” Candidates have taken a position consistent with the policy reputation of their party if they line up vis-à-vis one another in the same ideological order as their parties line up vis-à-vis one another. The Order rule provides an exact definition of the range of position(s) that candidate may take, conditional on the location of her opponent, and still collect a full reputation premium. Third, in the contemporary era of party politics, the use of the Order rule entails that a wide range of positions are open to candidates from both parties. We call this implication of the Order rule the Latitude Prediction.

Reputation premiums, the Order rule, and the Latitude Prediction, if our account is right, define party-centered spatial reasoning.

I. The Institutional Basis of Party-Centered Voting

Two decades ago, Fiorina (1988, 1992) raised the curtain on an institutionally based account of party-centered. His premise: voters cast their ballots based on a prediction of how the control of institutions by political parties
influences policy outcomes. By splitting their tickets—voting for Party A in legislative elections, and Party B in elections for the executive, for instance—voters moderate the expected policy outcome produced by the government. The policy outcome is neither the view of Party A or of Party B. Rather, it reflects a compromise between the two parties. Shortly afterwards, Alesina and Rosenthal elaborated a similar view. “[P]olicy outcomes,” they contended, “are a function not only of which party holds the executive but also of the composition of the legislature.”

Since then, an impressive research literature has accumulated. To pick two exemplary works, in an ingenious survey experiment Lacy and Paolino (1998) demonstrate that citizens’ presidential vote depend on their expectations regarding the partisan control of Congress. More recently, Kedar (2005) has worked out a general and deeply-thought through analysis, developing a theory of compensatory voting in which partisans “overshoot” – that is, vote for a party further from their preferences, to obtain a policy outcome closer to their preferences from the coalition government that will be assembled.

These are all arguments that it sometimes pays to vote for a party other than – or even at odds with – the party one most prefers on policy grounds. It would be an act of literary license to suggest that our goal out-of-the-gate was to contribute to this line of research. But it is pleasing to be in a position to contribute to it. We share two premises with previous research: that policy outcomes often drive vote choice and that the calculus of policy outcomes is party-centered. Unlike previous

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research, though, our focus is the institutional logic of party loyalty, not party
defection.

Political parties, of course, were not always part of the American scene. In
Federalist Number 10, James Madison famously railed against the pernicious
influence of “factions.” And, true to this view, political parties did not exist when the
first Congress met in 1789. But this was a short-lived condition. By the second
Congress, reliable coalitions had formed, with the Jeffersonian Republicans on one
side, and the Federalists on the other side.12 Political parties arose as a direct if
unintended consequence of the institutional environment established in the
Constitution.

The country is of course far larger and more diverse today than in 1787, but
even then the founding fathers saw the profound difficulties inherent to sustaining
large-scale representative democracy. If the Republic is to endure, public policy,
they saw, cannot swing wildly from one year to the next; one region of the country---
let alone one representative---cannot hold too much influence over the course of the
nation’s policy. The founding fathers accordingly established a deliberately
fractured system of federal government. Enacting a law generally requires the
approval of a majority of members in both chambers of Congress and also of the
president.13 No single institution determines the nature of public policy outcomes.
Instead, public policy is a joint function of the behavior of the executive and
legislative branches of government.

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13 Of course, Congress can also override a presidential veto with a supermajority vote.
Just as no single institution determines public policy, within Congress at least, no single elected member determines the behavior of the institution. Each chamber of Congress is a collective body. The House consists of 435 voting members; the Senate 100 voting members. Almost since the inception of political science as a field, congressional scholars have engaged in lively disputes over how legislative control is distributed among members of Congress.\textsuperscript{14} Arguments draw full-throated counter-arguments over whether and the extent to which the floor median, committee chairmen, and political parties influence congressional behavior. But all agree on an elementary point. Legislative control is not given to any single member.\textsuperscript{15} Authority over the direction of public policy is thus separated across institutions and, within congressional institutions, among elected members.

It is just at this juncture that political parties enter the story. They help overcome problems of coordination and collective action generated by decentralized control of public policy.\textsuperscript{16} They organize the cacophony of interests within and across institutions. They also provide a framework for the all-in-all judgments that voters must make. As Aldrich argues in his seminal theory of the origins of political parties, "government policy is determined by the collective actions of many individual office-holders. No one person either can or should be held accountable for actions taken in the House, Senate, and president together."

\textsuperscript{14} Prominently, see Cox and McCubbins (1993, 2005, 2006) and Krehbiel (1998).
\textsuperscript{15} Even the "party boss" type theories---in which the majority party leader holds disproportionate influence over policy---generally require that the leader has at least tacit approval from the majority of members within the party caucus. In this sense, even the most atomistic understanding of congressional organization in fact recognizes the fundamentally decentralized nature of power in the institution.
range of offices, provides the only means for holding elected officials responsible for what they do collectively".17

Our concern is not with legislators but with voters who put them in or take them out of office. But to understand voters choose we must first acknowledge how parties structure the alternatives on offer. We stress three characteristics of a party-organized choice set.

II. Characteristics of Choice Sets in Politics

Three aspects of the organization of choice sets in politics by political parties hold special significance. We begin with the coordination of alternatives.

(i) Policy Coordination and Low Dimensionality

At every moment, policy choices call out to be made. Many of them must be made, in the strictest sense of must; not making them counts as making them. Their range is extraordinary. So, too, is their diversity. Were each choice independent of every other – or even of many others – no voter or legislator could make them coherently. Hence the pivotal role of political parties in coordinating policy alternatives.

In the language of the trade, political parties bundle policies.18 The policies in a bundle tend to cover the same ground substantively. And the process of bundling them together brings out their similarities. Political parties do not

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17 Aldrich (1995, 3).
18 To our knowledge, the first to introduce the metaphor of policy bundling was Carmines and Stimson (1989).
produce a perfectly coherent system. Issues involving foreign trade and immigration, for example, famously divide parties internally. It is for this reason that elections rarely focus on these issues, at least at the national level. Indeed, if these issues enter an election, it often arises from the efforts of a party out of power to divide a ruling coalition. Or, as in the 2010 elections, insurgents raise the issues to challenge established co-partisans. The key point, however, is that, for most issues—particularly domestic issues—political parties effectively organize issues into coherent policy bundles.

The result of policy bundling is accordingly, to create a low dimensional policy space – indeed, for long stretches, effectively a one dimensional policy space. Historically, one dimension in particular has dominated policy competition between the Democratic and Republican parties. Since at least the 1890’s, the Democratic Party has been the party of social welfare liberalism. In contrast, the Republican Party has been the party of economic conservatism. It is thus no accident that the Democrats generally push for increases in social spending and increases in environmental protections. It similarly is no accident that the Republicans generally push for privatized responses to policy problems ranging from health care to social security.

The coordination of policies has a dynamic aspect. True, the Democratic Party has been to the left of the Republican Party on the primary left-right

19 The most obvious example of such an insurgent challenge is J.D. Hayworth’s campaign against John McCain. But immigration is part of the more general insurgent campaign within the Republican Party. For example, nearly 90 percent of tea party supporters, the dominant insurgent organization this election, approve of the controversial Arizona anti-immigration law. (http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/politicsnorthwest/2012005031_new_poll_looks_at_tea_party_vi.html)
20 Rosenthal and Poole (1997).
dimension since the mid-nineteenth century. But how far the two parties differ itself differs. Sometimes, they are farther apart; sometimes closer together. As fundamentally, when new issues come to the fore, the parties work to keep the policy space low dimensional. These new issues provide new opportunities for ambitious politicians. And with new issues come successful newcomers.

Stimson has provided a sketch of the organizational incentives for accommodation. The newcomers’ success poses a strategic choice for fellow party activists and candidates. Should they welcome them because they increase the party’s strength all in all? Or fight them because they are committed to controversial policies with uncertain enduring electoral value? If they are neutral on the new controversial issues (e.g., pro-life), whether on personal grounds or for constituency considerations, accommodation is easy. But if they have committed themselves to an opposing position (e.g., pro-choice), they do not have an easy option. Flip-flopping is costly. So holding out often is their best play.

Still, if the new issues prove of enduring electoral value, the position of holdouts in a party is likely to become more precarious over time. Defecting to the other party rarely is an attractive option, if only because they will be out-of-step the other party’s long-established policy agenda. So they tend to stay put until time itself, in the form of cohort replacement, decides the outcome. The holdouts retire from office or die in it. Their successors are attracted to the party in part because of its stands. So consensus again becomes a hallmark of the party.

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21 Ansolabehere et al. (2001).
22 See Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart (2001), which has been an invaluable guide for us. The classic study is Poole and Rosenthal (1997).
23 See Tomz and Van Houweling (2009) for an exemplary analysis.
This is an ideal typical sketch, to be sure. But it gets the most important thing right – the role of the party in organizing menu of alternatives into coherent competing ideological rivals.

(ii) Policy Reputations and Rational Ignorance

Ordinary citizens have a limited demand for information about politics, to say the least. This is rational, Downs argued, because the costs of citizens acquiring information outweigh the benefits of possessing it.\(^\text{24}\) In any case, he and others have added, they can come by useful political information by other routes and for other reasons. Many motives and means for ordinary citizens to acquire information about politics have been enumerated. Accidental exposure is one suggestion. Being a fan of politics is another. Acquiring information as a Collector’s Item is yet another. Feeling a duty to be informed still another.\(^\text{25}\) And there are yet more variations of this grand theme of democratic politics’ dependence on serendipity.

The length of the list is proof of the ingenuity of theorists, though also, possibly, a sign of their being in a tight spot. The difficulty lies less in the theory, we believe, and more in a one-sided approach to a theory of knowledge. Curiosity, citizen duty, being a fan of politics, having a museum curator’s drive for shards of political knowledge or a collector, all represent examples of a demand-side approach. All are efforts to add a muscle tone to a theory of motivation explaining

\(^{24}\) If the cost of acquiring knowledge to vote intelligently is greater than zero, it does not pay to acquire it any more than it pays to turn out and vote. See Hardin (2009), especially Chapter 3, for a characteristically lucid discussion.

\(^{25}\) We have hijacked this list from Fiorina 1990, which provides the clearest and deepest discussion of the (possible) relationships between information and rationality of which we are aware.
why citizens might want or desire the information sufficiently to expend the effort
necessary to collect it. Here, however, we want to bring to the fore a supply-side
approach. In particular, we want to concentrate on the role of political parties in
providing voters with information that they need to have to make coherent policy
choices and the incentives to put it to use.

A wheelbarrow full of research points the way. Cox and McCubbins (1993; 2005) and Aldrich (1995) were among the first to bring out the role of political
parties as brand names in politics. Snyder and Ting (2002) have helpfully
elaborated an informational rationale for political parties as brand names. They
demonstrate that party labels are useful to both candidates and voters “because
they provide low-cost information about the preferences of groups of candidates.”

The voters benefit from the party label because they learn a great deal about the
candidate’s views from their party affiliation; the candidates benefit from the label
because it allows them to communicate their preferences to the electorate without
the costs of directly advertising their policy positions.

And what is the information that party labels convey? In Snyder and Ting’s
account, they “... carry relatively precise meanings. Democratic candidates tend to
be liberal, and Republicans tend to be conservative.” Precise would not be

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26 Perhaps oddly, in view of this miscellany of motives, we believe that there is more to be said on a
demand-side of theory of knowledge. If we were working to develop a demand side theory of political
knowledge, our citizen’s motive would be the intrinsic -- and we would suggest, rational --desire to
understand the world around us. And, for many, that includes politics. The issues and political
personalities and causes of the day are significant. They matter to them. They speak to the meaning
of their lives; to their sense of what is right and important and worthy of support -- or opposition; to
their desire to understand the time in which they live; to live lives that go beyond the humdrum; to
have a sense of participating in an activity or cause that others recognize is deeply important.


28 Ibid, p. 91
precisely the word that we would choose. Liberalism and conservatism manifestly come in different dosages. “Wall-to-wall” would be our nominee. Just so far as policy choices tend to be low or even one-dimensional, the policy reputations of the parties cover the gamut of issues in play at a particular moment in time.

The wall-to-wall policy reputations of the parties provide a key to a puzzle in the study of public opinion. It has long been the consensus that ordinary citizens pay only intermittent attention to public affairs. As Tuesday follows Monday, they tend to have relatively little knowledge of politics.²⁹ But it is now well established that the general public tends to take consistently liberal or conservative positions on broad policy agendas.³⁰

How can ordinary citizens manage to be consistent policy liberals or conservatives considering how little that they know about politics, one might quite reasonably ask? By taking advantage of parties’ policy reputations, we in concert with others reply.

To make consistently liberal or conservative choices, it is not necessary that a citizen be able to elaborate a theory of liberalism or conservatism. It is necessary only that she know the parties’ policy reputations. And citizens learn them because the parties teach them, and the parties teach them not because voters necessarily wish to learn them, but because it is to the parties’ advantage to teach them. Sometimes, the Democratic Party benefits by declaring itself the party of liberalism, sometimes by condemning the Republican Party as the party of conservatism. Ditto, except the other way about, for the Republican Party. The result: although few

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²⁹ See Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) for the authoritative study of political knowledge.
³⁰ Carmines and Stimson (1989).
citizens know a lot about politics, a lot of citizens – on the order of seven in ten currently – know that the Democratic Party is the party of the left and the Republican Party is the party of the right. Know this and you have an ideological compass – one that partisans have good reason to know. Many of them, as a result, can tread an ideologically coherent path even if they are quite incapable of giving a definition of ideology.

Party-centered theories of knowledge have a comparative advantage over candidate-centered ones. So many candidates compete for public attention, and most have so little in the way of resources. Presidential candidates aside, the media hardly lavish attention on individual candidates. If candidates do become the focus of public attention, it is more likely to be on account of their peccadilloes rather than for their political ideas. A modest presence for individual candidates is built-into the institutional cards. The American political system churns through politicians. Their political careers are brief in absolute terms; briefer still, in terms of tenure in specific offices. Most change offices every few years, some out of necessity, others out of ambition. And with each change in office they must introduce themselves to a new electorate.

It is the parties that hold the key to a supply side theory of political knowledge. They have been doing business for a century and a half, and they have peddled their policy wares, if not at exactly the same location, then in the same ideological neighborhood for the last half century at least. So far from attempting to conceal what they stand for, they have invested in the billboard business. They look for the social routes that people travel in their daily lives, then post eye-catching
signs to attract their attention, advertising their policy reputation or publicizing that of their competitor, depending on whether the one or the other is to their advantage.

(iii) Top Down Politics

Top-down politics is a premise of our account, it follows. It is a premise that has deep empirical support, we would add.

The most dramatic change in the ideological structure of American politics in a generation has been the polarization of the parties-in-government. Beginning in the 1970’s, they began to take more extreme ideological positions and to become ideologically more cohesive in the mid 1970. They have become progressively more extreme and cohesive since.

Three research programs have pointed to connections between polarization at the level of elite politics and beliefs and preferences at the level of voters. The first highlights the awareness voters of polarization increasing in tandem with the intensity of polarization. Hetherington, for example, documents a sharp increase in the percentage of citizens who perceive important differences between the parties and who know the ideological reputation of the parties.\(^{31}\) The second line of research, conducted by Carsey, Layman and their colleagues,\(^{32}\) shows that party identifiers bring their issue preferences into line with their parties provided that

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\(^{31}\) Hetherington (2001, 624, figure 5).

\(^{32}\) See Carsey and Layman (2006). We are indebted to their research on the structure of cleavage, above all, their analysis of conflict extension rather than displacement, and we have drawn on their work at many points in developing our own thinking.
they are aware of the policy differences between the parties on the issues.\textsuperscript{33} They recognize, all the same, that partisans bring their positions into line with their party affiliation on issues that are less important to them and, in any case, that the relationship between party identification and policy preference surely operates in both directions. Highton and Kam (forthcoming) provide also provide a nuanced account, contending that partisanship drove policy preferences though the 1970’s and early 1980s while issue orientations have driven partisanship through the 1980’s and 1990’s.

This research bears on our account, but only obliquely. It is our claim that the meaning of partisanship itself differs systematically in the electorate. Accordingly, a third research program, led by Levendusky (2009a), is the most directly relevant to our project. In his exemplary study of partisan “sorting,” he maps the alignment of Republicans identifiers on the right and Democratic identifiers on the left on all the principal policy agendas – cultural issues, racial issues, and New Deal issues.\textsuperscript{34} Levendusky also has drilled below the level of policy agendas, measuring partisan sorting on an array of individual issues, running from government services, through government aid to minorities, through abortion, through defense spending, through government assistance to minorities. Partisan consensus characterizes some issues more than others. But all in all, voters’

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{33} To be exact, they do so provided the issue is not exceptionally important to them; if it is, they tend to bring their party attachment into line with their policy preferences. And, to be clear, there is evidence that policy preferences can drive party identification, as Carsey and Layman acknowledge. See especially Abramowitz and Saunders (2006). For our purposes, however, the direction of the relationship between party identification and policy preferences is irrelevant. What is relevant is that the two run together.
\textsuperscript{34} Levendusky (2009a) is the definitive study of partisan sorting. His work has provided one of the principal foundations on which we have built. On sorting at the level of policy agendas, see Levendusky chapter 5, and figure 5.1 in particular.
\end{flushleft}
partisanship and their policy preferences now align to a degree not present even three decades ago. Moreover, this sorting of the electorate on a partisan basis occurred after the polarization of the partisan elite. Sorting may be a consequence of polarization. It cannot be a cause of it.

So trend analyses conclude. To provide direct evidence of the responsiveness of voters to elite polarization, Levendusky exploits the power of randomized experiments. These experiments make use of an ingenious pictorial design to depict degrees of polarization among Democratic and Republican congressmen. In the “high polarization” screen, respondents see a screen with twice as many Congressman located at polar positions than moderate ones, none in the center, and no overlapping of preferences of Democrats and Republican. In contrast, in the “low polarization,” far and away most Congressmen take moderate positions; hardly any take a polar one. The tails also overlap in the low polarization condition. Some Republicans take liberal and centrist positions; some Democrats conservative and centrist ones. Still, the center of gravity of each party is clearly consistent with their policy reputations. Levendusky’s principal finding is that the sorting of party supporters increases as the degree of policy divergence between Republicans and Democrats in Congress increases.

All the evidence on hand, longitudinal, cross-sectional and experimental, thus points in the same direction. Party supporters responded to the ideological

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36 Levendusky uses a five-point Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree; the more Congressmen at a point, the larger the number of stick figures located there; which is to say, the higher the bar of figures; with the preferences of Democrats and Republicans shown in contrasting colors.
37 Notice that in our surveys, we ask the respondents to identify their ideological and policy views before we reveal the positions of the candidates.
initiatives of party leaders; party leaders did not adapt to the ideological demands of party supporters. Top-down politics is an idea that runs through our account.

III. Reputational Reasoning and Candidate Positioning

(i) Reputation-oriented Partisanship

The concept of party identification is embedded in a larger more finely spun web of analysis than commonly acknowledged. The concept itself can be economically summarized, however. Party identification is an emotional attachment to a political party. Typically, this affective attachment is acquired early in life, most commonly from one’s parents but not infrequently from one’s peers. Characteristically, party supporters’ identification with their party increases over the course of their lives. This strengthening of the bond between partisan and party can occur for diverse reasons. It may be a product of habitual exercise in election after election. It may be a consequence of the ossification of the aging process itself. But the bond between partisan and party does not strengthen out of conviction. Identifying with a party is only minimally related to identifying with policies that the party stands for.

That is the canonical conception of party identification. But the result of the “partisan sort” is to align, for the largest number, the party that they identify with and the policy preferences and political outlook that they hold. As important, they also understand the ideological logic of the party system; that is, they understand that the Democratic Party is the party of liberalism, the Republican Party the party
of conservatism. These two changes provide the materials for a new portrait of party identifiers. Yes, they identify with their party and their attachment has an emotional component to it. But, no, their attachment is not merely a matter of emotion. It has a policy component, too. For them, to believe in certain and outlook on politics is to be a Democrat; to be a Democrat is to believe in certain ideas and outlook on politics. Just the same holds true for most Republicans now. For them, to believe in certain ideas or a certain outlook on politics is to be a Republican; to be a Republican is to believe in certain ideas or a certain outlook on politics. These differences in outlook and knowledge are differences of degree, not kind. But for the sake of exposition, we shall refer to Democrats and Republicans who stand with the program of their party as programmatic partisans or, alternatively, reputation-oriented partisans. Programmatic or reputation-oriented partisans know and share the outlook of their party. Traditional partisans do neither.

(ii) The Reputation Premium

In the neo-Downsian framework, voters compare the candidates’ policy positions to their own. It is not obvious how ordinary citizens can pull this off, we cannot resist the temptation to add. A goodly number may have a fair idea of the position of prominent incumbents. But we know of no reason to believe that

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38 Hetherington (2001, 624, Figure 5).
39 We say neo-Downsian and not “Downsian” because Downs himself was concerned with the placement of parties in a parliamentary-type system and not candidates. However, in the years since his dissertation was published, scholars have commonly applied the Downsian predictions to candidates and not parties.
40 Jessee (2009).
citizens know most of the policy positions of most of the candidates who go head to head in elections.\footnote{The hitch, it is worth underlining, is not computational but informational. See Gintis (2010) on the fallacy of computational "requirements" in strategic choice.}

For programmatic partisans, it is another matter. They have internalized a coherent set of preferences. They know which party stands for which outlook. True, some issues are more centrally bound up with the policy reputations of the parties; others less so. All the same, the knowledge that the Democratic Party is the party of liberalism and the Republican Party the party of conservatism can carry voters a long way. In a polarized party system, know the party banner that a candidate is running under, and you will have a very good idea of their policy positions. Know their policy positions and you will have a very good idea of the party whose banner they are running under.

One part of our account, then, is informational. The other part is motivational. Programmatic partisans not only know the outlook of their party. They share it. When the party wins, they win. Voting for the candidate of their party is the way to realize the program of their party. In saying this, we do not assume that programmatic partisans have a particular theory of party government. Some students of Congress take the position that the parties exercise influence over their members in Congress; others that the appearance of party influence is misleading. Programmatic partisans may hold one theory or the other or no theory at all. What is relevant is that, as a matter of obvious fact, the preferences of members of the same party cluster together, and the preferences of members of the opposing party cluster in an ideologically distant location.
In this polarized environment, for a voter bent on realizing her preferences all in all, party or no party, this is a distinction without a difference. For a party supporter who knows and shares the outlook of her party, it is sufficient that electing a co-partisan increases the odds of achieving the team’s results.

A programmatic partisan’s ties with her party are bound up with what it stands for politically. So the more strongly she identifies with her party, the more likely she is to support candidates of her party if they represent what her party stands for politically. This increased likelihood of a candidate being selected by virtue of representing the policy outlook of a political party, we call a “reputation premium.” This is a premium that is independent both of the purely non-policy, emotional component of party identification—and also of the policy distance between the voter and the candidates. The premium accrues to candidates by virtue of their party affiliation, but not for affective reasons. Obviously enough, party identifiers who know and share the outlook of their party pay reputation premiums. How does party identification enter in? The size of the premium that programmatic partisan pay is proportional to the strength of their identification.

(ii) Candidate Positioning: The Order rule

Candidates of a party collect a reputation premium for representing the outlook of the party. The positions that they take must therefore be consistent with their party’s her party’s policy reputation. But what exactly does it mean for a candidate’s position to be “consistent with” her party’s policy reputation?
The relationship, “consistent with,” cannot be a synonym for matching the policy position of the median legislator of a party. It would be cock-eyed to suppose that liberal Democratic supporter will perceive a Democratic candidate to be at odds with their party’s program because she is a bit to this or that side of her party’s median legislator. Ditto for conservative Republican supporters and a Republican candidate. They will not judge a Republican candidate to have defected if she does not score bull’s-eye on the location of the median Republican legislator.

It is natural to think of taking a position consistent with a party’s position policy reputation as taking one “similar” or “close” to a party’s center of gravity. But then again, how similar is similar enough? How close is close enough? Someone who gets the “big picture” of the two parties will have a serviceable idea of the mean policy preference of her party’s representatives in Congress. But her knowing the mean is one thing. Knowing the standard deviation is another.42

In the standard spatial set-up, two candidates locate themselves on a left-right policy dimension. The policy orientation of the Democratic Party is, and is known to be liberal; the outlook of the Republican Party is, and is known to be conservative. It follows that, to be correctly aligned, the candidate of the party of the left must be to the left of the candidate of the party of the right. In a polarized party system like the contemporary American one, a Democratic candidate who has located herself to the right of her Republican opponent has put herself unmistakably at odds with the Democratic Party. Ditto a Republican candidate who has decided to take a more liberal position than the representative of the party of liberalism.

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42 Ignorance of representatives’ voting records appears to have been exaggerated. See Jessee (2009); also Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart (2001).
The rule then is: candidates running under the parties’ banners must line up vis-à-vis one another on the left-right policy dimension in the same order as the parties line up vis-à-vis one another. We call this the Order Rule. On our account, candidates who satisfy the Order Rule receive a reputation premium: an increased probability of being picked as partisans’ preferred candidate on the basis of a combination of their party affiliation and policy orientation.

Figure 2.1 identifies the positions that a Democratic candidate may and may not adopt to collect a reputation premium.\textsuperscript{43}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\begin{tikzpicture}
\draw[->,thick] (0,0) -- (10,0);
\draw[red, thick] (2,0) -- (2,0.5);
\draw[red, thick] (4,0) -- (4,0.5);
\draw[red, thick] (6,0) -- (6,0.5);
\node at (1,0) {D\textsubscript{1}};
\node at (3,0) {D\textsubscript{2}};
\node at (5,0) {R};
\node at (7,0) {D\textsubscript{3}};
\end{tikzpicture}
\caption{Figure 2.1}
\end{figure}

Consider first D\textsubscript{3}. She has located herself to the right of the candidate of the Republican candidate. She accordingly forfeits any reputation premium. The choices of D\textsubscript{1} and D\textsubscript{2} are more interesting. Both represent atypical cases: D\textsubscript{1} because she has taken an extremely liberal stand even for a very liberal party; D\textsubscript{2} because, he has taken a conservative position even though he represents the liberal party. Yet, the positions of both satisfy the Order Rule. Both adopt positions to the

\textsuperscript{43} Figure 2.1 does not address support they can win on other grounds – by best representing the position of an individual voter, for example, or by generating an appeal that goes beyond party and wins the support of political independents and, possibly, some weakly attached to the other party.
left of the candidate of the party of the right. It follows, on our theory, that both $D_1$ and $D_2$ should collect a reputation premium; and what is more $D_2$ should profits as handsomely as $D_1$, even though he crossed over the center-point. Indeed, on our account, any Democratic candidate who locates between the two likewise pockets the full reputation premium. Satisfying the Order Rule is a sufficient as well as necessary condition for collecting a reputation premium, we claim.

We recognize that our claim is at odds with common sense, and we shall make plain that is at odds also with some major theories of spatial reasoning. Then again, we claim that falsifiability is not the least virtue of our theory.

**(iv) The Latitude Prediction**

On our account, candidates need only line up in the same ideological order vis-à-vis one another as their parties line up vis-à-vis one another, and they will collect a full reputation premium. What follows if our reasoning is valid? Candidates enjoy wide latitude in terms of the positions that they may adopt, not only without suffering a penalty but still enjoying a reward. We call this the latitude prediction.

The first thing to say about this prediction is that there are good grounds for arguing that it is false. Consider two of these grounds.

In all versions of spatial theory, candidates take positions on a policy dimension running from left to right. According to Directional Theory, voters first determine whether a candidate is on the same side of the issue they are, rewarding them if they are, punishing them if they are not. Any policy position to the left of the center-point is liberal; any policy position to the right is conservative. This categorical
conception of left and right fits the way that political analysts think of politics when they pronounce that a politician as “on the left” or “on the right.” The first objection to the Latitude Prediction then is that it ignores this directional logic. Liberal Democratic supporters do not regard a Democratic candidate who crosses over the center point as a representative of the liberal outlook of the Democratic Party.

Directional Theory asserts that a candidate increases her policy appeal by taking up a position nearer the pole than the center point of a policy dimension. The intuition is that by taking a more marked, less moderate position, a candidate signals his commitment to the policy. So far as the extremity of the position is an indicator of the strength of her commitment to a policy commitment, then (again to take the example of a Democratic candidate) as the candidate moves away from the left pole, the size of a reputational premium will decrease, going to zero as the candidate takes a centrist position on the policy dimension.

Both objections to our account have merit. Why then do we stand by the latitude prediction? Because the rationale of both criticisms is exclusively candidate-centered. They are arguments about support that a candidate will receive by virtue of her policy position and for no other policy consideration. By contrast, the latitude prediction follows from the extra support that a candidate can collect by virtue of their party’s policy positions. Our theory of party identification, if correct, thus spills over into an account of spatial reasoning. The more strongly partisans identify with their party, the more likely they are to support the candidates of their party -- that is the result that *The American Voter* discovered and every subsequent

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44 Directional theorists add the rider that the position should not be so near the pole as to be “extreme.” There is, in their view, “a region of acceptability.” See Rabinowitz and Macdonald (1989).
study of American politics has replicated. Our interest is a multiplier effect, an increase in the effect of party identification on candidate choice above and beyond the support generated by an emotional attachment to the party and the candidate’s own policy positions.

The question then is, under what conditions will this special activation of party identification occur? It is tied to the outlook of the party, we have argued. It follows that knowing the policy reputations of the parties and sharing the outlook of one’s own party represent two central conditions. The third condition is the positions of the candidates adopt as candidates of their party. The parties do not have absolute positions. The Democratic Party sometimes is further to the left, sometimes closer to the center; sometimes more cohesive; sometimes more disparate. Ditto the Republican Party. What is fixed is the order of the two parties. The Democratic Party always has been to the left of the Republican Party. Hence the Democratic candidate must be lined up to the left of the Republican candidate, for the candidates’ positions to be consistent with the policy reputations of the parties. To ask for more is to mistake the nature of party reputations. For the purposes of electoral choice, they are not defined in terms of an absolute ideological standard. They are defined relative to one another.

(iii) Reputational Choices and Spatial “Errors”

On our account, there are two reasons why a reputation-oriented partisan may judge a candidate of their party to represent her policy preferences. One is because the candidate’s position is closer to hers. The other is because the outlook of the
candidate’s party is closer to hers. Just so far as a party system is polarized at the
level of party leaders and sorted at the level of party supporters, the two reasons
overlap. Democratic identifiers are liberal, albeit mostly only moderately so;
Democratic candidates are liberal, too, though generally markedly more so.
Similarly, Republican identifiers are conservative, albeit mostly only moderately so;
Republican candidates are conservative, too, though generally markedly more so.
Typically, then, Democrats and Republicans are presented with a choice between a
(very) liberal Democratic candidate and a (very) conservative Republican candidate.
Both have an easy choice since the candidate of their party is their preferred
candidate on both candidate-centered and party-centered grounds.

An easy choice for voters but a quandary for us. Candidate-centered theories of
spatial reasoning are well-established. Why drag on stage the analytical machinery
of a party-centered account when we already have an account of spatial reasoning
that does the job?

We could argue that the standard neo-Downsian candidate-centered approach
alone puts all of us in a quandary, since its signature product, the median voter
theorem, is arguably at odds with the signature property of contemporary American
politics -- the polarization of party elites.45 In contrast, the reputation premium—
and the latitude prediction that follows from the conjunction of the premium
reputation and the Order rule— opens the door to polarization since the party
premium accrues to candidates irrespective of the extremity of their positions.

45 Consider Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart (2001), who provide evidence suggesting that
candidates rarely converge in elections.
It is an advantage that our theory accommodates ideological polarization at the level of party leaders and (relative) moderation at the level of party supporters. It is less of an advantage than might be supposed, however. A baker’s dozen of reasons have been adduced to explain why, though the median voter theorem and the actual world appear estranged from one another to the untrained eye, all is right to the tutored eye. Then again, the next worst position to having no explanations is having too many.

Our strategy, then, is to meet the issues head-on. Our tactic is to investigate when candidate-centered and party-centered policy considerations clash.

(iv) Party-Centered vs. Candidate-Centered Policy Choice

On our theory, reputation-oriented partisans have two policy grounds, not one which to choose between candidates. They have the policy positions of the competing candidates. In addition, they have the political outlooks of the opposing parties. How do they choose when the two set of policy consideration conflict? On the side, the candidate of the opposing party is their spatial favorite. On the other, he is a candidate of the party with an opposing policy outlook. Figure 2.2 illustrates, from the perspective of a Democratic supporter, a conflict between candidate and party-centered policy choices.

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**Figure 2.2**

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46 For one of the most thoughtful and incisive discussions see Grofman (2004).
47 We only consider the case when party candidates satisfy the Order rule, given the argument that we have just made that a party’s candidate loses any reputational premium if he violates the Order rule, that is, takes a position at odds with the policy reputation of his party.
When the Other Party’s Candidate Is Your Spatial Favorite

To bring out the theoretical issues, we have taken dramatic license. $D_v$, the Democratic partisan, is a moderate liberal. She has a choice between $D_c$, a Democratic candidate who is extremely liberal, and $R_c$, a Republican candidate who locates himself almost exactly at her ideal point. On our account, in addition to taking account of the policy positions of the two candidates, $D_v$ takes account of the policy reputations of the two parties. The two points of reference, candidate and party, lead to different choices: the first favors $R_c$; the second $D_c$.

What should we observe if our line of reasoning is right? Assume that $D_v$ is a party identifier of *The American Voter* stripe. She all the same may have policy preferences. So the fact that $R_c$ is her spatial favorite counts in his favor, while the fact that $D_c$ is her spatial loser counts against him. On the other hand, if $D_v$ is a party identifier of *The American Voter* stripe, loyalty to her party is what fundamentally matters to her. The more strongly she identifies with it, the more likely she should be to favor $D_c$.

Now, assume that $D_v$ is a reputation-oriented partisan. Policy will matter to her. The question is which policy – that of the candidate or of the party under whose
banner the candidate is running. On our account, she will and should cast her lot with the policy of her party. In an era of polarization at the level of party activists and legislators, the policy reputations of the parties are widely publicized; their commitment to the policies at the heart of their reputation is credible. $D_v$ would select $R_c$ if all she knew or cared about were the policy positions of the candidates. But $D_v$ identifies with her party and what it stands for. $D_c$, the Democratic candidate, has taken an extremely liberal position, while the voter holds only a moderately liberal position. But – and this is the vital point – on our account, the position of $D_c$ is consistent with political orientation of the Democratic Party and she knows it. Voting for $D_c$ gives her the opportunity to vote for a candidate who stands with the party that she believes in. She will choose him, then, and the more strongly that she identifies with her party, the higher the probability that she will do so. Indeed, because her identification with her party incorporates both a commitment to what it stands and an emotional attachment, the effect of party identification should be markedly stronger for her than for a party supporter of The American Voter variety.

Our account, if right, is doubly ironic. First, party identification, which is not supposed to incorporate policy preferences, is a force driving policy-centered choices. Second, in the Downsian scheme, preferring the candidate who is further from your position to the one who is closer is a spatial error – unequivocally and emphatically an error. Yet, it is our claim that it is the ideologically sophisticated partisans, not than their politically naïve cousins, their party, who are more likely to make this error in spatial reasoning. If true, this raises a provocative question. In
the contemporary American party system, can a Downsian spatial error be a strategic choice?
CHAPTER 3:

Lessons from A Sterile Downsian Environment

The neo Downsian paradigm is the theory of spatial choice that we are challenging. But we are challenging it, not on the grounds that it is wrong, but rather on the basis that it is incomplete. A party-centered theory is necessary to supplement candidate-centered theories, we have become persuaded.

Since a party-centered approach is the one that we shall argue for, our strategy is to stack the odds in favor of a candidate-centered choice. So we deliberately have created an experimental setting biased in favor of Downsian spatial reasoning, sterilizing it to remove any reference to political parties or their programs. Our prediction is that, in spite of this sterilization, many party supporters will nonetheless take into account the policy reputations in choosing between candidates. If they do so in a situation where there are no references to political parties, it will be the strongest possible evidence that they do so in the world of real politics, where the parties are among the most prominent features of the political landscape.

1. Issues of Identity

The Downsian paradigm is now an integral part of the tool kit of political scientists in all fields. Figure 3.1 illustrates the standard depiction: two candidates,
A and B, position themselves on a single policy dimension with an eye to winning the support of \(V\), the voter. But though A and B are two individuals competing for office, are they only individual candidates? In the current conditions of American politics, we claim that they are associated with parties in the minds of many – appropriately as it happens. Candidates are associated with political parties, because the parties supply the policy context that gives candidates their political identities. That is not true of all voters, we recognize. But it is true of a large, possibly even the largest, number of them.

Insert Figure 3.1 Here

Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart’s groundbreaking study of candidate positioning illuminates key conceptual and empirical issues.\(^{48}\) Their study details the three principal predictions of the Downsian model. (1) Candidates should converge, if not at the national level then at the district level. (2) Candidates should be responsive to the preferences of their constituents, if not in the general election then in the primaries. Finally, (3) candidates have incentives to take moderate positions. Ansolabehere and his colleagues find some evidence consistent with all three theoretical claims. More competitive districts tend to produce more moderate candidates. Candidates in competitive districts tend to converge, they also report, particularly when high quality candidates are in the race. Yet, what is striking to Ansolabehere and his colleagues is not the absence of evidence in support of the Downsian model, but its weakness.

\(^{48}\) Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2001).
What is the dominant result? Examining House races from 1874-1996, they find that the Democrat is “to the left” of the Republican in all but two of the 1,814 races since 1874. The absolute amount of divergence between the national parties varies in a periodic fashion. Divergence was marked between the 1820’s and 1930’s, then decreased from the 1940’s through the 1970’s. Since then, ideological polarization has returned to its historic levels. Once again, their programmatic outlooks define the identity of the national parties. In turn, and this is the fulcrum of our account, the ideological identities of the national parties provide a context for policy-centered evaluation of positions of party candidates at all levels.

II. A Thought Experiment: Spatial Reasoning in a Sterilized Downsian

Space

Since Downs, the defining rule of the voter’s rationality is a voter’s choice of the candidate whose policy position is closest to hers. Call this the proximity rule. Here is a thought experiment to test the validity of the proximity rule.

In our thought experiment, we ask a nationally representative sample of citizens their position on a policy. Since we are studying spatial reasoning in our thought experiment, we would like measurement conditions to be ideal. So all respondents are provided with a computer monitor. To put them in just the right frame of mind for a study of spatial reasoning, they are asked to give their answer in a spatial format. The monitor screens thus display a policy dimension, one pole anchored by

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49 See, for example, Poole and Rosenthal (1997). See also McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (2006).
50 We are indebted to Professor Lynn Vavreck for bringing out the central role of the nationalization of the political parties for our reputational theory of party identification.
a liberal policy alternative, the other by its conservative competitor, and respondents are asked to indicate their position by locating themselves on this policy dimension.

The second step is to show them a screen depicting the positions of two candidates on the very same policy on which they themselves took a position. Everything in the second screen parallels the first. It is the same policy, described word-for-word in the same way, presented in the same spatial format – a single policy dimension anchored at each end by brief descriptions of liberal and conservative policy alternatives, again word-for-word identical with those in the first screen. The candidates are alphabetically denominated -- Candidate A and Candidate B – and their positions are marked by arrows directed to points on the policy dimension. The positions of both candidates randomly varied, covering all possible combinations, with the exception of ties (since a choice between them on the basis of policy would then be moot). Respondents are then asked whether Candidate A or Candidate B represents their position. Their choice of Candidate A or B is the dependent variable in our thought experiment.

Our thought experiment mimics a thoroughly sterilized Downsian choice situation. The candidates locate themselves on a policy dimension. Their positions are not only conveyed in a spatial format. They are also unequivocal, eliminating uncertainty or ambiguity. And what respondents are not informed about counts for as much as what they are informed about. In particular, there is no information about the candidates’ personalities, or their previous offices or voting records, or their personal characteristics such as race or gender, or – above all – their party
affiliation. So voters are told all they need to know to make a candidate-centered spatial choice. And they are told nothing that could distract them or confuse them or lead them to discount the spatial information that they receive. In these conditions, their choice of between candidates on policy grounds is not merely determined. It is over-determined.

Now, comes the third part of our thought experiment – the analysis of respondents’ spatial choices. Imagine that we have assembled a sample of expert researchers on elections. The question we put to them is this. In these circumstances, will a voter choose between candidates A and B on the basis of their policy positions or her party identification? Without exception, they have asked us why we are asking this question. What possible difference, in this situation, could it make whether a voter identifies with the Democratic or Republican party? Party loyalties will count for nothing; the candidates’ policy positions will count for everything, since that is all that distinguishes them.

So our colleagues thought. So we thought, too.\(^{51}\) It may be all the more interesting to observe the results when our thought experiment is translated into a real experiment.

III. The Downsian Experiment\(^{52}\)

We begin with the Downsian paradigm Experiment. For this study, as for all our subsequent studies, nationally representative samples were selected by

\(^{51}\) Van Houweling and Sniderman (2004).

\(^{52}\) This section draws on a revised version of van Houweling and Sniderman (2004).
Knowledge Network (KN) with the interviews carried out using KN’s web-based technology.\textsuperscript{53}

The first step in the Downsian Experiment proceeds is measurement of respondent’s policy preference. The test issue is government services and spending. It is the focal issue for our analysis of spatial reasoning because it taps the deepest cleavage in American electoral politics, over the responsibilities of government and the duties of citizens.\textsuperscript{54} Measurement of preferences on the issue of government services and spending follows a general principle. Here and everywhere, we make use of standard National Election Study measures whenever we can, not because they necessarily are ideal, but rather because they are standard. Their behavior in our studies can thus be benchmarked against their performance in many studies and over many years.

The Downsian experiment thus begins with a screen presenting locations a 7-point scale on government services and spending. The poles are anchored by brief policy descriptions. One anchoring position is that government reduce services, even in areas such as health and education to reduce spending, defined as 1 on a 7-point scale. The other anchoring position is that government should provide more services even if it means an increase in spending, defined as 7 on the 7-point scale. Respondents are told that people take positions at all the points on the scale. Then they are asked “Where would you place yourself on this scale ...?” They also are provided with the option of not expressing an opinion. So the test item includes a standard escape clause “… or haven’t you thought much about this?” Respondents

\textsuperscript{53} See Appendix B for a description of the properties of data sets used in this project.

\textsuperscript{54} See, for example, Stonecash (2000), McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal (2006), Bartels (2006).
are asked to indicate their position by clicking on a point on a scale, at the bottom of the screen, visually anchored at the two poles by short descriptions of the competing policies.

Insert Figure 3.2 About Here

A miscellany of question was inserted between the first step of the experiment, measurement of respondents’ policy preferences, and the second step, presentation of candidates’ policy positions. In all, twenty-nine questions intervened between measurement of respondents’ policy preferences and their reactions to candidates’ policy positions. The idea was not merely to separate the two judgments temporally. It was also to separate them cognitively. Asking questions about a variety of other matters, we reasoned, would divert respondents’ attention from the position that they themselves had on the government services and spending item.\(^{55}\) Then, having driven respondents through the equivalent of a cognitive car wash, came the test measure – the choice between candidates.

The screen, reproduced in Figure 3.3, shows the positions of two candidates, Candidate A and Candidate B, on the government services and spending item. In this particular instance, B has taken a centrist position (at 4) and A and slightly liberal one (at 5). The visual presentation depicting the policy alternatives and the candidates’ positions is exactly the same as for the assessment of the respondent’s own position on the issue of government services and spending: same issue, same visual format, same wording anchoring the two poles. As for the candidates, they

\(^{55}\) As it developed, subsequent studies indicate that this separation of measurement of respondents’ preferences and presentation of candidates’ positions was an unnecessary precaution. Still, better safe than sorry.
are assigned all possible positions but for a tie.\textsuperscript{56} Since the assignment of candidate positions is random, it is therefore independent of the respondents’ own positions on the issue, removing the inferential indeterminacies that have crippled the analysis of policy voting in standard public opinion surveys.\textsuperscript{57}

Insert Figure 3.3 Here

Vote choice is what we are interested in, ultimately. But we lacked the confidence to begin our research program by asking about it directly. All that respondents know about the candidates is their position on one issue. Asking people to “vote” pushed the envelope on plausibility, we feared. Respondents would oblige us with an answer, we knew. But they might not take the task seriously; they might suppose that they were being asked to through a dart, blind-folded. An alternative would have been to ask respondents which candidate’s position was “closer” to theirs. But the downstream costs were unacceptable, we decided. Spatial proximity – choosing the closer candidate – is the standard decision rule. But there are others. Why start off privileging one over others? For the record, in subsequent studies we have used a variety of formulations – Which candidate would you vote for? Which candidate best represents your general outlook? The various formulations are operationally interchangeable.\textsuperscript{58} For the Downsian experiment, we settled on a formulation that has the advantage of being direct without the disadvantage of being either implausible or leading. “Which candidate represents

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{56} If the candidates “tied,” that is, took identical positions, there obviously would be no policy basis for a choice between them.
\textsuperscript{57} See the classic analysis of Brody and Page (1972).
\textsuperscript{58} For further evidence, see Tomz and Van Houweling (2008, 2009).
\end{flushleft}
your position on the issue?” with respondents having the option of choosing “Candidate A,” “Candidate B”, “Neither,” or “Don’t Know.”

There you have the set-up of the experiment: first, measure respondents’ spatial policy preferences; then, measure their choice between candidates on the basis of their (randomly assigned) spatial policy positions. With these three pieces of information, it is a trivial matter to calculate the probability of respondents picking their Downsian winner – that is, the candidate whose position is closer to theirs.

The established theory of spatial reasoning assumes that voters choose candidates based on the candidates’ policy positions. A premise of the theory that we laid out in Chapter 2, however, is that programmatic partisans also take account of the policy outlooks of political parties. What, we asked ourselves, would be the strongest test that of our claim that spatial choices are based on the policy commitments of the parties as well as the policy positions of the candidates? Our answer: conclusive evidence that they take account of the parties’ policy reputations even when there is no reference – none at all – to political parties. Hence the design of the Downsian experiment: choices defined by the (fully randomized) policy positions of two anonymous and alphabetically-denominated alternatives, Candidate A and Candidate B, in a choice situation rigged in favor of candidate-centered choices. If, even so, significant numbers also make party-centered choices, one can only imagine the power of parties shaping spatial reasoning in the real world in which political parties are among the most prominent parts of the political landscape.
IV. Party and Partisanship in the Absence of Party

The question posed in our thought experiment is whether party identification, in addition to policy preferences, will influence candidate choice in the absence of any reference to the party affiliations of the candidates. Accordingly, we estimate the probit regression model of voter choice:

\[ \Pr(A) = \Phi[\alpha + \beta_1(PID) + \beta_2(A\ closer)] \]  \hspace{1cm} (Eq 3.1)

The first coefficient, \( \beta_1(PID) \), captures the influence (if any) of party identification; and the second, \( \beta_2(B\ closer) \), the probability that respondents will pick the candidate whose position in fact is closer to theirs. The results, presented in Table 3.1, will warm the heart of every expert we asked to make a prediction about our thought experiment. The spatial proximity coefficient is obviously statistically significant. But the coefficient for party identification is insignificant not only substantively but statistically. Our respondents are behaving like gimlet-eyed Downsians and not at all like party-centered reasoners.

Insert Table 3.1 Here

On the theory that we have proposed, the nub of the matter is that the Democratic and Republican parties now stand for programmatic policy outlooks. Purely as a matter of fact, it is uncontroversial that the candidates of the two parties tend to land on opposite poles on a left-right dimension; indeed, so much so that representatives of the two minimally overlap. It follows that the candidate on the
left is an odds-on favorite of being a Democrat, the candidate on the right a possibly still better bet to be a Republican. It also follows that partisans should take this fact of political life into account. What does this imply about the analysis of the Downsian experiment?

In the experiment, policy positions are randomly assigned to Candidates A and B. Table 3.1 reports the results related to choosing Candidate A as representing your position. But because policy positions are randomly assigned to Candidates A and B, one half the time Candidate A takes a position to the left of Candidate B. However, the other one half the time, Candidate A takes a position to the right of Candidate B. If policy positions are proxies of party affiliation, a programmatic Democrat would choose Candidate A half the time – when Candidate was the candidate on the left, and Candidate B the other half, when Candidate B was the candidate on the left. Ditto, in reverse, a programmatic Republican. The result: no relationship between party identification and candidate choice.

What, then, is necessary to begin to test the party-centered hypothesis? If taking a liberal position is a proxy for being a Democrat and taking a conservative one is a proxy for being a Republican, it is necessary to recode the candidates, so that L stands for all candidates who took the more liberal position, ignoring whether they are denominated Candidate A or B, and C for all candidates who take the more conservative position, again ignoring whether they were denominated as Candidate A or B. Having done so, we estimate the following equation:

\[
Pr(L) = \Phi(\alpha + \beta_1(PID) + \beta_2(L\text{ closer})) \quad \text{(Eq. 3.2)}
\]
Table 3.2 presents the results of this analysis. Candidate proximity is still the dominant rule of choice. But then again, it could hardly be otherwise. We have created a Downsian heaven for voters to identify their spatial favorite. The striking resulting Table 3.2—striking to us, certainly—is that that the party identification of the respondent now matters; and it is worth remarking that it matters notwithstanding the fact that orientation on the policy issue itself also matters.

Insert Table 3.2 Here

To get some sense of the substantive impact of party loyalty, Figure 3.4 translates the probit coefficients into estimates of the probability that candidate preference is a function of strength of party identification, while controlling for spatial proximity and general policy preference. The dotted line tracks the probability of choosing the candidate on the left, when the candidate on the left is the respondent’s spatial favorite, as a function of strength of party identification; the solid line, the probability of choosing the candidate on the left, when the candidate of the right is the respondent’s spatial favorite, also as a function of strength of party identification.

Insert Figure 3.4 Here

As Figure 3.4 shows, when the candidate on the left is their spatial favorite, on the order of 85 percent of strong Democrat pick him as representing their

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59 Substantively, the probability of supporting the left candidate increases to 73 percent from 33 percent when the left candidate holds a closer position.

60 In entering ideology on the right hand side, we are ‘over-controlling,’ since political outlook is part of the phenomenon of programmatic partisans. We have nonetheless chosen to do to aggressively rule out a hypothesis of spuriousness.
position. No mystery here, we must say. Respondents are picking their spatial favorite when all they have – and all of them have it – unequivocal, readily understandable information specifying the spatial winner. Still and all, far and away most strong Democrats make the rational – that is, Downsian -- choice. In contrast, strong Republicans are dimwitted Downsians. The candidate on the left is their spatial favorite. But only 60 percent of them say that he is the candidate who better represents their position. You might say that a majority of them get it right. A more appropriate way to think of the gap between them and strong Democrats, as it seems to us, is that it is about the distance between one group getting an A+ and another a C+.

Awarding the higher grade to Democrats would be premature, though. Consider what happens when the candidate on the right is the respondent’s spatial favorite. Now, the tables have turned. As Figure 3.4 also shows, when the Downsian winner is the candidate on the right, approximately 80 percent of strong Republicans pick their spatial favorite, compared to about 60 percent of strong Democrats.

The two sets of results are altogether consistent, of course. A partisan’s spatial favorite may be, by inference from her policy position, the candidate of her party. Alternatively, by the same reasoning, she may presumptively be a candidate of the opposing party. In the first situation, both bits of policy information, the candidate’s express policy position and their inferred party affiliation, are consistent; in the second, they are at odds. Democrats and Republicans are deft at

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61 By way of warning, we want to underline that projection of effect sizes from our experimental setting to the world of actual politics is not warranted.
handling spatial choice when policy and party point in the same direction; both are more ham-fisted when they point in opposite ones.

We have spoken in categorical terms, contrasting the responses of strong Democrats and strong Republicans in particular. In fact, the relationship between party identification and the choice of which candidate represents a respondent’s position is continuous: the stronger Democrats identify with the Democratic Party, the more likely they are to pick the candidate to the left even though she is not their spatial favorite; the stronger Republicans identify with the Republican Party, the more likely they are to pick the candidate to the right even though she is not their spatial favorite. Here is a possible illustration of a reputation premium being paid to a candidate based on her party’s policy reputation as opposed to the proximity of her spatial position. The word possible deserves to be stressed, since this result is merely the beginning of a test of a reputational theory of party identification.

(i) The Policy Reputations of the Parties

On our theory, the policy reputations of the two parties are the mechanism governing party-centered spatial reasoning. In the Downsian paradigm experiment, the only information provided is about the candidates’ policy positions. We presume that the parties provide a framework for evaluation of the candidate’s policy positions; indeed, so immediate a framework that, among other things, some of their supporters can winkle out the party affiliation of candidates knowing only their policy positions. This chain of reasoning manifestly presumes that these

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62 We use the concept of mechanism in the sense that Elster has assigned it as a “frequently occurring and easily recognizable pattern” (2007, 36) providing a sense of how things work.
supporters know the policy reputations of the parties. What sense would it make to say that partisans can winkle out the party affiliation of candidates from the positions candidates take if they did not know the political outlooks of the parties? A test of this line of reasoning, albeit a low hurdle test, is whether there is an interaction between party identification and knowledge of the parties’ policy reputations. We therefore estimate the following probit equation:

\[
Pr(L) = \Phi[\alpha + \beta_1(PID) + \beta_2(L closer) + \beta_3(Reputations) + \beta_4(PID*Reputations)]
\]

(Eq 3.3)

The first two coefficients have already been introduced. \(\beta_3(Reputations)\) is a coefficient representing knowledge of party reputations (measured in the standard NES format). The interaction term, \(\beta_4(PID*Reputations)\) represents the caboose of the prediction equation, attached to test the hypothesis that partisans who know the outlooks of the parties are more likely to pay a reputation premium than those who do not.

Table 3.3 presents the results of the probit regression. Focusing on the coefficients \(\beta_1(PID)\) and \(\beta_5(PID*Reputations)\), one can see that there is a deep interplay between partisanship and knowledge of the party’s policy reputations. The influence of the former is conditional on the latter. Party identification has no impact on candidate preference for partisans who do not know the programmatic

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63 The test of knowledge of the ideological logic of the party system is the standard NES item: “In general, thinking about the political parties in Washington, would you say that Democrats are more conservative than Republicans, or Republicans are more conservative than Democrats?”
outlooks of the parties. They do not know that Democrats are generally more liberal than Republicans; so they cannot infer that the candidate on the left is a Democrat, and party identification is therefore silenced. On the other hand, party identification manifestly has a significant impact on candidate choice for those who do.

Insert Table 3.3 Here

To provide a more immediately intelligible sense of the meaning of the results in Table 3.3, Figure 3.5 translates the probit coefficients into the predicted probability of picking the candidate on the left as a function of strength and direction of party identification. The lines in the left panel track the responses those who do not know the policy reputations of the parties of voting for the left candidate. The lines in the right panel do the same for those who know the policy reputations of the parties.

Insert Figure 3.5 Here

Consider the difference in predicted probabilities, conditional on strength of party identification, depending on whether the candidate on the left (dotted line) or the candidate on the right (solid line) is the voter’s spatial favorite. The panel on the left shows the candidate choices of respondents who do not know the policy reputations of the parties. For this group of respondents, the probability of selecting the left candidate is roughly constant across values of party identification. In a word, candidate choice is unrelated to party identification for those who do not know the programmatic outlooks of the two parties.

In contrast, among those who do know the reputations of the parties, candidate choice and party identification are manifestly tied together. Both the
dotted line (candidate on the left the voter’s spatial favorite) and the solid line (candidate on the right the voter’s spatial favorite) slope downward, steeply, from left to right. And just as one would and should expect, over 80 percent of strong Democrats chose the candidate on the left when he is their spatial favorite. On the other hand, approximately forty percent of strong Democrats do the same when he is not their spatial favorite. The same is true for strong Republicans except the other way about.

What does this add up to? The canonical interpretation of party identification is a story about blind loyalty. Strong identifiers are more likely to stick than weak identifiers with the candidate of their party through thick and then, in good times and bad, when he represents their position and when he doesn’t. Figure 3.5 shows that – absent party labels -- party identification promotes party loyalty – but if and only if party identifiers know the political parties’ policy reputations. This suggests a rather different interpretation from the canonical one. Based on this figure, the more strongly partisans identify with their party, the more likely they are to use the candidates’ policy positions as proxies for their party affiliations. They then decide which candidate they prefer on the basis of the imputed party affiliation, favoring her if she likely belongs to their party, opposing her if she likely belongs to the opposing party. This is a story of loyalty, all right, but hardly a story of blind loyalty. Knowing the parties’ reputations is key.

This result definitely represents a passing grade on our theory’s report card, but as grades go it, it is not much better than a B-. One reason that it contributes only a modest amount of support for our line of reasoning is that there is another
quite obvious – and obviously plausible – line of reasoning that generates the same prediction. Why assume that it is one particular bit of knowledge – knowing which is the more conservative and which the more liberal party – that is pivotal? Isn’t it just as reasonable – indeed, more reasonable – to expect that what counts is political awareness and sophistication in general, not one particular bit of knowledge about the party system? After all, our measure of knowledge of parties’ policy reputations is a standard component of measures of political knowledge and sophistication in general.64 If knowledge of the parties’ political outlooks is just one of a number of indicators of the latent trait of political sophistication – and there is a good deal of evidence for just this – the right story to tell may have nothing to do specifically with political parties. It instead may a story of political awareness and sophistication in general.

The publication style in social science is: presentation of hypotheses; description of methods; then reporting of results – all written up as if everything had gone according to plan. But whether this is a fair description of other studies, it is not a truthful description of this one. We did not derive our theory from first principles. We did not even start out with an intuition about its key components – a reputation premium and the Order rule. We did start out with a suspicion that a body was buried. But when we dug it up, clue after clue led us away from our first suspect, The American Voter conception of party identification, to a quite different conception of it, one bound up with the policy outlooks of the parties. If we are

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64 Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996).
following the right trail, then knowledge of their policy reputations should be what counts, not knowledge of politics in general.

Consistent with previous research, we have assembled an Index of General Knowledge of Politics. The Index comprises four questions. Two are fixed choice: Whose responsibility is it to determine if a law is constitutional or not: and How much of a majority is required for the US Senate and House to override a presidential veto. Two are true-false: John Ashcroft is the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and Tony Blair is the Prime Minister of Great Britain. Considering the brevity of the Index, its reliability is rather impressive: alpha = .71.

The question is whether knowledge of party reputations in particular or knowledge of politics in general is a key to the special activation of party identification that results in a reputation premium. We re-estimate our basic regression, this time investigating the impact of general political knowledge as well as knowledge of party reputations, plus of course the interactions of each with party identification. Accordingly, we estimate:

\[
Pr(L) = \Phi[\alpha + \beta_1(PID) + \beta_2(L\ closer) + \beta_3(Reputations) + \beta_4(PID*Reputations) + \beta_5(Knowledge) + \beta_6(PID*Knowledge)] \quad (Eq \ 3.4)
\]

All but the last two coefficients in Equation 3.4 are part of a now familiar cast of characters. \( \beta_5(\text{Knowledge}) \) captures the direct effect of general knowledge of politics. \( \beta_6(\text{PID*Knowledge}) \) is the pivotal coefficient. If it is significant and

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65 We specifically want to thank Michael Delli Carpini for recommendations on items to form our short-form Index of Political Knowledge.
$\beta_5 (\text{PID} \times \text{Reputations})$ is not, then we know that the policy reputations of the parties plays no special role in triggering party identification in making spatial choices.

It is a banal truth that if people have knowledge of one aspect of politics, they are more likely to have knowledge of another. Bits of knowledge about politics accordingly tend to be treated as interchangeable. There is nothing that distinctively follows for reasoning about politics from knowing the number of justices on the Supreme Court as opposed to knowing the number of terms that a President may serve. Both are indirect indicators of political awareness, as near in diagnostic value as makes no difference. In contrast, a reputational theory of party identification inherently assigns a special status to knowledge of the parties’ programmatic outlook. Knowing that the Republican Party is the party of the right and the Democratic Party is the party of the left is the key to the policy menu of the American party system. The concept of a reputation premium posits that partisans will pay a support premium to a candidate of their party in exchange for the candidate representing the programmatic outlook of their party. If this line of reasoning is right, then knowledge of the parties’ policy reputations is not just another bit of knowledge. It is a crucial piece of knowledge.

Table 3.4 puts this line of reasoning to a test. It contrasts the efficacy, in generating a reputation premium, of one bit of knowledge, namely, (a one item measure of) knowledge of the programmatic orientations of the parties, vs. a (multiple indicator) measure of knowledge of politics in general. The key terms in Equation 3.4, it follows, are the two interaction terms. It is logically possible, but empirically unlikely, that both may be significant. It also is logically possible, and

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pragmatically quite likely, that neither will be significant, since the two measures of political knowledge naturally are correlated (r=.42). But supposing that our measures are up to the task of distinguishing them, the question is, Which of the two triggers partisans to support the candidate of their party the more strongly that they themselves identify with their party?

Insert Table 3.4 Here

The last two rows of Table 3.4 provide an answer. On the one hand, the interaction between party identification and knowledge of the parties’ policy reputations is significant (t-value = -2.2). On the other, the interaction between party identification and knowledge of politics in general is not significant (z = -1.3). In short, knowledge of politics in general is not the key to a reputation premium; knowledge of the parties’ programmatic outlooks is.

**Replication: Reputations of the Parties vs. Knowledge of Politics in General**

Ours is a party-centered theory of spatial reasoning. It is thus a source of encouragement to us to observe that it is knowledge of parties’ policy reputations, not knowledge of politics in general, that is the key to whether (unlabeled) candidates get a reputation premium. But we have been candid. We did not start with the idea of a reputation premium when we designed our study. Replication is called for.
Replication is standardly understood to mean a repetition of identical procedures on an independent – sample.66 There is much to be said for this approach to replication. All the same, we have adopted an approach that, although similar in one respect, is quite different in another. Like the standard approach, the test of the original finding is conducted on an independent sample. Unlike the standard approach, however, the second test is different, in measures always, in design sometimes, from the first.

This may seem a second-class strategy. If we fail to reproduce the original result, one plausible reason is simply that we did something quite different the second time than we did the first. True enough, but our approach seems to us first-class rather than second just because it is riskier. If one really has got hold of something, and if one’s understanding of what one has got hold of is on target, one should be able to carry out a quite different experimental procedure, yet observe an outcome that parallels the outcome observed in the first experiment. That it is the rationale for Party Prototype Experiment.67

If a person knows what a party stands for, she will know the positions that candidates of the party typically take. In turn, one way to test whether people indeed know the positions that candidates of the party should take is whether they recognize when a candidate of a party has taken positions that he should not take. Accordingly, in the Party Prototype Experiment, we test

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66 See the special number of PS 1995, which is devoted to the issue of replication.
67 The Party Prototype Experiment was carried out in Study 11.
whether respondents recognize that a candidate has taken stands at odds with those of the party whose banner she is running under.

Gathering an independent sample, we randomly asked one half of the sample:

Let me tell you about a person who says that he is a Republican. He supports more government spending and favors more rights for homosexuals. Would you say that he is a real Republican?

while asking the other half of the sample:

Let me tell you about a person who says that he is a Democrat. He opposes more government spending and does not favor more rights for homosexuals. Would you say that he is a real Democrat?

In this study, we have two measures of knowledge of politics in general, knowing much of a majority is required to pass a bill through the U.S. Senate and knowing who is the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. In addition, we have our measure of knowledge of the political parties’ policy reputations, knowing that the Republican Party is more conservative than the Democratic Party.

\[
Pr(Proto-Partisan) = \Phi[\alpha + \beta_1(PID) + \beta_2(Reputations) + \beta_3(Knowledge)] \quad (Eq 3.5)
\]

Table 3.5 presents the results of a probit regression of a test of knowledge of the prototypical policies of a party on general knowledge of
politics and knowledge of the ideological logic of the party system. The dependent variable is scored 1 if the respondent correctly rejects the candidate as a “real Republican (or Democrat)” and zero if the respondent incorrectly accepts the candidate as a prototypical Republican (or Democrat). The crucial issue is which measure enables citizens to recognize the protopartisans: knowledge of politics in general or knowledge of the parties in particular. Again, the answer is that knowledge of the parties’ policy reputations is statistically significant, while knowledge of politics in general is not.

Insert Table 3.5 Here

In short, both the replication experiment and the original experiment demonstrate that knowledge of the parties’ policy reputation specifically, not knowledge of politics in general, trigger in activating party identification.

(ii) Sharing as well as Knowing the Outlook of One’s Party

A reputational theory of party identification suggests two conditions for a reputation premium. The first is that a partisan must know the parties’ policy outlooks to reward the candidate of her party for representing her party’s program. She surely will be more likely to do so, though, if she also shares it.

We speak of “sharing” the outlook of one’s party. In laying out our theory, we gave a conceptual tour of the notion of sharing the outlook of one’s party. Here, we provide an operational one. Our focus is the overall policy reputation of the parties; hence our operational definition of sharing the outlook of one’s party is identifying
with the ideological outlook that one’s party is identified with. Democrats who classify themselves as liberal and Republicans who classify themselves as conservatives, we characterize as sharing the outlook of their parties (or “sorted”). Democrats who either do not classify themselves as liberal or identify themselves as conservatives, and Republicans who either do not classify themselves as conservatives or identify themselves as liberals, we characterize as not sharing the outlook of their party (or not sorted).68

The prediction then is, Sharing the outlook of one’s party contributes to the reputation premium above and beyond knowing its outlook. Specifically, partisans who share the outlook of their party as well as know it will favor the candidate of their party in proportion to the strength of their identification with their party. We therefore estimate, for those who know the policy reputations of the parties, the following probit equation:

\[
\Pr(L) = \Phi[\alpha + \beta_1(PID) + \beta_2(L closer) + \beta_3(Reputations) + \beta_4(Sorted) + \\
\beta_5(PID*Sorted) + \beta_6(PID*Reputations)] \quad (Eq. 3.6)
\]

with all the terms as they were with the addition of Sorted, scored 1 for sorted partisans and 0 for unsorted partisans.

The nub of the matter is whether identifying with the political outlook that one’s party is identified with independently contributes to a willingness to pay a

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68 In our studies, ideological orientation is measured by the location that respondents assign themselves on a 7-point scale. Positions 1-3 are defined as liberal; 4 as moderate or middle of the road; and 5-7 as conservatives.
reputation premium. The test is whether, for partisans who pass the first hurdle of knowing the parties’ policy reputations, the impact of party identification on candidate choice is stronger among those who share their party’s programmatic outlook than among those who do not. The results in Table 3.6 shows that it does. Even after controlling for spatial proximity and orientation on the policy issue, the interaction between party identification and being sorted is plainly significant.

Insert Table 3.6 Here

Figure 3.6 provides a graphic interpretation of the probit coefficients for party identification conditional on whether partisans are sorted or not. Here is the result for partisans who do not share the outlook of their party. Assuming, for the sake of exposition, that the left candidate is closer to the voter, the probability of supporting the left candidate decreases from 86 percent for strong Democrats to 75 percent for strong Republicans.69 It would, perhaps, be unfair to say that party identification is of absolutely no importance for partisans who do not share the outlook of their party—but it would not be outrageously unfair.

The situation is quite different for partisans who do share the outlook of their party. There is a steep drop in support for the candidate on the left as one moves from strong Democrats the gradient of strength of party identification to strong Republicans. Roughly, the probability of picking the candidate on the left differs by 35 points for strong Democrats and strong Republicans.

Insert Figure 3.6 Here

69 If, on the other hand, we assume that the right candidate is closer to the voter, the probability of supporting the left candidate decreases from 37 percent for strong Democrats to 30 percent for strong Republicans.
What do these results add up to? The candidates bear no party markings or labels. Yet programmatic partisans – that is, party supporters who know and share the outlook of their party – act as though the candidates’ policy positions are proxies for their party affiliations. The result: the parties’ policy outlooks are part of their spatial calculations even though there is no reference to parties.

Finding that substantial numbers of party identifiers recover two pieces of policy information, one party-centered, the other candidate-centered, even though they are supplied only with information only about the candidates’ policy positions has deep implications for the use of the neo-Downsian spatial model in contemporary political science. If the finding is valid, the standard account is under-identified. Accordingly, we conducted a replication experiment.

**Replication: A Second Test of Pre-coded Party Cues**

The mechanism underlying our interpretation of the Downsian paradigm experiment is pre-coded party cues. The candidates do not have party labels. But the association between support for government spending and the Democratic Party and opposition to it and the Republican Party is stamped in the minds of programmatic partisans. Tell them the policy and they will know, from the reference to the policy alone, whether the candidate is likely a Democrat or a Republican. That is our hypothesis. Our objective is to put this test this hypothesis of pre-coded party cues to a second, independent test. Just so far as policies are pre-coded, then a reference to a
candidate backing a policy should convey the same information as a reference to a party-branded candidate backing that policy.

What might the expression “convey the same information” mean? The strictest definition is synonymy. Synonymy, spatially defined, cashes out in positioning candidates, based on the policies that they support, at the same point on a left-right policy dimension regardless of whether party labels are attached to them or not. Synonymy so defined, would be proof positive that party labels are superfluous voters. Similarity seems a more reasonable standard: more reasonable albeit vaguer standard of the superfluousness of information.

The irrelevance of party labels as informational sources is the intuition motivating the Superfluous Information Experiment. To carry out this experiment, we mounted a separate study (N= 3,609).70 It is unreasonable to suppose that partisans have pre-coded any and every policy. But if the hypothesis of pre-coding is a useful one, it is fair to expect that they have pre-coded issues historically distinguishing the Republican and the Democratic Parties.

So we focus on a pair of core issues – government spending and government assistance for the poor. The experiment features two manipulations. The first has to do with policy direction. Respondents are told of the positions of a candidate for Congress. One half of the time, the candidate supports an increase government spending and more government

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70 Waves 7B, 7C, and 7D. See Appendix B for Study details.
efforts to improve the social and economic position of the poor.\textsuperscript{71} The other half of the time, the candidate opposes these policies. Half of respondents are thus randomly assigned to a candidate who takes liberal positions on two issues; the other half, to a candidate who takes conservative ones on the same two issue. The second randomized variation is the pivotal one. One half of the time the candidate supporting liberal policies is identified as a Democrat and the conservative supporting conservative ones as a Republican. Then, in all experimental conditions, respondents are asked to place the candidate whose policies have been described (and sometimes whose party has been identified) on an overall scale of liberalism-conservatism, where -5 is extremely liberal and +5 extremely conservative. In order to do this, they see on the screen a line anchored at one end by the label Extremely liberal and at the other Extremely conservative, with radio buttons to click at each of the 11 points from -5 to +11 inclusive.

We have christened this the Superfluous Information experiment, since the centerpiece hypothesis is that, for programmatic partisans, attaching party labels to the candidates adds minimal spatial information above and beyond the description of their policies. The more similar the locations of candidates with and without party labels on the overall scale of liberalism-conservatism, the stronger the sense in which the labels provide superfluous information.

\textsuperscript{71} Half the time, the specific reference was to Americans who are poor, the other half to African Americans who are poor. Making race explicit makes no difference
The columns in Table 3.7 show the mean locations, for candidates with and without party labels, on a left–right scale running from 1 (most liberal) to 11 (most conservative). The rows show the scores of partisans who know the policy reputations of the parties and share the outlook of their party (bottom row); those who meet one or the other criterion but not both (middle row); and those who satisfy neither criterion.

Insert Table 3.7 Here

Consistent with common sense, traditional partisans extract minimal information from the policies and the party labels. For example, they see a candidate who embraces two core liberal policies just to the left of center (x=7.47). Pinning a party label on her adds no information (x=7.57. And in both cases, the striking feature of their estimates is their variation (s.e. = .171 and 1.75, respectively). The same is true of their judgments of candidates backing core conservative policies. The mean location is just to the right of center with a party label (4.39) and without (4.51). Again, the size of the standard deviation is striking. In short, the policy signals convey scarcely any ideological information whether the candidates have party labels or not. Even after learning that a candidate supports a brace of core liberal (or conservative) policies traditional partisans have no confident idea that they are liberal (or conservative).72

Insert Table 3.7 Here

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72 Slightly more formally, differences between the placements with and with party labels are not statistically significant for traditional partisans.
Consider, in contrast, the judgments of partisans who know and share the outlook of their party. A Republican candidate who opposes government spending and government assistance for the poor they locate as definitely on the right – at 9.55, to be exact, and with a small standard error (.07). They key point, though, is they locate a candidate backing the same policies – but who does not exactly bear the Republican label – at just the same point on the liberalism-conservatism dimension – at 9.48, to be exact, and with an indistinguishably small standard error (.075). And just the same is true on the other side of the political spectrum. Branded and unbranded candidates espousing liberal policies are located at 2.28 and 2.25, respectively, again with similarly small standard errors (.07 and .072, respectively).\footnote{In all cases, these differences are statistically significant.}

The lesson to draw from the Superfluous Information experiment is thus an ironic one. Traditional partisans get no information from party brand names because they do not know what they mean. Programmatic partisans get no information from them because they already know what they mean.

V. Lessons from a Sterile Downsian Environment

For spatial theorists since Downs, two competitors take positions on a policy dimension. The competitors may be candidates. Or they may be parties. But it is never both candidates and parties. Our results show that partisans who know and share the outlook of their party recover information about the parties even when the only information that they are given is about the candidates.
This result fits the institutional logic of competition in American politics. One consequence of the separation of powers is that competition takes place on two levels – candidate and party. And this result applies only to those who understand the ideological logic of the party system and are in synch with it.

This result, however, raises an immediate question. What do they do with these four pieces of spatial information? Add them, divide them, take account of the distance between the candidate’s position with the programmatic orientation of her party – there are many possibilities. The objective of the next chapter, accordingly, is to consider a political account of how partisans who know and share the outlook of their party make use of these four pieces of information.

It is politics, not psychology, that concerns us. How exactly do the policy reputations of the parties constrain the policy positions of candidates running under their banner? How wide latitude do candidates of a party enjoy in the positions they may take and still be judged to have taken a position consistent with their party’s policy reputation?
Table 3.1: Partisanship and Candidates without Party Labels

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>-1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party ID</strong></td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Candidate A Closer</strong></td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>1487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pseudo R-Squared</strong></td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Dependent variable takes a 1 if voted for candidate "A" and a 0 if voted for candidate "B".
<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>(0.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party ID</strong></td>
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<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Left Candidate Closer</strong></td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **N**           | 1487   |
| **Pseudo R-Squared** | 0.36   |

**Note:** Dependent variable takes 1 if voted for left candidate and 0 if voted for right candidate.
Table 3.3: Partisanship and Knowledge of Party Policy Reputations

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td>(0.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party ID</td>
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<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Left Candidate Closer</td>
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<td>(0.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows Reputations</td>
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<td>(0.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1484</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R-Squared</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Dependent variable takes 1 if voted for left candidate and 0 if voted for right candidate.
Table 3.4: Partisanship and Knowledge of Party Policy Reputations

<p>| | | |</p>
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<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td>(0.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party ID</td>
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<td>(0.06)</td>
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<td>Left Candidate Closer</td>
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<td>(0.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows Reputations</td>
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<td>(0.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Political Knowledge</td>
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<td>(0.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party ID X Knows Reputations</td>
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<td>(0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party ID X General Knowledge</td>
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<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1482</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R-Squared</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Dependent variable takes 1 if voted for left candidate and 0 if voted for right candidate.
Table 3.5: Knowledge of Prototypical Party Positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party ID</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows Reputations</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>(0.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Knowledge</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N                           | 1463        |

Pseudo R-Squared            | 0.05        |

Note: dependent variable takes a 1 if the respondent correctly identified the prototypical position of the political party and a 0 otherwise.
Table 3.6: The Relevance of Ideological Sorting

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Candidate Closer</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorted</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification X Sorted</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R-Squared</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Dependent variable takes 1 if voted for left candidate and 0 if voted for right candidate. Regression run on the subset of respondents who know the correct ordering of the parties.
Table 3.7: The Superfluous Information Experiment: Mean Placement of Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Liberal Candidate</th>
<th>Democratic Candidate</th>
<th>Conservative Candidate</th>
<th>Republican Candidate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Partisans</td>
<td>7.42 (0.17)</td>
<td>7.57 (.18)</td>
<td>4.51 (0.15)</td>
<td>4.39 (0.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational Partisans</td>
<td>2.25 (0.07)</td>
<td>2.28 (.07)</td>
<td>9.48 (0.08)</td>
<td>9.55 (0.07)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
Figure 3.1. Idealized Downsian Electoral Competition

Candidate A

More Liberal Policy

More Conservative Policy

V

Candidate B
Figure 3.2: Respondent Self-Placement Interface

The next issue is government services and spending. Some people think the government should provide fewer services even in areas such as health and education in order to reduce spending. They are at 1.

Other people feel it is important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending. They are at 7.

And other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6.

Where would you place yourself on this scale or haven't you thought much about this? Please indicate your location by clicking on the button below the appropriate number.

Fewer services even in areas such as health and education to reduce spending

Important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Haven't thought much about this.
Figure 3.3: Candidate Placement Interface
Figure 3.4: Partisanship and Candidates without Party Labels by Left-Right Position
Figure 3.5: Party Identification and the Probability of Consistent Policy Choice by Knowledge of the Ideological Structure of the Party System
Figure 3.6: The Relevance of Ideological Sorting

Unsorted Partisans

Sorted Partisans

Probability of Selecting Left Candidate

Party ID
CHAPTER 4:
The Electoral Logic of Party Reputations

In this chapter, we present a theory of candidate positioning. The key, we believe, is the policy reputations of the two political parties. Candidates must take positions consistent with the policy reputations of their parties to collect a reputation premium. But what is the rule or rules that define “consistent with”? Our task is two-fold. The first task is to demonstrate that reputation-oriented party identifiers favor candidates of their party on the grounds that they represent the overall outlook of their party, independent of the specific policy positions that the candidates take. The second is to specify the range of positions that a candidate may take and still be judged to represent the overall outlook of the party by supporters who know and share it. The two objectives are connected. The basis for the theory of candidate positioning that we shall advance is the new theory of party identification that we are proposing. Since it is a new theory of party identification, the burden of proof is on us. And the best way to meet our burden of proof, as it seems to us, is to make plain just how strong the evidence is in support of the canonical theory of party identification.

I. The Canonical Theory of Party Identification

---

74 Provided, as we note below, that the candidates meet the Order condition.
On the established view, party identification represents an emotional attachment. This attachment characteristically is acquired early in life, more or less unreflectively. Gilbert and Sullivan perhaps overstate just how early and just how unreflectively, when they quip:

I often think it’s comical – Fal lal, la!

How Nature always does contrive -- Fal lal, la!

That every boy and every gal

That’s born in into the world alive

Is either a little Liberal

Or else a little Conservative?

Fal lal, la!76

Pre-adult socialization is the primary mechanism for acquisition of partisan loyalties. So children and young adults learn to think of themselves as Democrats or Republicans, through observation – and imitation – of their parents or peers. They do so painfully early – painfully, certainly for democratic theorists – often well before they have had an opportunity to develop their critical faculties or acquire a sense of politics and public affairs based on their own life experiences. Their parents – or in a stable party system, their parents’ parents -- may have had politically relevant reasons to identify with one party rather than another. So far as they identify with the party of the parents or grand-parents because it was the party

75 We say the canonical rather than classical view of party identification because the interpretation of The American Voter has regularly been reaffirmed, most notably, in Lewis-Beck et al (2008) and Miller and Shanks (1996).

76 Lolanthe, Act II. No. 14: Song “When all night long a chap remains.” On the other hand, there is gathering evidence of a genetic basis of liberalism-conservatism. See, e.g., Alford, Funk and Hibbing (2005) and Fowler and Dawes (2009).
of their parents or grandparents, their reasons are one, or two, or possibly more
generations out-of-date. Copying is a method of learning. But it is a learning of
political commitments without political content.

If party identification in its canonical conception lacks political content, just
what does it consist in? “[A]n affective orientation to an important group-object in
an [individual’s] environment” is the admirably laconic answer of *The American
Voter.*\(^{77}\) Admirably laconic we say because all the work is being done by one word -
- “affective.” Emotion, sentiment, feeling, the logic of party identification is the logic
of the heart. True enough, the classical theory recognizes that voters may amend
their party loyalties in moments of crisis. But even this concession is heavily
qualified. The “updating” of party identification is primarily done by the cohort
entering the electorate and responding to new circumstances, not by those with
already established loyalties. To a first approximation, to say party identification is
to say party loyalty.

And to say party loyalty is to say partisan bias. In the classic formulation of *The
American Voter:*

If party identification deeply influences the *partisan* character of a field of
psychological forces, it also will have marked effects on the internal
*consistency* of the field. Our conception of the role of partisan loyalties leads
us to expect this result. Identification with a party raises a perceptual screen
through which the individual tends to see what is favorable to his partisan

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\(^{77}\) Campbell et al. (1960, 121).
orientation. The stronger the party bond, the more exaggerated the process of selection and perceptual distortion will be.\textsuperscript{78}

Selective attention to information, and selective interpretation of the information attended to, are twin drivers of the “errors-and-bias” interpretation of party identification. This interpretation was put in memorably gracious terms by Stokes. “(T)he tie between party identification and voting behavior,” he remarked, “involves subtle processes of perceptual adjustment by which the individual assembles an image of current politics consistent with his partisan allegiance”.\textsuperscript{79} “Subtle processes of perceptual adjustment,” less graciously put, cashes out in a train of errors and biases driven by a desire that their party should be seen in a favorable light and the opposing party in an unfavorable one.\textsuperscript{80}

The partisan bias hypothesis has been incorporated into general model of motivated reasoning in politics. Integrating research on automaticity of responses and the primacy of affect in social psychology with experimental studies of political evaluation, Lodge and his colleagues have presented strong evidence of a large family of biases in information processing. For example, the stronger an individual’s

\textsuperscript{78} Campbell et. al. (1960,132-3).
\textsuperscript{79} Stokes (1966, 127).
\textsuperscript{80} There has been a friendly amendment to the traditional hypothesis of partisan reasoning, it is true. See Gerber and Green (1998); and Green, Palmquist and Schickler (2007). The amendment is friendly in the sense that its proposers wish to retain the largest part of the conceptual furniture of the traditional interpretation of party identification, in particular, the linkage of partisan and social identities, and above all, the premise of the stability of party identification. But if the amendment is friendly in a number of respects, it turns the traditional interpretation of partisan reasoning on its head in another. For it involves a claim that partisan learning, so far from being biased, is rational – indeed, rational in arguably the strictest sense possible, namely, Bayesian updating. This claim of rational partisan learning, it will not be surprising to observe, has evoked in response a counter-claim that the very findings presented as evidence of rational learning are in fact evidence of biased reasoning (Bartels 2002). The statistical presumptions of Bayesian updating, a wag has observed, are themselves being updated. This quip misses, however, the genuine deepening understanding of rational updating that has followed from the renewed debate over partisan bias. See especially Bullock (2009).
attitude about a political issue, the more motivated that they are to downgrade arguments at odds with her position on the issue, a disconfirmation bias, and the more uncritically that they are to accept arguments in favor of it, a confirmation bias. This tendency to believe that what one already believes is right, whatever one believes, is so strong that Lodge and his colleagues now speak of The Rationalizing Voter.

The paradigm of motivated reasoning is far-reaching. It is not just a matter of liking those who like what we like and disliking those who dislike what we dislike. It extends to how we react to the facts of the matter. "Just the facts, ma'am" was the trademark expression of the classic police show, Dragnet. But in politics, though not just in politics, the facts of the matter do not always speak for themselves -- even when there is a superabundance of information about them -- because it is not just a matter of the facts but also of their interpretation.

In an ingeniously designed study, Gaines and his colleagues (2007) investigated how partisans took on board information about two of the most thoroughly reported aspects of the Iraq war: troop casualties and the search for weapons of mass destruction (WMD's). They carried out four studies, starting about six months after the invasion of Iraq and carrying on through transfer of power to the Iraqi provisional government, they show that both Democrats and Republicans "held reasonably accurate beliefs (about casualty levels and the failure

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81 Taber and Lodge (2006).
82 Lodge and Taber forthcoming.
to finds WMD’s) and seem to have updated them as circumstances changed.” But although Democrats and Republicans agreed on the facts of the matter, they were very far from agreeing on their meaning. Democrats typically characterized the casualty levels as very large or large, Republicans as moderate, small, or very small. And as for WMD’s when it became undeniable that they were not there, Democrats concluded that they never had been there, Republicans that they had been moved or destroyed or not yet found.

If the emotional forces bound up with party identification influence the meaning that partisans attach to the objective facts of the matter, they surely will shape perceptions of candidates and their positions. Who doubts that the more strongly that partisans identify with their party, the more likely they are to perceive a candidate of their party as representing their position on issues of the day? No doubt, different reasons might be given why partisans perceive the candidate of their party as holding positions akin to their own. The strength of their emotional attached to the party may lead them to presume that the candidate of their party holds a position like their own. Or the process may work the other way around: again because of their identification of themselves with their party, they may presume that, because the candidate of their party holds a particular position, so do they. Either way, partisans are bad Downsians; and the stronger their partisanship, the worse Downsians they will be.

We propose to test the strongest version of the partisan bias hypothesis in spatial reasoning. Feeling an emotional attachment to a party, identifying one’s self

\[\text{\textsuperscript{84} Op. cit p.961.}\]
with it, predisposes party identifiers to perceive the candidate of their party as representing their position even when the unmistakable evidence before their own eyes is that the candidate of the other party better represents their position.

This hypothesis of bias is the last thing from a straw man. It was in fact our own view, and not just at the outset of this project but also a good way through it.\textsuperscript{85} For that matter, it was the view of anyone with whom we discussed the problem. Still, we felt that it would be an advance in knowledge – even if a modest one -- to demonstrate via a randomized survey experiment partisan distortion in judgments of spatial proximity.

To test the hypothesis of radical misperception, we examine spatial judgments about two competing candidates. One is identified as the Democratic Candidate, the other as the Republican Candidate. The positions of the candidates are fully randomized, and identified visually with arrows drawn to a specific point on a 7-point scale. To test for partisan bias of spatial locations, we estimate the following probit regression model of voter choice for respondents in the partisan condition:

\[ \text{Pr(Democrat)} = \Phi[\alpha + \beta_1(\text{PID}) + \beta_2(\text{Democrat closer})] \] \hspace{1cm} [Eq. 4.1]

The results of the regression are reported in Table 4.1. Both the partisanship of respondents and the identity of the nearest candidate are estimated to be highly significant determinants of choice. The negative coefficient for party identification indicates that Republican identifiers are less likely to select the Democratic candidate than Democratic identifiers. Similarly, the negative coefficient for the

\textsuperscript{85} More exactly, the view of one of us. See Van Houweling and Sniderman (2004).
dichotomous proximity variable indicates that respondents are less likely to select
the Republican candidate when their self-location is closer to that of the Democrat.

Insert Table 4.1 Here

Figure 4.1 displays a substantive interpretation of these estimates. The lines plot the probability that a person will choose the Democratic candidate conditional on which candidate is more proximate to the person and conditional on the person’s partisan ties. They allow us to distinguish, for supporters of both parties, two types of choice situations. The first is when spatial and party cues are consistent; the second when they conflict.

Insert Figure 4.1 Here

Obviously enough, when the two cues are consistent, partisans will be overwhelmingly likely to declare that the candidate of their party represents their view on the issue. To take one example, our estimates indicate that strong Democrats will pick the Democratic candidate 94% of the time when the Democratic candidate is closer to them than the Republican.\textsuperscript{86} Republicans mirror the behavior of Democrats. As Figure 4.1 shows, strong Republicans will pick the Republican candidate approximately 95% of the time when the Republican candidate is closer to them. The vital question, though, is how do partisans behave when spatial and party cues conflict.

To judge from Figure 4.1, party identifiers leap off the pages of \textit{The American Voter}. An extraordinary proportion of them declare that the candidate of their party is closer to them \textit{even when they are presented with incontrovertible evidence}

\textsuperscript{86} Again we want to underline that the numbers have no absolute meaning. They are relative to the test condition.
that the position of the candidate of the opposing party in fact is closer to their own position. For example, when the Republican candidate is their Downsian choice, strong Democrats will still pick their own party’s candidate 58% of the time. Strong Republicans are similarly susceptible to errors in spatial judgment. A strong Republican will pick the Democratic candidate 62% of the time even when the Democratic candidate is closer to the respondent than the Republican candidate. In short, our estimates indicate that respondent partisanship has a substantial impact on candidate choice. “Substantial” understates the result, one could argue. The spatial information is unambiguous and unequivocal. Yet, most who strongly identify with their party “misperceive” the candidate of their party as their spatial favorite when the position of the candidate of the other party, in fact, is closer to theirs.

Here surely is evidence of partisan bias in flagrante delicto.

I. The Canonical Theory of Party Identification

Party identification is a matter of social identity Campbell and his colleagues (1964) originally proposed and Green and his colleagues have subsequently extended.\textsuperscript{87} Prototypical examples of social identities include “working” or “middle” class for Democrats and “people of means” and “business executives” for

\textsuperscript{87} See Green, Palmquist and Schickler (2002) for a powerful statement of party identification as social identity. There is a subtle, but possibly consequential, difference, though, between their conceptualization and that of Campbell et al. For the former, identification with a party, though a consequence of identification with a social group, is an autonomous and predominant force; for the latter, identification with a party is secondary to identification with a social group. For authoritative broad-gauge reviews, see Johnston (2006) and Jacoby (2010). For an excellent overview of the social identity approach in the context of comparative politics, see Bartle and Belluci (2009).
Republicans. We agree that party identification is a matter of identity: but political rather than social identity. In American politics, the prototypical political identities are liberal Democrat and conservative Republican.

(i) Conceptualization

Every theory of party identification of which we are aware presumes that partisans are cut out of the same cloth. These theories differ only in their choice of material: “affective orientation” for one theory of party identification; “differential benefits” for another; “a running tally” for yet another; “social identity for still another; and so on. They disagree on the meaning and operation of party identification. They agree that whatever it means and however it works it means the same thing and works the same way for all party identifiers.

A desire for a universal theory is understandable, and for many problems profitable. But when it comes to giving an account about reasoning and choice in politics, a one-size-fits-all theory has long seemed to us a second-best strategy. There is more than one reason why it is a second-best strategy, but here is the first one that led us to this view.

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88 The social identity theory of party identification appeals to social identity theory in social psychology by way of securing a theoretical foundation. It is not altogether clear what work this appeal is doing. In the social psychological formulation, however, the signature feature of social identities is that they are situational and therefore fluid and transient. In the party identification literature, social identity is dispositional and enduring. For a sharp-edged analysis of the double barreled concept of social identity, see Huddy (2001; 2002). There also is a subtle, but possibly consequential, difference between the conceptualization of Campbell et al. and that of Green et al. For the former, identification with a party, though a consequence of identification with a social group, is an autonomous and predominant force; for the latter, identification with a party is secondary to identification with a social group. For an excellent overview of the social identity approach to poarty identification, see Bartle and Belluci (2009).

89 “Us” refers to Sniderman.
“Imagine two hypothetical voters. One is exceedingly well informed about politics, a daily and devout reader of the New York Times, who follows closely the major issues of the day, both national and international. The second, a Daily News fan, is hardly overburdened by the amount of time, or effort, she devotes to public affairs – in fact, looks only at the sports page and cares next to nothing about politics. Is it plausible to suppose that these two voters, asked to make a choice about who should be president of the United States, would make up their minds in the same way?”

It is similarly unreasonable to suppose that seeing oneself as a Democrat or Republican means the same thing for everyone. For some, identification with a party represents an “affective orientation,” a psychological attachment reinforced by emotion and habit. For others, their identification with their party includes identification with the outlook and policies that it is identified with. For them, part of what it means to identify with one of the parties is to hold a particular view of politics, and part of what it means to hold a particular view of politics is to identify with a particular party.

Why speak of a “view of politics” – as opposed to particular policy preferences – and what does this notion of a view of politics entail? The partisan we have in mind aims to make the most of the choices on offer. She aims to realize her policy preferences all in all, or as many as is practical.

The political parties organize the alternatives on offer. Thanks to their efforts, the choice set all in all takes on an ideological character. One party offers a set of liberal policy alternatives; the other of conservative ones. This overall ideological character of the alternatives is what we have in mind when we speak of a “view of politics.” There are other possibilities, we recognize. The divergence between the

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parties on the traditional values agenda is one; their divergence on the social welfare agenda is another. The advantages of these other views of a “view of politics” we leave for a future time to investigate, since there are no standardized measures of them at the present time. Hence, here and now, by a view of politics we mean a broadly liberal or conservative outlook on it.

From the classical view of party identification, it is heresy to speak of partisanship consisting of a conjunction of an ideological outlook and an emotional attachment. The classical view of party identification argues for the similarity of party identification with religious attachments precisely on the grounds that both are acquired early in life, and more or less reflexively in response to parents and peers. As Miller and Shanks write:

In seeking to describe the nature of party identification without direct reference to politics, it is sometimes helpful to turn to the example of religion as a comparison that is much more than an analogy. Party affiliation, like religious affiliation, often originates within the family, where it is established as a matter of early socialization into the family norms. In addition to the primary group experience, however, the maturing child has a clear sense of belonging to a larger body of adherents or co-religionists. The sense of self in the religious context is clearly established by the sense of ‘We are Roman Catholic,’ ‘I am a Jew;’ in politics, ‘We are Democrats’ or ‘I am a Republican.’”\(^91\)

The aptness of the simile between partisan and religious identification has been taken for granted. In fact, however, it is instructive just by virtue of its inaptness. Children of Catholics and Protestants become Catholics and Protestants by virtue of being raised as Catholics and Protestants; indeed, characteristically, by receiving formal as well as informal schooling in the doctrines of their religion. Their understanding of doctrine is imperfect, it is true. Judged by the standards of priests

\(^91\) Miller and Shanks (1996, 120).
or scholars, their views on doctrinal issues are likely to be superficial; indeed, may
on points of consequence sometimes be wrong or out-of-step with informed opinion
of the day. All the same, to be a Catholic is to believe certain things. To be a
Protestant is to believe others. And both Catholics and Protestants understand that
what distinguishes them is the distinctiveness of their beliefs.

Identification and doctrine are companion ideas in religion. It is their divorce
that defines the canonical conception of party identification. The partisan of The
American Voter faithfully votes for his party’s candidates, but has only a blowsy
understanding of his party’s fundamental political principles. Of course, the
traditional partisan has political ideas. But they characteristically are loosely tied to
one another, and still more loosely to identification with his party.

Ironically, the stock simile of party and religious identification is custom-tailored
for the new theory of party identification that we are proposing. Just as the
understanding of many adherents of the doctrines of their religion is imperfect, so
too, the understanding of programmatic partisans of the principles of their parties is
imperfect; even on points of consequence sometimes wrong or out-of-step with
opinions of the day. But they identify with the view of politics that their party is
identified with. For a liberal Democrat, to be a Democrat is to be liberal and to be
liberal is to be a Democrat. For a conservative Republican, to be a Republican is to
be conservative and to be conservative is to be a Republican.

Programmatic partisans know as well as share the outlook of their parties;
traditional partisans neither know nor share the outlook of their parties; and,
obviously enough, other party supporters fall somewhere between the two.
(ii) Operationalization

In distinguishing among party identifiers, we have chosen the currency of the realm. Party identification and ideological self-identification have been measured time and again, mainly (though not always) in the same way from study to study. The measures of partisanship and ideology therefore have sharply defined profiles. What goes with what has been pinned down, literally over decades. So in each of our studies, we can tell whether (the largest number of) our measures measure what they purport to measure.\(^{92}\)

Which is a very good thing for us, since we have overstated our claim to conformity to established practice. In fact, our measures of both party identification and ideological self-identification appear in two formats. One is the standard branching format, the other a scalar (7-point) format. Close comparisons show them to be equivalent, for the purposes of our study.\(^{93}\) A case can be made that the two are equivalent. For our part, consistent with the treatment of the NES branching format itself as two category variable (Democrat, Republican),\(^{94}\) we make a practice of presenting illustrative results in terms of partisan categories to demonstrate the reproducibility of findings across studies. In short, no measurement models; just plain vanilla indicators, one asking respondents to indicate whether they are a

\(^{92}\) See Cronbach and Meehl’s (1955) classic – and neglected – analysis of validity.
\(^{93}\) More generally, see Dennis and Li (2005). Available on request
\(^{94}\) See Miller and Shanks (1996, Chapter 6) for interpretation of the NES party identification measure, on grounds of stability, as a two category variable (Democrat, Republican).
Democrat or a Republican, another whether they are liberal or conservative; yet another testing whether they know the parties’ policy reputations.\textsuperscript{95}

This trio is combined in three steps. First, party identifiers are classified as sorted (Republicans who also identify themselves as conservatives plus Democrats who also identify themselves as liberals) and nonsorted (all other partisans). Second, partisans are given a half point for being sorted and also a half point for knowing the policy reputations of the political parties. Summing their scores, the Index of Partisanship those runs from party identifiers who neither know nor share the outlook of their party, to those who manage one or the other but not both, to those who both know and share the outlook of their party. For presentational convenience, though, we shall refer to those who neither share nor know the outlook of their party as traditional partisans; and those who manage one of these elements but not the other as mixed; and those who both know and share their the outlook of their party as either reputation-oriented or programmatic partisans. For the record, though, we conceive of this Index of Partisanship as a continuum summarizing differences of degree, not a typology defining differences of kind.

To provide a sense of how the portion of the electorate that identifies with one or the other of the two major parties is constituted in contemporary American politics, Table 4.2 shows the proportions of traditional, mixed and programmatic partisans. The first row reports the distributions from our first study, conducted in 2002; the second and third rows, the distributions from the NES 2004 and 2008.

\textsuperscript{95} We use the standard NES measure of knowledge of party’s policy reputations: “In general, thinking about the political parties in Washington, would you say that Democrats are more conservative than Republicans, or Republicans more conservative than Democrats?”
Insert Table 4.2 Here

The results from the three studies are similar, though not identical. In our study, a little more than one half of party identifiers qualify as reputation-oriented partisans, while a little under one fifth fall under the heading of traditional ones. In the 2004 and 2008 NES, the proportions of reputation-oriented partisans are slightly larger – 60% and 58%, respectively, while those of traditional partisans are almost the same size– 16%.

For our purposes, it is the similarities of the distributions across the surveys—between Knowledge Networks and the NES surveys—that is the critical point. Our Knowledge Networks studies are not anomalies.

III. Reputation-Oriented Partisans and Reputation Premiums in Spatial Reasoning

To say that a partisan is reputation-oriented is to say that, in choosing between candidates running under the banners of the two parties, she will take account of the programmatic outlooks of the parties, quite apart from the specific issues positions of the two candidates.\(^9^6\) We say “quite apart” because it is not our purpose to propose yet another errors and bias theory of party identification. For the purpose of hypothesis testing, accordingly, it is the actual position of the candidates that count, not the ones that partisan supporter might attribute to them by virtue of their identification with their party. Hence our hypothesis: the more strongly that reputation-oriented partisans identify with their party, the more likely

\(^9^6\) We leave open for future research the question of whether, in taking account of the programs of the parties, partisan attend to both or just one, and if one which one.
they are to select the candidate of their party on the grounds that her policy position is consistent with the political outlook of their party. A natural test of this hypothesis is a predicted interaction between strength of party identification and fulfilling the conditions of being a reputation-oriented (or programmatic partisan).

Accordingly, we estimate:

\[
\Pr(\text{Democrat}) = \Phi[\alpha + \beta_1(\text{PID}) + \beta_2(\text{Democrat closer}) + \beta_3(\text{Programmatic}) + \\
\beta_4(\text{PID} \times \text{Programmatic})]
\]  [Eq. 4.2]

where Democrat takes a 1 if the voter selects the Democratic candidate and a 0 otherwise; PID is the standard 7-point party self-identification variable; Democrat closer takes a 1 if the Democrat is the spatial favorite and a 0 otherwise; and Reputation-oriented partisanship takes a 1 if the voter meets both of the conditions for programmatic partisanship, discussed above, and a 0 otherwise. \(\Phi\) represents the standard normal distribution. To maintain some fidelity to political reality, we estimate this equation on the subset of respondents who face correctly ordered candidates, with the Democratic candidate to the left of the Republican candidate.

The key difference between our theory and the canonical interpretation of party identification rests with the coefficient \(\beta_4\). This coefficient captures the extent to which the influence of party identification is conditional on party identifiers knowing and sharing the outlooks of their party. This coefficient will take a negative sign, if our line of reasoning is right, the negative sign indicating that party identification plays a more influential role in the choices of partisan-oriented (or programmatic) partisans.
The results, reported in Table 4.3, strongly support our account. The influence of party identification is highly conditional on knowing and sharing the outlook of one’s party. Indeed, judging by the magnitude of the coefficients, the results indicate that party identification has more than twice the influence for voters who meet the programmatic conditions compared to voters who do not. Party identification influences the decisions of voters who meet the reputation conditions far more heavily than it does the decisions of voters who do not. The difference between the two types of voters, it is worth underlining, holds even after controlling for spatial preferences. The reason that programmatic partisans support their party is not because both they and the Democratic candidates have similar policy preferences. In this regression, we control for whether the respondent prefers the Democratic or Republican candidate on spatial grounds. Programmatic partisans distinctively support the party, even if the candidate of their party holds relatively distant views from them, in proportion to the strength of their identification with their part. And they do so, our results indicate, not by virtue of an emotional spasm, but by virtue of a recognition of the connection between party programs and policy outcomes.

Insert Table 4.3 About Here

IV: Candidate Positioning and the Reputation Premium: The Order Rule

It is our claim that partisans who know and share the outlook of their parties take account of two types of policy information – the policy positions of the candidates and the policy reputations of the two parties under whose banner they
are running. These partisans are considering the candidates’ policy positions in light of their parties’ policy reputations, the results to this point suggest.

In a general way, it is obvious that the candidate of a party who takes a position that violates the policy reputation of her party risks the loss of the support of partisans who know and share the outlook of the party. But what does this mean, exactly? How free is a candidate to deviate from the policy reputation of her party without losing the support of reputation-oriented partisans? And however broad or narrow the latitude that a candidate has in practice, what is the reason as a matter of theory that she can deviate so far, and no farther?

Several formulations are possible depending on the ambitiousness of assumptions about citizen knowledge one is willing to make. Our preference is for the least ambitious assumption. The rule defining when a candidate violates the policy reputation of her party that requires the least ambitious assumptions about citizen knowledge is this. As a candidate of the liberal party, the Democratic candidate must be more liberal than the candidate of the conservative party. As a candidate of the conservative party, the Republican must be more conservative than the candidate of the liberal party. More generally, party candidates must line up vis-à-vis another in the same ideological order that their parties line up vis-à-vis one another. We refer to this as the “Order” rule.

The Order rule is a necessary condition for a party candidate to show that she is lining up with her party. To say that it is a necessary condition is to say that any candidate who fails to satisfy it losses any benefit of the reputation premium. Whether she fails to satisfy it by a little or a lot is irrelevant. As far as candidate
placement, it is our hypothesis, though, that the Order rule is a sufficient as well as a necessary condition for collecting a reputation premium. A candidate of a party need only line up vis-à-vis her opponent in the same ideological order as their parties line up vis-à-vis one another to collect a reputation premium.

At the poles we have distinguished two forms of partisanship – traditional and programmatic. Our hypothesis is that programmatic partisans will be responsive to the Order rule, reverting to standard, candidate-oriented spatial reasoning when the rule is violated. But traditional partisans, being insensitive to policy considerations, will not respond to the Order rule. To test this double-jointed hypothesis, we add two terms to our basic probit regression model of voter choice:

\[
\text{Pr(Democrat)} = \Phi[\alpha + \beta_1(\text{PID}) + \beta_2(\text{Order}) + \beta_3(\text{PID} \times \text{Order})]
\]

where Order takes on the value of 1 when the Republican candidate takes a policy position to the right of the Democratic candidate and 0 otherwise, and the interaction term (PID*Order) represents the impact of party identification conditional on the candidates being aligned in the correct order.

The first column in Table 4.4 focuses on traditional partisans. Clearly, party identification has a significant impact on their candidate preferences. The more strongly they identify with their party, the more likely they are to view the candidate of their party as representing their policy preferences. No surprise here. The question is whether traditional partisans take account of the order of candidate positioning. The canonical theory of party identification predicts that they do not. If they do not take account of the ideological order of the candidates, the interaction term between party identification and the Order rule will not be significant.
Insert Table 4.4 Here

And indeed it is not, as the first column of Table 4.4 shows. To traditional partisans, it makes no difference if the Republican candidate is to the right of the Democratic candidate or if the Republican candidate is to the left of the Democratic. Traditional partisans are as likely to support the candidate of their party if she lines up in the wrong ideological order up vis-à-vis her opponent as the parties line up vis-à-vis one another as if she gets things right side right. The main effect of party identification is strong and independent of the order of the candidates. Traditional partisans choose on the grounds of loyalty and emotional attachment to their party, not on the basis of whether the position of the candidate of their party is consistent with the political outlook of their party.

What about reputation-oriented partisans? They know and share the outlook of their party. So they know and care whether the positions of the candidates are consistent with the policy commitment of the parties. Our hypothesis then is that the activation of party identification for reputation-oriented partisans is conditional on the policy positions of the candidates conforming to the Order rule. If the rule is satisfied, then the more strongly programmatic partisans identify with their party, the more likely they are to support the candidate of their party. But if the candidates do not conform to the Order rule, the strength of identification of programmatic partisans is irrelevant.

The third column of Table 4.4 makes plain that programmatic partisans pay a reputation premium only if the candidates satisfy the Order rule. Although the main effect of party identification is statistically significant, the magnitude of the
coefficient is small—about four times smaller than the corresponding coefficient for traditional partisans its entire effect is conditional on candidates lining up vis-à-vis one another in the same ideological order as the parties line up vis-à-vis one another. Indeed, when the Order condition is met, judging by the coefficients, the importance of party identification increases five-fold.

The mixed partisans, by contrast, fall somewhere between the programmatic and traditional partisans. Although party identification exhibits some force when the candidates violate the Order rule, it is a weak force, much less important than for traditional partisans. Similar to the full programmatic partisans, however, when the Order condition is met, the importance of party identification increases—though not nearly so dramatically as for the programmatic partisans.

V. Alternative Hypotheses on Candidate Positioning

It is our claim that triggering party identification of programmatic or reputation-oriented partisans is conditional on party candidates conforming to the Order rule. It also is our claim that not only must candidates do the Order rule to pocket a reputation premium. It is all that they need to do to pocket it.

The first thing to say about our claim is that it is not self-evidently true. Consider the everyday use of ideological labels. “He is a conservative/liberal,” we often say, meaning that he holds the principles of the political right/left. This categorical usage is a common, perhaps the most common, way that we use ideological labels. We can, and sometimes do, point to degrees of liberalism or
conservatism. But pegging a position or candidate as liberal or conservative does the job we most often want done.

The categorical use of ideological terms points to an obvious objection to the Order rule. Yes, party candidates must line up in the right order vis-à-vis one another – that is, in the same order as their parties line up – for their positions to be consistent with the political outlook of their party. But they must do more, one can surely argue. A Democratic candidate must be liberal; not just more liberal than her Republican opponent. There is all the difference between a liberal Democrat facing off against a conservative Republican and a conservative Democrat doing the same against an even more conservative Republican, one feels. To win the support of Democrats who understand the ideological logic of the party system and share the ideological outlook of their party, Democratic candidates must locate themselves on the left – and not merely to the left -- of their Republican opponents. Ditto for Republican candidates facing off against Democratic opponents.

An argument that candidates must line up on the appropriate sides, and not just in the appropriate order, is the last thing from a straw man. All the more reason, then, not to apply it mechanically to any and all party identifiers. Traditional partisans are bound by emotion and habit to their party, not the ideology of the party. This is not to say that they have no political ideas. It is to say that they do not organize their thinking around the ideological framework of the parties. Why, then, should their support for the candidate of their party be conditioned on whether she lines up on their party’s side of the ideological divide or not? It is a quite different matter for programmatic partisans. They know the ideological logic of the party
system. So they can recognize when a candidate is on the wrong side of the ideological divide. And programmatic partisans share the ideological outlook of their party. So they have a reason to punish a candidate of their party who lines up on the wrong side of the ideological divide

All of this has force, we recognize. But our theory posits that voters compare the positions of the candidates relative to each other. If our theory is right, candidates who satisfy the Order rule will collect a reputation premium, and they will do so whichever side of the ideological divide they position themselves on.

We test whether candidate order is a sufficient as well as necessary condition for a reputation-oriented partisan to respond on a partisan basis by adding two terms to our model:

$$\beta_5(\text{Offside}) + \beta_6(\text{PID} \ast \text{Offside}) \quad [\text{Eq. 4.4}]$$

where Offside takes on a 1 when both party candidates take positions on the sides of the ideological divide inconsistent with their party’s ideological orientation, .5 when one but not the other takes an ideologically consistent position, and a 0 if both take positions ideologically consistent with their parties’ reputations. As before, we estimate the probit regression for traditional and for programmatic partisans separately.

Table 4.5 contrasts the power of categorical versus ordinal formulations of consistency in triggering a partisan reaction on the part of programmatic partisans. Model A takes account of whether candidates line up on the appropriate sides, and
not merely in the appropriate order.  

Model B takes account of whether candidates lining up on the appropriate sides matters if one also takes account of whether they line up in the appropriate order. The first two columns present the results of two models for traditional partisans; the second two the results of the two models for reputation-oriented partisans.

Insert Table 4.5 Here

Consider the reactions of traditional partisans first. The more strongly they identify with their party, the more likely they are to choose the candidate of their party as representing their views. How the candidates line up is irrelevant – and that includes whether or not they line up on the appropriate side of the ideological divide as well as whether or not they line up in the appropriate order. But what else should we have expected? Why should partisans whose attachment to their party does not depend on ideological considerations care about the ideological location of the candidates?

But what about partisans who key in on ideology? Must the candidates line up on the right sides to get a reputation premium? Or is it sufficient that they line up in the right order?

The third column of Table 4.5 suggests that whether candidates line up on the appropriate side matters. Citizens’ identification with their parties kicks in if the candidates line up on the correct side of the ideological divide; it does not kick in, or not nearly with the same force, if the candidates locate themselves on the wrong

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97 The Sides measure takes a value of 0 if the Republican and Democratic candidates are both on the wrong side, .5 if one of them is on their appropriate side, and 1 if both of them are on their appropriate side.
sides of the ideological divide. This result, therefore, appears to favor a directional hypothesis.

It is ambiguous evidence, however. Whenever both candidates line up on their appropriate ideological side, they also locate themselves in the appropriate ideological order. The question is whether categorical information adds to ordinal information. Are reputation-oriented partisans even more likely to respond as partisans when the candidate of the party of the left has lined up on the left and not merely to the left of the candidate of the party of the right?

To answer this question, the fourth column in Table 4.5 contrasts the capacity of categorical and ordinal information to trigger a partisan reaction from programmatic partisans. The interaction between party identification and directional candidate position is now insignificant. In contrast, the interaction between party identification and ordinal candidate position is highly significant. For a reputation-oriented partisan, therefore, if the candidates line up in the right order—regardless of whether they line up on the right side. The magnitude of the interaction is also substantial—when the candidates line up in order, the importance of party identification increases roughly five-fold.

Still, it might be objected that races where the candidates take the appropriate side can take many different forms. The candidate of the party of the left may be just barely to the left of the neutral point; alternatively, she may be crowding the left pole. Ditto for the candidate of the party of the right. Perhaps, then, it is not just a matter of whether candidates the opposing sides of the ideological divide. Perhaps, it also is a matter of how far apart they are. The further
apart the candidates are, the easier it is to see that each represents the outlook of
their party; the closer together they are, the harder it is to see this. If so, the more
polarized candidates are, the better their chances of collecting a reputation
premium.

It would absurd to ask, in the context of the American party system, how
partisans would react if a Republican candidate were extremely liberal and her
Democratic competitor were extremely conservative. Candidate polarization, in the
context of a polarized party system, entails that the candidates are lined up in the
same ideological order vis-à-vis one another as the parties are lined up vis-à-vis
another. And there is no reason to expect that traditional partisans will take
account of how polarized are the candidates' positions. After all, traditional
partisans do not appear to care if the candidates reverse their order entirely; they
appear almost blind to the candidates' policy positions. The test of the polarization
conjecture, then, is whether the influence of party identification on candidate
preference increases as the policy distance between the competing candidates
increase. The answer is no, as the results in Table 4.6 makes plain. And the answer
is no for programmatic partisans as well as traditional partisans. For both groups of
partisans, the interaction between party identification and candidate polarization is
not even close to significant.

Insert Table 4.6 Here

Finding an absence of an interaction between party identification and
candidate polarization speaks to a signature characteristic of the American party
system, we would suggest. On all accounts of contemporary American politics,
partisan legislators have moved to the ideological poles over the last thirty years. This agreed-on fact of ideological extremism at the elite has raised a puzzle. How can legislators take extreme positions when their supporters have remained moderate in theirs?

The results in Table 4.6 suggest two observations. The first is that the traditional partisans are insensitive to the ideological positions of the candidate of their party because they are insensitive to the political outlook of their party. The second observation is that reputation-oriented partisans are insensitive to the degree of polarization of the candidates for just the opposite reason: because they care about the ordering of the candidates and not their placement.

Even so, a reasonable person may respond, judgmental shortcuts like the Order rule rarely are knife-edge. It must matter, she would say, whether the Order rule is violated flagrantly or just by a smidgen. Perhaps the lack of significance in the polarization regression stems from some quirk of the variables. Perhaps it matters, for example, on one side of the rule but not the other—that is, perhaps partisanship increases with the distance between the candidates, but only so long as they line up in the correct order. Or perhaps just the opposite.

Consider another test. We first subtract the Republican position from the Democratic position. Since higher values correspond to more spending, any positive difference means that that Democrat is to the left of the Republican—that is, he wants more spending than the Republican candidate. This candidate difference score, thus, runs from -6 to 6, with -6 representing extreme polarization, but with the Republican to the left of the Democrat; positive 6, by contrast, represents
conventional polarization, where the Democrat is far to the left of the Republican. We then estimate a now-familiar equation, interacting this candidate difference score with party identification, and controlling for policy preferences and Downsian proximity. The main difference in this equation is that we include the difference score as a series of dummy variables rather than as a continuous variable. This allows us to examine each value of the score carefully, and to see whether a sharp break in partisan behavior occurs when the candidates cross over each other. We focus on programmatic partisans.

We use a figure to report the results. In Figure 4.2, we plot the predicted probability of selecting the Democratic candidate as a function of the difference in positions between the candidates for programmatic partisans. The grey lines around each predicted probability represent 95 percent confidence intervals. Recall that, for all distance scores less than 0, the Democrat is to the right of the Republican and the Order Rule is violated; for all values greater than 0, the Order Rule is satisfied.

The key result from this figure is this: for all negative values of candidate distance, Democrats and Republicans behave almost identically—and they do not vary their behavior as the distance increases. Though the point estimates bounce around, members of both parties select the Democrat about 65 percent of the time regardless of the distance between the candidates: partisanship does not matter.

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98 The presence of many dummy variables results in an unwieldy table. Contact the authors for a copy of the table.
99 We arbitrarily assume that the Democratic candidate is closer to the respondents for the simulations used to produce the predicted probabilities. This explains the modest bias in favor of selecting the Democratic candidate in the figures.
when the Order rule is violated. Instead, citizens revert to the Downsian state of nature, basing their choice largely on which candidate is closer. Moreover, the probability of selecting the Democrat does not depend on whether the distance score is -6 or -1—in all cases, about 65 percent of partisans, both Democrats and Republicans, support the Democratic candidate.

By contrast, as soon as the candidate distance score becomes positive—indicating that the Democrat is to the left of the Republican—partisanship kicks in sharply. Democrats support the Democratic candidate with nearly probability 1; Republicans support the Republican candidate roughly 85 percent of the time.\textsuperscript{100} We thus observe a marked jump in partisanship as soon as the candidates order correctly. At the same time, however, this manifestation of partisanship does not increase as the distance between the candidates increases. It’s a one-time result that occurs just when the Order Rule is satisfied.

\textbf{V: Replication: The Order rule}

What are the key results? If candidates line up in the right order, they get a reputation premium. As important, they pocket the premium whatever side they line up on, and however far to one side they locate themselves provided the candidates line up in the appropriate order. This follows from our claim that reputation-oriented partisans evaluate whether candidates stand with their party not by comparing their positions with an abstract

\textsuperscript{100} Recall that this asymmetry is a result of assuming that the Democratic candidate is closer to the citizen in the simulation.
standard, but by comparing their positions vis-à-vis one another with the positions of the parties vis-à-vis one another.

This Order rule has the virtue of simplicity – not a small virtue considering how modest is the knowledge of politics even of the relatively knowledgeable citizen. It also has the virtue of ecological validity. Voters much choose between the alternatives on offer at each election. In a party system polarized at the level of party leaders and sorted at the level of party supporters, the Order rule produces the best possible outcome for partisans who share the outlook of their party.

Still and all, obtaining a finding that fits the theory using the data set that one used to develop the theory is not dispositive. Replication is required. The replication standard that we have set is reproducibility, in an independent data set, using different procedures that should yield a similar result if the underlying reasoning is right.

In both studies, the candidates wear party labels and are assigned randomly to all possible positions (except for ties). That is the fundamental point of similarity. But there are two points of dissimilarity in measurement. In the first study, the issue was the appropriate level of government services and spending. In the replication study, it is government regulations on business to protect the environment.\textsuperscript{101} In the first study, the dependent variable was, which candidate’s position on the issue represents the position of the respondent on the issue. In the replication study, it is which

\textsuperscript{101} The replication experiment was conducted in Study 11.
candidate’s position on the issue represents the respondent’s “general outlook on politics.”

On the basis of the findings of our first study, we should expect three results in the replication study. First, partisanship and candidate preference are more closely tied together for programmatic partisans than for traditional party identifiers when the candidates have lined up in the appropriate order, and the other way around when they have not. Second, it should be irrelevant for traditional and programmatic partisans, albeit for different reasons, whether the candidates line up on the appropriate sides as opposed to the appropriate order. Third, it should also be irrelevant how far to one or the other side they line up, provided again that they line up in the appropriate order.

Table 4.7 shows the correlation between party identification and candidate preference, conditional on whether the candidates are lined up in the appropriate order or not, and in both case, the absolute distance between their policy positions. The correlations are presented separately for traditional partisans, mixed and programmatic partisans.

Three findings stand out. For all practical purpose, it is irrelevant to traditional partisans whether the candidate of their party is in the appropriate order, or is on the appropriate side, or takes a position on the appropriate side closer to the pole or nearer the middle. Reputation-

---

102 Only respondents identifying themselves as Democrats or Republicans were included in Study 11. The party identification measure thus can take on one of four values: strong Democrat, weak Democrat, weak Republican, strong Republican. We are presenting the data in this form in order that the results are transparent.
oriented or programmatic partisans care entirely about whether the
candidate of their party conforms to the Order rule. If she does, their
partisan reaction is as strong as it could possibly be. On the other hand, if the
candidates do not line up in the right order, there is no partisan reaction on
their part. Mixed partisans – that is, party identifiers who either know the
outlook of their party or share it but not both – fall in-between traditional
and programmatic supporters. On the one hand, their partisan reaction is
strongest when the candidates conform to the Order rule, though not as
strong as the reaction of programmatic partisans. On the other, there is some
willingness on their part to tolerate marginal violations of the Order rule.

Insert Table 4.7 Here

VI. When Candidate Positions and Party Reputations Conflict

In a party system in which party leaders are polarized and party supporters
sorted, choices of candidates on their basis of their position or on the basis of their
party’s policy reputation characteristically coincide. But not always. Every now and
then, the Republican candidate will be the spatial favorite of liberal Democrats; the
Democratic candidate the spatial favorite of conservative Republicans.

In contests where candidate-centered and party-centered policy cues point
in the opposite direction, how party will supporters choose? Will party
identification count for more in the choices of traditional or of reputation-oriented
partisans? On our theory, programmatic partisans place their bets primarily on
policy outcomes on the basis of the programs of the parties rather than the positions
of individual candidates. It is not necessary for them to have a theory of party government to adopt this reasoning, though they may, at any rate in an attenuated form. All that is necessary is to treat the political outlook of the party as a better predictor of policy outcomes than the positions of individual candidates and to be concerned about realizing their preferences all in all rather than piecemeal issue by issue.

If this line of reasoning is right, reputation-oriented partisans should rely more heavily on party identification. That is, to realize their policy preferences all in all, they should weight the party-centered cue over the candidate-centered one. To test our reasoning, we examine candidate preferences when the candidates are lined up in the appropriate order and the candidate of the opposing party is the voter’s spatial favorite, estimating the following equation:

\[
Pr(\text{Democrat}) = \Phi[\alpha + \beta_1(\text{PID}) + \beta_2(\text{Programmatic Index}) + \beta_3(\text{PID} \times \text{Programmatic Index})]
\]  
[Eq. 4.5]

where Democrat takes a 1 if the voter selects the Democratic candidate and a 0 otherwise; PID is the standard 7-point party self-identification variable; and the programmatic index takes a 1 if the voter both knows and shares the outlook of her party and a 0 otherwise. We assume that the order condition is satisfied and that candidate from the opposing party is closer to the citizen—this way, the party cue conflicts with the candidate placement cue.

Insert Table 4.8 Here

The key result in Table 4.8 is the test of an interaction between being a programmatic partisan and the influence of strength of party identification. If the
interaction is significant, it is strong evidence in support of our hypothesis, since it indicates that party identification has a stronger influence over the choices of reputation-oriented partisans than over those of traditional ones. The interaction is indeed statistically significant. When spatial and party cues conflict, programmatic partisans give more weight to the party affiliation of the candidate than do traditional partisans. Judging by the coefficients, programmatic partisans place about twice the weight on party identification in this circumstance than traditional partisans.

VII. Caveat Lector

Reputation-oriented partisans, we claim, support the candidate of their party above and beyond the congruence of their position with hers. They pay a premium in support, in proportion, to the strength of their identification with their party. But payment of premium is conditional on the candidate of their party taking policy stands consistent with the reputation of their party – hence our characterization of it as a reputation premium.

Much hinges on specifying the meaning of the relation, “consistent with.” Of the various possibilities, we have proposed the Order rule. Candidates take positions consistent with the reputations of their party if, but only if, the candidate of the party of the left is to the left of the candidate of the party of the right. This is both a necessary and sufficient condition of collecting a reputation premium, we have claimed. All our results, both those that we have presented and those that we have not, are consistent with this claim. And the simplicity and ecological validity of
the Order rule provide a theoretical base for our claim. It is an extreme claim all the
same.103 Future research or further analysis may call for modification. It is our bet
that if modification is necessary, they will be minor.

103 There is a deep problem. According to our formulation of the Order rule, if the candidate of one
party is out of order, so is the other --wherever she locates herself. In our view, it is a defect of our
account that one candidate in the wrong order wrong foots both. We make this point explicitly
below.
Table 4.1: Partisan Bias in Spatial Judgments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat Closer</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N                         3034  
Pseudo R-Squared          0.4

Note: Dependent variable takes a 1 if the citizen prefers the Democratic candidate.
Table 4.2: Distributions of Traditional and Programmatic Partisans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Partisan</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Programmatic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Networks Study</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NES 2004</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NES 2008</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.3: The Programmatic Conditions and Partisanship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>(0.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party ID</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmatic Index</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat Closer</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party ID X Programmatic Index</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1257</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Results from probit regression. Dependent variable takes a 1 if the voter selects the Democrat and 0 otherwise.
Table 4.4: Activating Party Identification: The Order Rule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional Partisan</th>
<th>Mixed Partisan</th>
<th>Programmatic Partisan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.49</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat Closer</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td>(0.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Order</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.35)</td>
<td>(0.2)</td>
<td>(0.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification X Order</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>1333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R-Squared</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Results from probit regression. Dependent variable takes a 1 if the voter selects the Democrat and 0 otherwise.
Table 4.6: Activating Partisanship, Ordering and Offsides

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional Partisan</th>
<th>Rational Partisan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model A</td>
<td>Model B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.32)</td>
<td>(0.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
<td>-0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.1)</td>
<td>(0.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat Closer</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Order</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offside</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.4)</td>
<td>(0.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification X Offside</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification X Order</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R-Squared</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Results from probit regression. Dependent variable takes a 1 if the voter selects the Democrat and 0 otherwise.
Table 4.6: Polarization and Activating Partisanship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional Partisans</th>
<th>Rational Partisans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.59)</td>
<td>(0.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td>-0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat Closer</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.3)</td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polarization</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.2)</td>
<td>(0.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification X Polarization</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R-Squared</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Results from probit regression. Dependent variable takes a 1 if the voter selects the Democrat and 0 otherwise.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order Rule</th>
<th>Traditional Partisans</th>
<th>Mixed Partisans</th>
<th>Programmatic Partisans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Absolute Distance</td>
<td>Absolute Distance</td>
<td>Absolute Distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between the Candidates</td>
<td>Between the Candidates</td>
<td>Between the Candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violated</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(45)</td>
<td>(39)</td>
<td>(41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>-0.51</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(58)</td>
<td>(47)</td>
<td>(37)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Number of observations in the cell noted in parentheses.
Table 4.8: Conflicting Candidate and Party Cues

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmatic Index</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification X Programmatic Index</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R-Squared</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Results from probit regression. Dependent variable takes a 1 if the voter selects the Democrat and 0 otherwise. Run on the subset of observations for which the candidate from the opposing party is the Downsian favorite and the candidates line up in the correct order.
Figure 4.1 Partisan Bias in Spatial Judgments
Figure 4.2: The Order Rule—A Knife-Edge Result

Programmatic Democratic Voters

Programmatic Republican Voters

Difference Between the Candidates

Probability of Selecting Democratic Candidate
CHAPTER 5:

The Democratic Experiment: The Party System and Citizen Competence

Many partisans are old school: identifying with a party because it was the party of their parents or peers; concerned about whether the country is going in the right direction, to be sure; by no means blind to outstanding candidates from the opposing party; but, in the main and over the long haul, standing by their party, casting their vote on the basis of habit and emotional attachment, not considerations of policy, still less an overarching or broad outlook on politics. These are the party identifiers who appear on the pages of *The American Voter* – traditional partisans we have dubbed them.

Our aim has been to call attention to partisans cut from a different cloth. They are cognizant of the ideological logic of the party system and identify themselves with the ideological outlook of their party. These are the party identifiers who stand out in our spatial reasoning experiments --reputation-oriented or programmatic partisans we have styled them.

Our portraits exaggerate for effect. Traditional partisans have plenty of ideas about politics in their head, though not integrated with their identification with a party. And programmatic partisans do not lack for feelings for their party and its cause. Indeed, they may be more cast down than the traditional partisan by the victory of the opposing party (if personal experience is any guide). Still, the electoral significance of party identification depends on the alternatives on offer.
And in the contemporary world of American politics, with the parties massed on opposite sides of the ideological divide, partisans of all stripes will come down on the same side 9.9 times out of 10.

So we make no claims that every choice scenario we have been able to examine thanks to the power of randomization has practical value. Our findings are of value all the same, we believe. Party identification has come to be synonymous with a blind emotional attachment. Votes cast on the basis of party identification are, by definition, votes cast on the basis of habit and loyalty, not reasoning and choice. But we have shown that party identifiers who know and share the outlook of their party react on a partisan basis because they take account of the party’s policy outlook as well as the candidates’ policy positions.

Our findings throw a new light on theories of party identification and spatial reasoning, we therefore suggest; and so far as they do, throw a new light as well on the meaning of the democratic experiment. We therefore divide our concluding comments into two parts: the first reviews the empirical results; the second weighs their normative implications.

I.

(i) The Disconnect in American Politics Parties as Mechanisms of Representation

A contemporary master-narrative of American politics is a story about ideological cleavage. But it is a cleavage not between voters with opposing points of
view but between them and their elected representatives. In this narrative, the voters are moderate and restrained in their views. They have not veered to the left or to the right. Indeed, their views on issues of the day have remained remarkably constant over time. The contrast with their elected representatives could not be more striking. Thirty and more years ago, the Democratic Party in Congress, though liberal all in all, also included substantial numbers of conservatives, many very influential; while the Republican Party, though predominantly conservative, included a number of prominent liberals. Both parties have been transformed over the last thirty years. Both have become communities of co-believer; and what is more, communities of extreme believers.104 In this second narrative, then, the principal cleavage in contemporary American politics is between the electorate, which is moderate, and their elected representatives, who are polarized. The shorthand metaphor for this cleavage between the voters and the politicians elected to represent them is a “disconnect.”105

A stylized representation of this disconnect is shown in Figure 5.1.106 The curve in the upper panel of Figure 5.1 describes the policy preferences of legislators and political activists on a left-right policy dimension; the curve in the lower panel, the policy preferences of the electorate as a whole. There is a dramatic difference in the shapes of the two curves. The elite curve is bimodal, with each mode at an opposing on pole on the left-right policy dimension. Political elites are deeply divided ideologically and ideologically extreme. In contrast, as the second

104 For the breakthrough study, see Poole and Rosenthal (1997).
105 See Fiorina and Abrams (2008) for the authoritative presentation of this argument.
106 Note that this figure is borrowed from our colleague, Fiorina and Abrams (2008).
curve shows, the largest number of voters are concentrated at the midpoint of the left-right policy dimension. This is a disconnect, indeed. The political class, including elected representatives, are policy extremists; the electorate policy centrists.

Our party-centered view calls for an additional comparison, though. A handful of exceptions aside, legislators are either Democrats or Republicans. The electorate includes many who are neither.\textsuperscript{107} Our concern is parties as mechanisms of representation. The relevant comparison, it follows, is between party leaders and their supporters.

Figure 5.2 displays a stylized representation of the preferences of voters taking account of party. The solid curve describes the policy preferences of Republicans and Democrats on a left-right policy dimension; the dotted curve the policy preferences of Independents on the same dimension. Looking at the two curves together, you can see that the distribution of policy preferences is trimodal. Democrats bunch up on the left, Republicans on the right, Independents in the middle.

Insert Figure 5.2 Here

Figure 5.1 and 5.2, taken together, point to a connection, not a disconnection, between party leaders and their supporters. Both Democratic leaders and the typical Democrat are clearly on the liberal side of the continuum; while Republican leaders and the typical Republican supporter are clearly on the conservative side of

\textsuperscript{107} Another way to put the point is that one group, the political class, consists only of liberal and conservatives – hence the bimodality of preferences; while the other group, the electorate includes by construction many who are neither liberal nor conservative – hence the unimodality of preferences.
the continuum. Democratic politicians represent the point of view of Democrats, Republicans the point of view of Republicans, one is tempted to say.

This is a temptation to resist. The party system is an example of representation with a sting. Two features of Figure 5.2 are a tip-off why. The first has to do with extremity. Although party leaders and their supporters bunch up on the same side of the left-right continuum, they locate themselves in quite different neighborhood effects. The modal preferences are near the poles for party leaders, and midway between the poles and the center point for their supporters. In a word, the preferences of parties-in-the-government tend to be extreme; those of the parties-in-the-electorate moderate.

That is a disconnect, and a deeper one than it at first may seem. It is deeper because Democratic legislators tend to line up in close ranks and Republican legislators do the same. Each is, as near as makes the smallest difference, of one mind. In contrast, there is a diversity of views within each party in the electorate. Democratic supporters include large numbers who are centrist, even a substantial number who are conservative. Republican supporters include a fair number who are centrist, and some (albeit not many) who are liberal.

These differences between the parties-in-government and the parties-in-the-electorate are indirect clues that the operation of parties as mechanisms of representation may not correspond to the textbook story. This story is a story of bottom-up politics. Elected representatives respond to the policy preferences of those who elect them, in order to get their support the next time around. The recent record, though, is one of top-down politics. Party leaders did not move toward the
preferences of their supporters. It was just the other way around. The supporters of the two parties moved toward the outlook of their leaders. And we know this because we know that the parties-in-government polarized before the parties-in-the-electorate sorted. So the increasing proportion of Democratic identifiers on the left and of Republican identifiers on the right had to be a consequence, not a cause, of Democratic and Republican leaders moving Democratic leaders to the left. Party supporters thus followed the lead of party elites.

They did not follow them all the way, though. The leaders of both parties hold extreme views. In contrast, their supporters are moderate; indeed, without pretending to specious precision we would say, much more moderate than the leaders of their parties. The parties-in-the-electorate have not formed the communities of co-believers that the parties-in-government have. As Marx remarked in another context, differences of quantity at a certain point become differences of quality.

But if party supporters did not follow their party’s leaders all the way, they did follow them all the same. They bunched up on either side of the ideological divide in response to intensified party competition on ideological lines. This is top-down politics, not bottom-up politics: voters taking their lead from the politicians that they elect to represent them rather than their elected representatives taking their lead from them.

This top-down dynamic of party competition is a key to the difference between the reputational theory of party identification that we are proposing and the canonical theory. The canonical theory is a social psychologically-oriented. It
centers on socialization processes and reference group theory. The theory of party identification that we are proposing is politically and policy oriented. It turns on political dynamics -- polarization of partisan elites, the sorting of the electorate on a partisan basis, and the political mechanism connecting them, the policy reputations of the two parties.\textsuperscript{108}

(ii) Reputational Effects: A Puzzle

There is nothing original in proposing a theory centered on the concept of parties’ having policy reputations. The theoretical foundations for the concept of party policy reputations or brand names were first laid in the study of Congressional parties (e.g., Aldrich 1995; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Rhode 1902). The idea of party policy reputations has since been formally extended to the analysis of voting in partisan elections (e.g., Snyder and Ting 2002) and legislative accountability (e.g. Grynavski 2010).

Nor is there anything empirically original about making use of randomized experiments to demonstrate their influence of party brand names on candidate and policy choices of party identifiers. For a generation and more, experiments have been carried out demonstrating that partisans are more likely to favor a candidate or policy of their party if the candidate or policy is party-branded (e.g., Rahn., 1993; Jacoby, 1988; Squire and Smith 1988; Kam 2005; Merolla, Stephenson and Zechmeister 2008). Yet, notwithstanding all this formal and experimental work, there is a puzzle about reputational effects in politics.

\textsuperscript{108} For the record, we want to note that this dynamic of the last thirty years did not generate programmatic partisans \textit{de novo}. Rather, it produced a change in their proportions.
It may sound puzzling to speak of a puzzle about reputational effects. Certainly, there is no question that partisans are more likely to favor policies of their party if the brand name of their party is attached to them. But why the need to attach the brand name of the party to the policy. If the parties have indeed stamped their brand on it, it should not be necessary continually to remind their supporters of their party’s position?

A party has a policy reputation just so far as people have taken on board what it stands for, we would argue. The key to a reputational effect, it follows, is precisely that a reminder is not necessary. This may seem a merely negative point. It is a pivotal point. A proof of a reputational effect is the opposite of what it has been taken to be. Proof of whether people know what it stands for is that they don’t have to be told reminded of what a party stands for. It is the superfluousness of reminders that is evidence of a reputational effect.

This is the hypothesis that the Superfluous Information Experiment was designed to test. For party identifiers of the stripe that The American Voter has in mind, attaching the party brand names to policies will be uninformative since they are not oriented to the policy reputations of the parties. On the other hand, for party identifiers of the stripe that we have in mind, attaching brand names will be superfluous, precisely because they are oriented to the policy reputations of the parties. The same outcome but for two different reasons – that is the prediction.

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109 The question here, it is worth underlining, is not whether party labels can evoke a favorable response from party supporters. It is rather whether they are informative, that is, convey policy information for partisans who are not reputation-oriented.
And that is the finding. For traditional partisans, neither knowing nor caring about the policy reputations of the parties, party brand names are uninformative. They perceive candidates backing the signature policies of their party as centrist. And they do so whether the candidates have party labels or not. On the other hand, party labels are superfluous for more programmatic partisans just because they know and care for the policy reputations of the parties. Identifying with the political outlook that their party identified with, party labels are superfluous.

And this is evidence of just how successful modern political parties are at their mission. They have effectively communicated their basic purpose to the majority of the electorate. They have supplied the critical pieces of information to voters. On the order of seven out of ten citizens—and fully three-quarter of partisans—know that the Democratic Party is to the left of the Republican Party.

(iii) A Party-Centered Theory of Spatial Reasoning

A reputational theory of party identification and spatial reasoning must address three questions: do partisans take account of the policy reputations of the parties, in addition to the policy positions of the candidates, in making policy-based choices between candidates? If so, how exactly do they combine the two? And with what consequences?

In the Downsian and neo-Downsian framework, voters chose between two competitors based on their positions on a policy dimension. The competitors may be – and usually are – candidates, though they may be – and sometimes – are political parties. But in the Downsian and neo-Downsian framework, it is one or the
other. In contrast, it is our claim that often it is both, simultaneously. There are four pieces of information in the policy space, not two – the policy positions of the two candidates plus the policy reputations of the two parties.

The claim that spatial reasoning is party-centered as well as candidate-centered is the heart of our account. We therefore have put it to the toughest test that we could come up with – provide respondents with information only about the policy positions of the candidates and see if they nonetheless also make use of the policy reputations of the parties.

Hence the design of the Downsian experiment. Respondents learn the policy positions of the candidates. And that is all that they learn. They are not even told the names of the candidates, since names can be indirect cues to their party affiliation. Instead, the candidates are simply denominated Candidate A and Candidate B. Respondents are asked to choose the candidate who best represents their position. The only information that they have to work with is therefore the policy positions of the candidates. Their policy positions are unambiguous. What is more, their positions are presented in an explicitly spatial format. So we have not only suppressed any references to political parties or their policy reputations. We have done everything in our power to center their choices on the policy positions of the candidates.

Yet, many partisans take account of the policy reputations of the parties, in addition to the policy positions of the candidates, in choosing between candidates on policy grounds. That is the conclusion that we have drawn from the Downsian Experiment. The more strongly Democrats identify with their party, the more likely
they are to support the more liberal of the two candidates – *if but only if they know the policy reputations of the parties.* And exactly the same holds for Republicans. The more strongly they identify with their party, the more likely they are to support the more conservative of the two candidates – *if but only if they know the policy reputations of the parties.*

This is an even stronger result that it at first may seem to be. A large body of research could be cited in support of the hypothesis that it is people’s overall level of knowledge of politics – or their level of political sophistication, if you will – that conditions the extent to which they will engage in policy-based reasoning. That is what we ourselves thought in the earliest stages of this research project. As we worked through the premises of our approach, though, we saw our line of reasoning committed us instead to the hypothesis that one specific piece of knowledge is pivotal – namely, knowledge of the parties’ policy reputations. It is true that people who know a good deal about politics (relatively speaking) are very likely also to have this particular piece of knowledge. But that is just the point. The test of the theory that we have conducted is not a test of the null hypothesis – namely, that there is no difference between in the bases of choice between those who know the

110 It happens that the results in our experiments are knife-edged: the influence of party identification is highly significant for those who know the policy reputations of the parties, statistically insignificant for those who do not. It is not a requirement of our theory that party identification necessarily go to zero in all situations and for all respondents who do not know the parties’ policy reputations. Some third factor can kick in.

111 We repeat the same caution.

112 The pivotal research determining the direction that the National Election Studies would go is Zaller (1986) See also Luskin (1987), and Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock (1991) and Zaller (1992). For a contrary view, presented at the same NES study design conference as Zaller’s, see Iyengar (1986). The findings in our study are more consistent with Iyengar’s than Zaller and Luskin’s and Sniderman’s approach.
policy reputations of the parties and those who do not. The test that we have conducted is more demanding. It is whether possessing that particular piece of knowledge, as against having knowledge about politics in general, is pivotal. Consistent with the theory we are proposing, it is knowledge of the parties’ policy reputations in particular, not of politics in general, that is pivotal.

There is a second key finding of the Downsian Experiment. Again it is true both of Republicans and Democrats who know the policy reputations of the parties. The more strongly that they identify with their party, the more likely they are to support the candidate whose policy position is closer to their party’s policy reputation – if but only if they share the political outlook of their party.

And what is the evidence for a conclusion that they are taking account of the policy reputations of the parties? It is not their saying that they are taking account of it; nor their saying that their party’s programs is one of their reasons for choosing between candidates. It is observing who exactly is doing what. The more strongly partisans identify with their party – provided that they know and share the outlook of their party -- the more likely they are to support the candidate whose position is closer to the outlook of their party.

We continue, even so, to have some discomfort about the use of the term ‘theory.’ Partly, it is because the term has a specific meaning in the study of spatial reasoning. Partly, it is because the term so often is deployed for brow-beating. We stick with it because a chief benefit of a theory is that it commits one to predictions that one would rather not make.

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113 See Meehl (1991) on the limited utility of testing against the null.
Such is our lot here. The most direct test of a reputational theory of party identification is choices made in the face of conflicting candidate-centered and party-centered calculations. When the two conflict, we are committed to a prediction that in this situation programmatic partisans will respond a more partisan basis than traditional partisans. Writing this prediction down on paper makes us uncomfortable even now. Virtually the defining characteristic of traditional partisans is blind loyalty, after all. How can it be that party identification will exert a stronger influence reputation-oriented partisans than on traditional partisans?

In a party system polarized at the level of the parties-in-government and sorted at the level of the parties-in-the-electorate, the candidate of their party is almost always the spatial favorite of programmatic partisans. But not absolutely always. And if a programmatic partisan might herself having to choose between the candidate of her party and the candidate whose position is closer to hers, how should she choose?

We assume that she wants to maximize her policy preferences all in all. We also assume that the candidate of her party, though not adopting the position closer to hers, has taken a position consistent with the programmatic outlook of her party.\footnote{We discuss below the meaning of “consistent with.” Here we would only refer to the findings that the influence of party identification on choices of programmatic partisans goes to zero when the candidate of their party takes a position inconsistent with the programmatic outlook of their party.} If so, a programmatic partisan should cast their lot with the candidate of their party; and the more strongly she identifies with her party, the more likely that she should do so.
The position of traditional partisans is more problematic. It would be a
caricature of the party identifier of *The American Voter* to suggest that she is
indifferent to the positions that candidates take. Then again, they are highly
susceptible to partisan bias. So, in the real world, they will more or less
automatically presume that the position of the candidate of their party is closer to
theirs. Our experimental setting, however, makes plain that it is the position of the
candidate of the other party is closer to theirs. Traditional partisans thus find
themselves, in our spatial reasoning experiment, in a more challenging quandary
than do programmatic partisans. A fairer, if less daring, prediction then is: the
degree to which traditional partisans lend support to co-partisan candidates is not
conditional on the locations of the candidates.

Reputation-oriented partisans are policy-oriented partisans *par excellence.*
One would not need to break a sweat to construct a their argument that they should
fix their attention solely on the policy positions of the candidates; and, at the least,
refrain from awarding a reputation premium to a candidate of their party who
violates the warranted expectation that she should be their spatial favorite. And yet,
party identification has a stronger impact on programmatic than traditional
partisans in our experiment. It seems a reasonable inference that it will have an
impact at least comparable in strength in the real world.

From these and others of our experiments, we draw the following conclusion.
Candidate-centered policy calculations are a component of choices between
candidates for partisans of all stripes. But party-centered calculations are an
integral component of the choices of party identifiers who know and share the outlook of their party.

b) Under What Conditions Do Programmatic Partisans Use Party-Centered Policy Information?

Our aim is to develop a behavioral, not a normative, theory of party identification and spatial reasoning – an account of the ways in which party identifiers decide between candidates, not the way that they should decide from a God’s eye perspective.

The thrust of previous research on party identifications is that the positions of candidates are all but irrelevant. The more strongly that partisans identify with their party, the more likely that they are to support the candidate of their party – period. So it is with traditional partisans. But according to our theory, programmatic partisans take account of the policy reputations of the parties as well as the policy positions of the candidates. The second question our theory must answer then is: what does it mean to take account of both sources of policy information? If they take account of both, they must combine them somehow? But how? How far may candidates stray from the policy reputations of their parties without straying too far?

To answer these questions is the job of a theory of party identification and spatial reasoning. But if it is obvious that a theory must provide an answer, the answer that our theory provides is by no means obvious. Candidates’ positions will
be consistent with the policy reputations of their party if they line up vis-à-vis one
another in the same ideological order as their parties line up vis-à-vis one another.
This requirement we have dubbed the Order rule.

It is easy to see that the Order rule is a necessary condition for a candidate’s
position to be consistent with the policy reputation of her party. How could a
Democratic candidate who is even more conservative than her Republican
opponent, or a Republican candidate who is even more liberal than her Democratic
opponent, possibly bamboozle supporters of their party who know and care about
their party outlook into believing that they are backing its program? The real
question is whether the Order rule is a sufficient as well as necessary condition to
stamp a candidate’s policy positions as consistent with the policy outlook of her
party?

Consistent with common sense, it could be objected that a Democrat
(Republican) must line up on the left (right), and not merely to the left (right) of her
opponent to hold a position consistent with her party’s policy reputation. This
common sense argument can be amped up. Lining up to the left or right of the
center should not suffice, according to directional theories of spatial reasoning. To
be compelling representatives of their respective party programs, Democratic
candidate must line up definitely and enthusiastically on the left, a Republican
candidate definitely and enthusiastically on the right. Both common sense and
directional theory conjectures are plausible. But we can find no evidence in our
experiments in support of either. Subsequent studies or more sensitive analyses
may call for modification. But to a first approximation, our findings indicate that all
that candidates need to do to reap the full benefit of a reputation premium is to line up vis-à-vis one another in the same ideological order as their parties line-up vis-à-vis one another.

The third question a reputational theory of partisanship and spatial reasoning must answer is: what are the consequences of candidates’ taking policy positions consistent with the policy reputations of their parties? A premium in support for taking a position consistent with the party’s policy reputation.

Candidates only receive a reputation premium from party identifiers who know and share the outlook of their party. And the size of their premium depends on the strength of their identification: the more strongly that they identify with their party, the greater the likelihood that they will favor the candidate of their party for taking a position consistent with their party’s outlook.

(iv) Some Cautions and Qualifications

It is asking a lot to ask spatial theorists to accept the concept of a reputation premium, we recognize. Voters choose the candidate whose position is closer to theirs in the neo-Downsian framework. Yes, allowances can be made for a family of forms of uncertainty; also, for adjusting best choices in the light of institutional factors, such as divided government or coalition formation. But that is as far spatial theorists have been willing to go. The rest is non-policy, non-rational, and the poster-child non-policy, non-rational factor is party identification.

There is a strong incentive to shoe-horn our results into an off-the-shelf account, we recognize. Recognizing that some substantial numbers of voters make spatial
choices based on party-centered as well as candidate-centered policy information will not make the mathematics of spatial theory simpler. Possibly, a party-centered judgment is a background consideration akin to institutional calculations based on coalition formation or divided government albeit with the effect of reinforcing party loyalty rather than party defection. Alternatively, a more psychologically-oriented explanation may be recruited. Party-centered judgments sharpen or accentuate or crystallize candidate-centered ones, the reasoning might run. For our purposes, it will suffice if it is accepted that assessments of the positions of candidates of a party are made, at least by those who know and share the outlook of their party, in the light of the overall policy outlook of their party.

A more substantial source of discomfort for us is the unconditional empirical support that the Order rule receives. The strength of support for a hypothesis is not a standard complaint for researchers to make, admittedly. What troubles us is this. If the candidate of one party wrongfoots the candidate of the other party by lining up on the wrong side of her, both lose the benefit of being judged to represent the outlook of their party. This is not self-evidently obvious. Why should a liberal Democrat forfeit a premium for representing the program of her party because she is challenged by an even more liberal Republican?

We can think of responses. In a party system polarized at the level of party leaders and sorted at the level of their supporters, a race between a (modally very) liberal Democrat and a still more liberal Republican is an anomaly – a quite exceptional anomaly – just as a race between a (modally very) conservative Republican and an even more conservative Democrat is an exception anomaly.
Either would be recognized an exceptional anomaly by a partisan who understands the big picture of American parties. She would still favor the candidate of her party if he was her spatial favorite. Also she would give him a nod for being a representative of her party. But she would recognize that the world is out of joint - there is something obviously weird in the way that the candidates have lined up -- and not confer the additional premium for representing the outlook of her party. This strikes us as a reasonable conjecture. But it is a conjecture all the same.

A different concern is the ‘light switch’ character of the Order rule. If the candidate of the party of the left is, so to speak, one inch to the right of the candidate of the party of the right, programmatic partisans do not react on a partisan basis. They support the candidate of their party if her position is closer to theirs. But they do not pay a reputation premium. On the other hand, if the candidate of the party of the left is, so to speak, one inch to the left of the of the candidate of the party of the right, candidates of both parties collect a full reputation premium.

The light-switch character of satisfying the Order rule may be a product of an experimental setting in which the positions of both candidates are presented in an unambiguous spatial format. If so, this is a less formidable problem than it may seem. In a party system polarized at the level of party leaders, there are few races where the Republican and Democratic candidates crowd up against one another ideologically. Even so, we think it a reasonable bet that our findings are only a first approximation.

(v) A Supply-Side Perspective on Party Identification and Spatial Reasoning
In a party system that is polarized at the level of elites and sorted at the level of party supporters, the candidate of their party is overwhelmingly likely to be their candidate-centered spatial favorite for partisans who know and share the outlook of their party. Why, then, the need for a party-centered theory of choice in addition to a candidate-centered one, if they both tend to cash out the same?

Our objective has been to understand how a large number of voters make policy-grounded choices. To accomplish this objective, we have developed a reputational theory of party identification and party-centered spatial reasoning. Theory is a prestige-claiming word. But who makes party-centered spatial choices, how they combine party-centered and candidate-centered policy information, and with what consequences? A party-centered theory of spatial reasoning brings gains, we believe. Above all, it brings out the supply-side role of parties.

Most obviously, recognizing the supply side role of parties provides the basis for a theory of motivation for policy-based reasoning. We have focused on party identification, which is arguably the most prominent component of demand-side non-policy theories of voting. Our study has provided evidence, for yet one more time, in support of this approach. Indeed, thanks to the advantages of experimental randomization, it has provided particularly strong evidence in support of the accepted errors-and-bias interpretation of party loyalty. Traditional partisans, we have seen, are overwhelmingly likely to support the candidates of their party, even when they have taken a position blatantly at odds with the policy reputation of their party, and regardless of whether their party’s candidate is their spatial favorite or not.
Theories of spatial reasoning have lacked an adequate theory of motivation, though. The presumption has been voters’ policy preferences supply all the motive force necessary for voters’ to learn the policy positions of competing candidates. It cannot be said that this is a self-evident proposition in the context of fifty years of research on public opinion. Nor can spatial theorists lean on behavioral studies of party identification to get the motivational fuel to run an engine of policy reasoning. On the contrary, on the canonical view of party identification, parties are passive, mere objects of emotional attachment engendered by socialization without regard to public policy. In contrast, a supply-side perspective recognizes the active role of parties in binding their supporters to their cause. Parties invest in attracting new supporters, and strengthening the attachment of the supporters they already have enlisted. They are in the billboard business, as we have said, and every other advertising business, we would add. And the wares that they advertise very much include their policies and the political outlook that they stand for.

Advertising seems, to us, an apt metaphor. It has become a convention to ring fence cognition from emotion. But a successful advertiser gets people to think what she wants them to think by getting them to feel what will encourage them to think what she wants them to think. And she gets them to feel what she wants them to feel by encouraging them to think what will lead them to feel what she wants them to feel. Belief feeds off emotion; emotion off belief. So the parties strategically use each to strengthen the other and both to bind as many of their supporters as possible to the policies and political outlook that they stand for. By contrast, an
identification with a party provides a motive force to learn what one has to learn and to do what one has to do to get spatial choices right.

An account emphasizing the supply-side role also provides legs for a theory of ideology. It is not necessary to suppose that any substantial number of voters have an innate cleverness at conjuring up judgmental shortcuts, allowing them to achieve ideological coherence on the cheap. It is what is happening outside the minds of voters, not what is going inside them, that provides the jumping off point for an account of ideological coherence. The parties coordinate the alternatives on offer by bundling policies. They also stamp their brand on these policy bundles. The result is that partisans do not have to connect all the ideological dots. Nor do they need to amass a large body of knowledge about politics and public affairs. They do need to learn the parties’ policy reputations, it is true. But it is coordination of the alternatives on offer by the parties that is the condition of the possibility of their making politically consistent choices across policies.

A supply-side perspective also provides a basis for a theory of the low-dimensionality of choice sets and thereby the external constraints for consistency of choices across policies.115 A handful of exceptions aside, studies of spatial reasoning have proceeded on the assumption of candidates competing on a single left-right dimension. This has been an assumption of convenience. Calculation of a dominant policy position in a multi-dimensional space has not been tractable.116 Political

115 This is a point that others have made in different contexts. We ourselves are indebted to Stimson’s work. See, for example, Stimson (2004). The emphasis on consistency of choice, however, is ours.
116 Canonically, consider McKelvey’s chaos theorem (1976). True, in some contexts, it may possible to find stability in multidimensional policy environments (Shepsle 1979). The key point, though, is that
parties, however, are the mechanism par excellence for minimizing the dimensionality of the policy space.

Finally, our supply-side perspective on spatial reasoning hooks up with on-going research on cycles of policy polarization and ideological divergence. In the contemporary era certainly, and in previous ones quite likely, the parties-in-the-government moved apart in response to ideologically motivated activists; to financial contributors; to politicians ambitious to achieve policy goals, among others.\textsuperscript{117} In turn, more and more voters increasingly came to see the differences between the parties-in-government as both large and important.\textsuperscript{118} And so a gradually widening fissure opened up between the parties-in-the-electorate began a process of divergence.

\textbf{(vi) Citizen Competence: A Paradox}

Our objective has been to develop and test a reputational theory of party identification and party-centered spatial reasoning. Our findings bear on the vexed issue of citizen competence, albeit in a double-edged way.

Our findings from one experiment to another demonstrate a remarkable level of ideological coherence. We say remarkable because ideological coherence

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absent some mechanism to reduce the dimensionality of the policy space, multidimensionality poses considerable challenges, both for the analyst and the analysis.
\textsuperscript{117} Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart (2001) and Poole and Rosenthal (1997), among others, have brought to light a periodicity to the dynamics of ideological competition between the national parties, with longer periods of ideological divergence punctuated by shorter periods of ideological convergence. See also the studies of Layman and his colleagues (2010) and Aldrich and his colleagues, among others.
\textsuperscript{118} See Grynavski (2010, figure 3.4). In addition to references already cited, see Layman et al (2010). Their analysis is framed in terms of the electorate rather than on the basis of parties-in-the-electorate in order to call attention to his uncommonly thought-through account, similar to ours in offering a party-centered account, though at odds with others at a number of points.
has long been supposed to be out of reach for any substantial numbers of ordinary citizens. Minimal coherence was a principal theme of Phillip Converse’s classic work, “The Nature of Mass Belief Systems.” Subsequent work by leading students of public opinion has come to an even harsher view of the general public. In a work that is a model of close reasoning and arguably the most influential study of public of recent decades, Zaller (1994) contends that "most people, on most issues, do not 'really think' any particular thing;"119 that "most people really aren't sure what their opinions are on most political matters;"120 indeed, that most of the people, most of the time, just "make it up as they go along."121 Or, to offer another example, Bartels rejects the claim that the thinking of ordinary citizens is “casual and shallow” as excessive praise, favoring instead the conclusion that “...even splendidly well informed, attentive citizens will routinely flunk the test.”122

In response to the President of Corpus College saying, “I hear you have strong political views,” A.J.P. Taylor, the English historian, quipped, “Oh no, President, extreme views, weakly held.”123 On the issue of citizen competence, extreme views extremely strongly held are commonplace. Reviewing research on the use of heuristics to compensate for informational shortfalls, Luskin

120. Zaller (1992, 76, italics added).
122. Bartels (2003, 63). The test strictly is context-independent choice which Bartels rules out on the grounds of the limits of natural language and the architecture of the brain. His claim of an inherent inability to achieve consistency thus has nothing particularly to do with politics, (2003, 55).
characterizes this body of research as a movement “From Denial to Extenuation (and Finally Beyond).”\(^\text{124}\)

For our part, we have done our best to stay clear of the extenuation business, let alone going beyond it. All the same, we also have done our best to bring out one reason why the question of citizen competence has been so perplexing. When one surveys the mountain of evidence documenting the average citizen’s level of political knowledge, or the mounting studies highlighting bizarre judgments and biased information processing, it hardly seems to make sense to ask whether citizens are competent to carry out the duties of democratic citizenship. The answer is, no.

Or so it seems viewing the problem from the customary perspective. But the inference of citizen incompetence drawn from this research rests on a tacit assumption that we have worked to make explicit. Citizens, it is assumed must rely on their own resources to make politically coherent choices. But they do not, we have argued. Political institutions, in particular political parties, do the heavy lifting for them, reducing, coordinating, labeling, and advertising the alternatives on offer. Just so far as the alternatives on offer are coordinated as a byproduct of the dynamics of electoral competition, citizens are put into a position where they can make ideologically coherent choices.

That is one lesson our findings suggest. A second one goes to the logic of assessing citizen competence. To ask whether citizens are competent is to ask for a judgment about how well citizens taken as a whole manage. But our study, and

\(^{124}\) Luskin (2002).
many, many others, make plain that asking whether citizens are competent is a systematically misleading question. It has the grammatical form of a question but not the logical underpinning of one. Philip Converse neatly quipped that “the pithiest truth I have achieved about electorates is that where political information is concerned [and by extension, the capacity of mass electorates], the mean is very low but the variance is very high.”

Here as elsewhere, aphorisms are risky. The higher the variance, the less informative the mean. The dimension of variation at the center of attention has been political sophistication. Reams of studies have demonstrated that the more sophisticated and politically aware citizens take account of more considerations, and place different weights on the same considerations, as their less politically sophisticated and aware fellows. In this study, we have changed the focus. We have spotlighted a segment of the electorate – strong partisans who know and share the outlook of their party. They achieve a high level of ideological coherence, our results indicate. Indeed, they can winkle out a candidate’s party from the policy position she takes. The opposite side of the coin, though, is that our findings of ideological coherence are limited to a pocket of the electorate – a sizeable one, but a pocket all the same. There may be other pockets of comparable political consequence but they remain to be discovered.

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125 Converse (2000). Considering the extent to which Converse has emphasized how thin a slice of the mass public possesses knowledge of what goes with what in politics, it may have been closer to the mark to say “the mean is very low but the range is very large.”

126 This was implicit in Converse’s classic study (1964), though at the periphery given his emphasis on how quickly contextual knowledge of what goes with what disappeared as one went from the thin slice of the comparatively politically aware to the bulk of the mass public. It was the principal theme of Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock (1991) and Zaller (1992) and many works since.
There is a deeper issue, though. One standard of rationality is choosing the electoral alternative most consonant with one’s policy preferences all in all. Our findings suggest that the largest number of party identifiers have a good chance of doing so in the current climate of American politics. This may seem to be cause for celebration, evidence of the capacity of a goodly number of citizens to choose the best alternative on offer. But the inference that we draw from our findings all in all runs in a different direction.

The standard critique is that citizens lack the competence to make politically coherent choices. Our objective is to put another critique on the table—namely, that competence at ideological reasoning gives party elites the upper hand. This claim may appear perverse, we recognize. Ideological reasoning is the very definition of politically sophisticated choice. Surely that is a good thing. Moreover, this claim of strength in reasoning being a weakness in representation runs straight into Grynavski’s (2010) pioneering work on party policy reputations as mechanisms for enforcing responsiveness.127 Party brand names, he argues, crystallize expectations. In turn, voters can assess the credibility of opposition candidates. If the promises of the out-party are consistent with its policy reputation, they will credible; and if they offer a better outcome than the in-party’s performance, they will be compelling.128

Grynavski’s account is an important contribution on a number of fronts. For our purposes, though, the key point is that it runs on the same tracks as standard candidate-centered spatial models. It provides an exclusively demand-side account of the interplay of two sets of players, voters and politicians. In contrast, we weight

127 Grynavski (2010).
128 For a telegraphic summary of the argument, see Grynavski (2010, 176).
heavily a presumption that politicians need to respond to players other than voters – among them, activists and interest groups.\textsuperscript{129} We also weight heavily top-down politics as against bottom-up politics. Voters do not get their choice of choices. They have to choose from among the choices on offer.

Two of our principal findings are relevant here – the reputation premium and the Order rule. The likelihood of favoring the candidate of their party, independent of the proximity of her own issue position, increases in proportion to the strength of party identification for partisans who know and share the outlook of their party. This premium support we have called a reputation premium because it indexes additional support that candidates win from strong partisans by virtue of taking positions “consistent with” the policy reputation of their party. Our second finding, the Order rule, specifies the spatial boundaries of the relationship, “consistent with.” Candidates have taken positions consistent with the policy reputations of their parties if, and only if, they have lined up vis-à-vis on another on a left-right dimension in the same order as their parties line up vis-à-vis one another.

What are the implications of these two results, the reputation premium and the Order rule, for the electoral logic of party competition? Figure 5.3 picks out four positions that a Democratic candidate may take relative to a Republican moderate.

Insert Figure 5.3 About Here

\textsuperscript{129} An altogether reasonable presumption. For one innovative analysis of this motivation, consider Baron (1994), who shows that candidates sometimes pander to interest groups to raise money for campaign ads that win votes from relatively uninformed citizens.
D¹ and D² take positions straightforwardly consistent with the policy reputation of the Democratic Party, albeit in two quite distinct senses. By the standard of legislative voting, D¹’s polar liberal position is the most consistent with the Democratic Party’s programmatic orientation. On the other hand, as the Superfluous Experiment showed, the position of D² best summarizes the policy reputations of the Democratic Party as understood by partisans who see the big picture of the American party system. Both D¹ and D², then, straightforwardly meet the ordinary understanding of taking a position “consistent with” their party’s political outlook.

The position of D³ is modestly conservative, lining up just to the right of center point; the position of D⁴ is extremely conservative, lining up at the far right pole. On the ordinary understanding of “consistent with,” the electoral logic of candidate positioning provides an incentive for Democratic candidates to line up at any point to the left of the center-point, the liberal side, and to shun any position to the right of the center-point. Follow this rule, and they will get the full benefit of a reputation premium.

The Order rule generates a different logic of candidate positioning. A Democratic candidate collects a reputation premium if she takes up a position at any point to the left of R, the Republican candidate. In the hypothetical set of scenarios
in Figure 5.3, this means that as $D^3$ as well as $D^1$ and $D^2$, collect premium support from their party’s supporters who know and share the outlook of their party. This is a radical claim, we recognize. If $D^1$, $D^2$ and $D^3$ are equivalent positions, then a Democratic candidate can position himself anywhere between $D^1$ and $D^3$, conditional on running against a moderately conservative Republican, without losing the backing of rational partisans. Since she will in any case have the backing of traditional partisans, this is tantamount to saying that she can choose any point to the left of his opponent, yet collect from her camp the fullest measure of support from strong partisans who know and share the outlook of their party.

This claim violates the common sense understanding of what it means for candidates to take positions consistent with the political outlook of their party, we acknowledge. On the other hand, it does have the advantage of fitting two signature facts of the American party system. The first is the polarization of the parties at the elite level over the last three decades, but the continuing (and by comparison) moderate positions of their supporters in the electorate. It is not a minor merit for an empirical account to fit the facts, even at the expense of violating common sense, we would submit.

Much has been written about the ways that the ordinary citizen falls short of the ideals of democratic citizenship. It is as though things would have gone well, or at any rate better, but for them; as though the policy of the day would have been wiser, or its implementation more principled, but for their knowing too little about public affairs or being too muddled in their thinking about them. On this view, the democratic dilemma is rooted in the fact that voters know too little to choose well.
Those who make the case for citizen incompetence are right in presuming that making politically coherent choices requires knowledge. They are right also in asserting that a great many citizens are woefully informed about public affairs. And they are right yet again in contending that even citizens who are relatively well-informed about politics are not all that well-informed. Yet, if our findings and reasoning are broadly right, those who make the case for citizen incompetence have underestimated, not overestimated, the democratic dilemma.

In an electoral system in which the parties-in-government are cohesive and stake out positions at the opposing poles, the policy reputations of the parties are a more efficient predictor of policy outcomes than the specific positions of an individual candidate. They are more easily learned. They are more accurate. In turn, in the world as it is, partisans who share the outlook of their party need only determine if the candidates line up vis-à-vis one another in the same ideological order as their parties line up vis-à-vis one another, a partisan who shares the outlook of her party the rule to determine whether the positions of a candidate of a party are consistent with the policy reputation of their party that requires the least information and is near fool proof in an era of polarized politics is the Order rule. By following the Order rule, then, partisans who share the outlook of their party have their best chance to realize their policy preferences all in all – which is the criterion of rationality.130 But the Order rule also allows candidates of their party to take any

130 Rationality is prestige word; hence a contested one. We have (almost entirely) suppressed a desire to make use of it. By way of accounting for our waywardness here and there, we note our usage conforms to (among others) Smith’s “adaptive rationality;” also to Manski (2009): A rational agent “[o]nly wants to make a reasonable choice from the choice set that he actually faces ... That is, [he]should promote welfare maximization in the choice problem the agent actually faces.”
position they wish provided only that they are on the ideologically appropriate side of their opponent. Hence the paradox. It is by making choices that come as close to rational as any in the real world that party supporters provide their party’s leaders freedom to play pretty much the hand they wish to play.
Figure 5.1: A Stylized Distribution of Activist and Citizen Preferences

**Activist Preferences**

More Liberal  

More Conservative

**Citizen Preferences**

More Liberal  

More Conservative
Figure 5.2: A Stylized Distribution of Preferences with Parties

Citizen Preferences by Party

More Liberal

More Conservative
References


APPENDIX A:

A Limit on the Influence of the Policy Reputations of Parties: The Example of Polarization

Our theory of party identification and party-centered spatial reasoning turns on the role of the policy reputations of the political parties. Their reputations serve as a signal activating party-centered reasoning. In the process, they constrain how candidates running under their opposing banners must align themselves vis-à-vis one another in order to collect a reputation premium from strong partisans who know and share the outlook of their party. Through multiple experiments in multiple studies, we have provided evidence of the importance of the parties’ policy reputations. We recognize that we could now say job done: all the evidence of their importance is on the table for colleagues to evaluate. But we believe that one part remains to be done: just so far as the evidence for the importance of parties’ policy reputations is persuasive, it is necessary to take one more step and specify the limits of their importance.

I. Introduction

Since the early 1970’s, political elites—most notably, elected representatives in Congress—have diverged ideologically on partisan lines. In recent Congresses, Republican representatives almost exclusively hold conservative political views, and what is more, very conservative views at that. Similarly, Democratic representatives almost exclusively hold liberal political views, and quite liberal views at that, if
possibly not as liberal as their Republican counterparts are conservatives. This possible nuance aside, there is consensus that both parties have become less centrist or moderate, more extremist or polarized. The causes and consequences of ideological divergence over the last thirty years or so are disputed, it is only fair to add. But so far as the simple empirical fact of elite-level polarization is concerned, researchers are singing from the same hymn sheet (see, e.g., McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal 2006).131

Our focus is ordinary citizens, not political activates, and if there is a chorus of agreement about partisan elites, there is a cacophony of views about the electorate. Some take the position that the general public is as moderate in its views now as it was a generation ago.132 Others take the position that Americans have become divided into opposing camps. “Red” states vs. “Blue” states is one metaphor, the “culture wars” another, the popularity of these images itself evidence of the wide currency of the notion of polarization.133

This dispute about the fact of polarization at the level of the public at large is, at least in part, a function of the different meanings assigned to the concept of polarization. Sometimes, the concept refers to the distance between the policy preferences of the median supporters of the two parties.134 Other times, it

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131 However, several scholars have suggested that elite-level polarization is over-stated. Theirault (2006), for example, argues that the composition of the legislative agenda amplifies the level of polarization evident in the congressional roll call record. Stiglitz and Weingast (2009), likewise, suggest that vote-buying and other common forms of parliamentary interaction can cause the roll call record to over-state the level of disagreement between members of the two parties.  
132 See, for example, Dimaggio et al (1996); Evans (2003); Fiorina (2005); Fiorina and Levendusky (2006).  
133 Abramowitz and Sanders (2005); Jacobson (2005).  
134 Fiorina (2005); Fiorina and Levendusky (2006).
designates the extremity of evaluative responses to political leaders. Still other
times, polarization is shorthand for the emotional heat of issues, particularly on the
“traditional values “agenda, a prototypical example being the issue of abortion. And still other times, polarization refers to the consistency with which partisans
back the policies of their party. To be fair, there is nothing exceptional about the
abundance of meanings attached to the concept of polarization. Social science terms
seem to invite definitional promiscuity.

Then again, there is all the difference between a concept being put to
different uses in research and researchers being confused about its use. The
occasional exception notwithstanding, those who do work on polarization in mass
politics are admirably up-front about just what job they are asking the concept of
polarization to do. And they usually have good reason to use it as they do, we
would add. Hetherington and Weiler (in press), to cite one example only, point to
the anger/outrage that fuel arguments over issues such as gay marriage and
abortion on the traditional values agenda, and to bring out the worldview that
underlies the traditional values agenda in general. It thus is not necessary to be
dogmatic about the meaning of polarization; only clear.

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135 For example, Jacobson (2007).
136 Hetherington (2009).
137 So defined, polarization is a synonym for sorting. See Levindusky (2009).
138 Part of the difficulty, we believe, is that much of the scholarly literature discusses the topic as
though the electorate either is or is not polarized, suggesting a simple dichotomous world (as in,
alogously, a woman either is or is not pregnant). Instead, we believe it is useful to think of
polarization as matter of degrees. This, at least, avoids the issue of forcing scholars to agree on an
arbitrary threshold before which the electorate is unpolarized and beyond which it is polarized. Of
course, even this issue aside, the difficulty of scholars using different datasets and different measures
persists.
Ours is a study of spatial reasoning, so the sense in which understand policy
polarization is spatial. Preferences are distributed along a policy dimension,
characteristically running from left to right. The higher proportion near the poles,
the more polarized the distribution; the higher the proportion near the center-point,
the less polarized. So defined, to claim that ordinary Americans are more polarized
now than thirty years ago is to claim that decisively more how hold extreme
positions – that is, are near the poles – while decisively fewer hold moderate
positions – that is, are near the center point.

The evidence is one-sided on polarization, so conceived. For example, the
aggregate proportions classifying themselves into various ideological categories
(e.g. extremely liberal, liberal and so on), plotted over time, reproduce the flat lines
on a cardiac monitor of patient who has suffered a fatal heart attack. For that
matter, the percentage variation in positions over four intervals from 1984 to 2004
on issues central to American political debate – health insurance, spending/services,
aid to blacks, defense spending – are miniscule, typically on the order of only several
percent – no more than muscle twitches, to continue the medical analogy.

It is possible to look at the problem of polarization in a quite different light,
however, if one considers the dynamic of elite mobilization. Most of the time,
citizens are caught up in the routines of life – family, work, their circle of friends and
social activities. It is only during the election season—and, most research shows —
primarily during the last weeks of a campaign that citizens engage with the issues of

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139 Admittedly, Figure 4 (Fiorina and Abrams 2008, 571) is an especially dramatic example, but not a
misleading one all the same.
140 Fiorina (2005).
the day. It is in this brief stretch — an instant, by the measure of a congressional or presidential election cycle — that candidates and parties galvanize their supporters and spark them to see the choices before them in the light of their underlying predispositions, their partisan identifications very much among them.\footnote{Gelman and King (1993); Alvarez (1998).}

This “activation” model of campaigns carries an implication for a theory of polarization. Rather than conceiving of polarization as an enduring change of positions from moderate to extremist, it can be understood as a short-term spike. In this conception, in the weeks before an election or in a moment of political crisis — \textit{that is to say, when it counts} — partisan elites can induce partisan identifiers to follow their lead in the heat of the moment and support more polarized positions that they would ordinarily.

Our objective is to throw light on the susceptibility of party identifiers to manipulation. Specifically, our aim is to determine whether party leaders can capitalize on the policy reputations of the parties to induce their followers to take more extreme positions, if only in the heat of the moment. Our hypothesis is that parties-in-government can \textit{not} induce the parties-in-the-electorate to adopt more extreme positions, even in the very short run and even under the most favorable circumstances. Our strategy is to use experimental interventions to pressure party identifiers to adopt more polarized positions to show that, whatever we do, we can barely budge them.

This may seem wrong-footed approach. Nearly without exception, and for perfectly good reasons, experiments in political science are run to test the
hypothesis that an experimental intervention will make a difference. We want to
turn things the other way around, and show that we cannot make a difference try as
we will. In the process, the weaknesses of survey experiments that skeptics rightly
remark – the fact that respondents are a captive audience, for example – turn into
strengths. For if we cannot move respondents even when we have everything
working in our favor in a survey experiment, the claim that they cannot be moved in
real life is stronger, not weaker.

We shall be arguing, then, against the view that party leaders can induce
party identifiers to move from centrist positions by staking out ones nearer the
poles. The best introduction to our argument is to set out its strongest competitor.
Ordinary citizens, on a once standard view of public opinion, have only a mazy idea
of where they stand on political issues. They may know whether they are for or
against, but even then, on one admittedly extreme view, they, “answer the question
on the basis of whatever considerations are accessible ‘at the top of the head.’”142
On this view, when party supporters learn where their party is -- in a survey
experiment, for example – they carry on an internal monologue, as it were, saying to
themselves, “Well, if that is where the Democratic (Republican) Party is, since I am a
Democrat (Republican), that is where I must be, too.” We might christen this the
“tag-along” theory of public opinion, if we were being unkind. It is a nihilistic view,
by any standard.

142 Zaller (1992, 49).
The nihilism, in fact, involves a double-negative. Partisans neither know where their party is, nor or where they themselves are. We propose to take up each negative in turn.

II. Reputations as Encoded Information

How do parties shape the views of their supporters? For many years, the emphasis was on the role of parties as reference groups.\(^{143}\) Their supporters are emotionally attached to the party, and by virtue of this attachment, are inclined to adopt the views associated with their party. This could, though it need not, mean that emotional loyalty underwrote mindless conformity. A reformist clause was added, accordingly, picking out the role of political sophistication (Zaller 1992). A precondition of following the lead of party leaders is being aware of the positions that they take. It follows that it is the most politically sophisticated who are the most likely to use parties as reference groups. Then, in the most recent wave of research, the role of parties’ policy reputations has been brought to the fore.

The introduction of the concept of policy reputations has been a valuable addition on the plus side of the theoretical ledger. But a clause in the fine print has not received the full attention it deserves. Consider this thought experiment. The objective is founding a philanthropy. Branding consists in connecting a unique trademark and a distinctive product. To take an example from life, we construct a visual and symbolic trademark, CoachArt, and a “product”, providing

underprivileged children and adolescents with chronic and life-threatening illnesses free, personal lessons in the arts and athletics. Distinctiveness is the first requirement of both the trademark and product; and definiteness and durability of the connection between the two are the second and third requirements. If you have to remind people what a brand name stands for, you have not succeed in establishing it.

How does this apply to parties as brand names? The policy reputations of the parties have “relatively precise meanings,” Snyder and Ting contend. “Democratic candidates tend to be liberal, and Republicans tend to be conservative.” But what, more exactly, does it mean to say that parties have a policy reputation? What is it that we are supposing that partisans who know the parties’ policy reputations actually know when they know that one set of players is liberal and their opponents conservative? Not liberalism and conservatism as political philosophies. We accept the portrait of citizens at large as only intermittently interested in politics. But if liberal and conservative do not refer to abstract political ideas, what do they refer to?

The concept of brand names carries on its back the metaphor of branding – as in cattle being branded. So conceived, the Democratic Party stamps a liberal brand on

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144 Coach Art was founded by Zander Lurie in honor of his father, Dr. Arthur Lurie, a distinguished cardiac surgeon. See CoachArt.org
145 Snyder and Ting (2001).
146 Special purpose terms enjoy fashion-cycles. Party “images” was once in vogue. Party “reputations” has taken its place. The two are vehicles for a common premise – namely, that political parties (not just prominent figures) are a focal point for the electorates’ evaluative judgments. The two terms also cover a lot of the same conceptual terrain, though reputation is narrower than image and more explicit in grounding the identity of political parties in their policy commitments. Since our concern is policy, we shall stick to reputation.
its policy products, the Republican Party a conservative brand on its. This metaphor of branding a policy does more conceptual work than commonly recognized, we believe. To brand a policy is to affix a marker. To say that parties brand their policies is thus to say that the policies are identified with the parties, in the minds of those who know the policy reputations of the parties. And to say this is to say that a party’s policies bear its mark even without its label having to be attached to them on each and every occasion.

Let us walk (slightly) uphill with this line of argument. If the parties have established policy reputations, then a reference to the policies that they have identified themselves with should be the same as referring to the parties themselves. In turn, partisans who know the ideological ordering of the parties – that is, know their policy reputations -- should be able accurately to locate candidates on the broad dimension of liberalism-conservatism on the basis of the candidates taking positions on the parties are identified with. And, to take the last step in this inferential parade, if the policies are indeed identified with a party, attaching a party label to them should be superfluous. In short, a political party has a policy reputation just so far people have taken on board the positions and general point of view it stands for – in the parlance, they have encoded the information.

III. The Stickiness of Preferences

Our second premise is the stickiness of preferences. It may sound odd to speak of political preferences as sticky. The discovery of non-attitudes triggered a
skepticism avalanche as to whether, when it comes to public opinion, there is any there there. In the most influential formulation of its time, the rallying cry was that "most people, on most issues, do not 'really think' any particular thing."\textsuperscript{147} The initial wave of “framing” experiments further reinforced the scholarly sense of the vacuousness of public opinion.\textsuperscript{148} In the mantra of the day, whoever controlled the framing of an issue controlled the side that the majority would favor. Smart money bet against citizens knowing where they stood on the issues of the day. They might say that they had a position on an issue. But likely as not, that was to cloak the fact that they had not taken the trouble to form one. So even in the absence of substantive arguments or interpersonal influence, they would float from one side of an issue to the other, then back again, carried back and forth by chance and circumstance

In contrast, a premise of our approach to spatial reasoning, like that of every other approach, is that preferences are sticky.

This is not theoretical self-pleading, though. The use of the concept of non-attitudes as a launching point for a theory of public opinion owed its plausibility to its abstractness, some would say, others to the brilliance of its scientific launch by Converse. Short shrift would have been made of anyone who stepped forward to claim that Americans decided by a flip of the coin whether they supported or opposed racial quotas, or wanted to legalize gay marriages or not, or favored

\textsuperscript{147} Zaller (1992, 194). The quote is not an isolated one. Other formulations include that "most people really aren’t sure what their opinions are on most political matters;" p.76, italics added for emphasis; indeed, that most of the people, most of the time, just "make it up as they go along." Making it up as you go along” is the title of Chapter 5 in Zaller (1992).

“reform” of welfare, or had a preference about whether their taxes should be increased or not. On all these and many other issues, citizens have preferences – definite, often strong, usually strongly felt.

And their preferences accordingly are sticky. One indication of just how sticky is the re-birth of the idea of the idea of false consciousness. A volume of studies has been accumulating over the last two presidential terms on how citizens cannot see the nose on their face when it comes to their economic self-interest. Republican elites use the social conservatism of the working class to pull the wool over their eyes, one argument runs.\textsuperscript{149} Or, in another version, they cash in on faith in the American Dream and its concomitant promise that everyone can hit the jackpot, to sell the public at large a bill of goods on tax legislation tailor-written for the super-rich.\textsuperscript{150} Or, in yet another version, they stoke the racial fears and animus of white Americans to their political advantage. All of these (and others) are stories of how the ordinary citizens are blinded to reality by their entrenched beliefs, attitudes, convictions, assumptions – or to use the umbrella term, their preferences.

To characterize preferences as sticky is of course to make a claim about their stability, or still more strongly, their resistance to change. Stability (or resistance to change) is a matter of degree. Some preferences are fleeting; some durable. Our concern, here, is with partisans’ preferences about issues that parties contest. These issues have a gut reality to their supporters: the responsibility of individuals to take care of their own problems as against the obligations of government to assist those who are poorly off; gun control; environmental regulation; foreign policy that makes

\textsuperscript{149} Frank (2004).
\textsuperscript{150} Graetz and Shapiro (2005).
use of military force; government assistance for blacks, to list a few that have been at the center of contention for generations now. We have some direct evidence on the stickiness of preferences on this roll call of issues, conditional on the method of measurement and mode of interview in our studies. In a panel study with Wave 1 and 2 interviews modally separated by four and a half months, the median stability coefficient is .72, the range, .65 to .75.

There is a deeper issue, flagged by the phrase ‘conditional on method of measurement and mode of interview.’ Stability coefficients are not part of the furniture of the world. What we observe when we measure the stability of attitudinal responses over time is tied to how we measure them. This may seem no more than an ordinary Sunday sermon on the theory of measurement, but for reasons that have more to do with a desire to lower study costs than to increase scientific rigor, the practice has been to calculate stability coefficients with the least ambitious technology – single indicator measures, often with self-assigned locations on a multi-point scale rather than branching formats. In contrast, using multiple indicators, Ansolabehere, Snyder and Rodden (2008) show that a large family of attitudinal constructs exhibit comparable degrees of stability over two and four year intervals as American political behavior’s flagship measure – party identification.

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151 The questions are, respectively: (1) Which position is closer to what you think? The federal government should make every effort to ensure that everybody has a good standard of living OR Each individual has a responsibility to get ahead on their own. (2) Which position is closer to what you think? Government should make it more difficult to buy guns OR The rules should be about the same as they are now. (3) Which is closer to what you believe? We need tougher government regulations on business OR Current regulations to protect the environment are already. (4) Which is closer to your view? The U.S. has the right to attack any country it thinks might attack the U.S. OR The U.S. should not attack another country unless that country has attacked the U.S. first. (5) Which position is closer to what you think? Government should make stronger effort to improve the position of blacks OR Blacks should take responsibility for helping themselves.

152 For the original presentation of this argument, see Achen (1975).

153 e.g., Malhotra, Krosnick and Thomas (2009).
Preferences on issues the parties contest are sticky, we conclude, and so are party reputations. These are premises. They point, in turn, to two lines of reasoning. The first has to do with partisans who know what they think and know their way about the political landscape. They should not easily be goaded or gullied into taking a more extreme or immoderate position than they ordinarily would. Traditional partisans similarly difficult to polarize, albeit for quite different reasons. They are out-of-step with their party’s program, yet as party loyalists, are reluctant to believe their party rejects their beliefs. And just so far as they believe their party is centrist, it should be difficult to induce traditional Democrats to take extreme liberal positions, or traditional Republicans to embrace extreme conservative ones, under the banner of supporting their party’s programs.

IV. Can Parties induce Polarization Spikes?

It is our hypothesis that, even under the most favorable conditions, parties have a very limited ability to induce policy moderates to take extreme positions. We have designed the Polarization experiment to work against our hypothesis. For one thing, the standard NES policy scale has 7 points, with four as the neutral point. The small number of units—7—limits our ability to observe the consequences of party reputations. A respondent’s underlying policy views may move toward the poles after a party “treatment,” though her response to the 7-point scale remains unaltered due to the lumpiness of the response format. So we have put in place an 11-point scale. The extra length should make it as easy as possible for respondents to slide in the direction of policy poles, in response to a partisan or ideological
political signal, even if they still are not inclined to go all the way. The more granular response format thus allows us to detect even small polarization effects.

Our second design decision concerned the multiplication of signals. In the baseline condition of the Polarization Experiment, policies are introduced in the standard neutral style: “Some people ... Other people .... In the three other conditions, the introductory phrase is respectively: “Democrats think ... Republicans think ...”; and “Very liberal people think ... Very conservative people think. In principle, either of the political signals, party or ideology, can induce a polarization effect. But to be on the side of the (experimental) angels, we added a fourth condition, combining the two signals: “Very liberal Democrats ... Very liberal Republicans...” Better to hit them on the head too hard, we reasoned, then to fail to catch their attention at all.

The first two of our design features are apple pie. The third is well out of the mainstream, we confess. We first carried out the Polarization Experiment with 1,023 respondents. Failing to find a significant effect, yet noticing the bare glimmering of a pattern, we enlarged the sample. Drive down the standard errors by increasing the number of respondents, we reasoned. So we conducted the Experiment with another 1,534 respondents, and since they were randomly selected like the first 1000 respondents, pooled two samples and redid the analysis. Again failing to find a significant effect, yet still noticing a pattern, we interviewed a third tranche of respondents, boosting the final sample size up to 3,609.154

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154 In the third tranche, only Democrats and Republicans were added to the sample, further increasing the efficiency of our estimates. See Studies 7A, B and C in Appendix B.
This repeated sampling and pooling of respondents in an experiment is an outside-the-box procedure, we acknowledge. But we did it to counter-act a school room scientific stereotype.\textsuperscript{155} Experiments are designed to induce an effect, most suppose. If responses in the ‘treatment’ condition fail to differ significantly from those in the control condition, their under-their-breath presumption that the experiment has failed. The fault with its design – too little statistical power to detect too weak an experimental manipulation.

Our substantive hypothesis is that, even under favorable circumstances, partisans cannot be induced to take up more extreme positions than they otherwise would. So we have done all in our power to reject this hypothesis -- increasing sample size, and then increasing it yet again. And we shall show that, with sufficient resources -- coupled with sufficiently adroit restrictions on statistical analyses -- treatment effects can approach or reach standard levels of statistical significance. But the sheer extravagance of our empirical effort reinforces our theoretical claim: even under the most favorable circumstances and in the heat of the moment, ‘polarization’ effects are trivial.

Table A.1 reports the responses of rational and traditional partisans.\textsuperscript{156} The experimental conditions are arrayed, from left to right, in (approximate) order of the strength of the polarizing cue: on the far left is the baseline or no cue condition; on the far right the double cue; and in between the two single cues. Each cell

\textsuperscript{155}Sniderman forthcoming.
\textsuperscript{156}To increase the number of cases in the table cells and decrease the number of cells, “traditional” and “mixed” partisans are combined.
presents three pieces of information: mean score (scaled from -5, most liberal, to +5, most conservative); number of respondents, and importantly, standard errors.

Consider the issue of medical and hospital costs. Two policy alternatives were presented: that a government insurance plan that would cover all medical and hospital expenses for everyone or that medical expenses should by paid by individuals through private insurance plans like Blue Cross or other company-paid plans. The wording for our question is borrowed from the National Election Study. Notice that the policy choices anchor the spatial poles but they are not semantically characterized as “extreme” or “polar” positions.

Insert Table A.1 About Here

As Table A.1 shows, even in the absence a political cue, the parties distinctly diverge, Democrats taking a stand definitely on the liberal side (mean=-1.83), the Republicans as definite a stand on the conservative side (mean=1.47). Visually, they appear to diverge more when either a partisan or ideological cue is paired with the policy alternatives, or when we combine both cues. Thus, the difference between the Democratic and Republican means in the combined party-ideology condition is approximately four and a half points, compared to three something points in the no cue condition. The difference is statistically significant. But it is substantively trivial.

Arguments can be mounted that traditional partisans should be more susceptible to party appeals, given the strength of their emotional attachment to their party. On the other hand, arguments can be conjured up that programmatic partisans should be more responsive to party appeals given the fundamental
harmony of their outlook and their party’s. Neither set of arguments has strong foundations, to judge from the results in Table A.1. Both rational and traditional partisans move toward their party’s polar position, and by about the same amount, which is to say a trivial amount, on the order of about half a point.¹⁵⁷ For changes on so small a scale, polarization is the wrong metaphor. There is a degree of inconsistency, of messiness if you will, in the thinking of party supporters rational and otherwise. Making salient partisan and ideological considerations encourages a modest amount of tidying up, these results suggest

The pattern for the issue stem cell research is similar. Respondents were presented with two polar positions -- “...feel very strongly that the Federal government should fund stem cell research” and “... feel very strongly that the government should not fund stem cell research – at opposite ends of an 11 point scale.¹⁵⁸ Note that partisans move toward their respective poles in the combined cue condition, compared to the no cue condition. More tellingly, note the modesty of the distance that they move. For Democrats, from -1.81 in the no condition to -2.19 in the combined cue condition, and .98 and 1.45, for Republicans—again about a half-point, for both Democrats and Republicans, in opposing directions. And again, the pattern is one of similarity, not dissimilarity, in the responses of rational and traditional partisans

In addition to medical care and stem cell research, we also examined susceptibility to polarization for two other issues. One was immigration.

¹⁵⁷ One might want to argue that traditional Republicans differ, since they show no change at all for the issues of medical care, nor government assistance or stem cell research. For the other two issues, immigration and government the pattern is the usual modest change is evident.
¹⁵⁸ Underlining in visual presentation of the test item.
Respondents were presented with two alternatives – do they think that “illegal immigrants should be allowed to stay here legally if they pay a fine and meet other requirements” versus do they believe that “illegal immigrants should be sent back to their native countries.” The other issue was government assistance versus self-reliance. In this case, we ask respondents to choose between whether they “feel the government should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living” versus “the government should let each person get ahead on their own.” The results for the second two issues are consistent with those of the first two. On both issues, and for both parties, the means in the no cue condition coupled with the size of an 11-point scale leave ample room for respondents to move toward either pole without having to take the most extreme position possible. But once more the “polarization” effect is conspicuous for its modesty: again no more than a half a point for both Democrats and Republicans.

One response to these results is that we have not examined the most relevant group of citizens. In Table A.1, we consider the influence of cues on all partisans—moderates and extremists alike. Given this sample, it is not surprising, a critic might retort, to find little evidence of polarization. Many of the partisans in the sample already possessed extremist views, and cues could not possibly have any influence on these citizens. Including these extremist partisans in the sample, the critic observes, pushes down the estimated polarization effect. The question of real interest to this critic is whether moderates alter their policy views on the basis of party and ideological cues.
This is a reasonable criticism. Accordingly, we recalculate Table A.2, only this time focusing exclusively on ideological moderates. We exclude from the sample any respondent who self-identifies as “extremely liberal / conservative,” and, for good measure, any respondent who self-identifies as a “liberal” or a “conservative.” This leaves in our sample only “slightly” liberal and conservative citizens, and of course the self-identified moderates themselves. Table A.2 reports the results from this exercise. Notice that, sensibly, moderates—as determined by ideology self-identification—tend to have more moderate policy preferences.

Insert Table A.2 About Here

The central observation from Table A.2, however, is that moderate partisans behave no different than the full sample of partisans. From the baseline condition to the “double-whammy” condition, Democrats move less than a half a point on the eleven point scale on the issue of medical insurance. Republican polarize only slightly more substantially on the issue—by about three-quarters of a unit on the same scale. The results related to the other three issues, also reported in Table A.3, corroborate the fundamental conclusion that moderates do not polarize in response to political cues.

V. Replication

Party leaders have a limited capacity to induce their supporters to take more extreme issues stands through the manipulation of partisan or ideological signals, the results of the Polarization Experiment. But it is only one experiment. And holes can be punched in any experiment by an advocate with a brief.
What has the “manipulation” actually consisted of in the Polarization Experiment? Merely attaching a label to a position, identifying it as the position of liberals (conservatives) or Democrats (Republicans), or attempting to deliver the strongest signal very liberal Democrats (very conservative Republicans). But suppose someone is, and sees himself as being, a moderately liberal Democrat. Why should he necessarily feel impelled to take a more extreme stand on a policy than he ordinarily would because it is said to be the position of very liberal Democrats? For that matter, in the Polarization Experiment, Democrats or liberals or very liberal Democrats (Republicans or conservatives or very conservative Republicans) are identified as the sponsors of policies. Policy labeling is the manipulation de jour in party branding experiments. But affixing a label on a position is not the same thing as saying, “Here is where good Democrats (Republicans) stand on this issue. Come over here and stand with them.” The partisan and ideological labels put to use in the Polarization Experiment are only implicitly spatial. To characterize a position as one held by a Democrat or by a very liberal Democrat is to locate a position on a policy continuum. But it is to do so only indirectly. Surely, more can and should be done in the way of giving directions, of indicating that as Democrats (Republicans) they should locate themselves, if not literally at the liberal (conservative) pole of a policy dimension, then at any rate in its vicinity.

There is also a strong case for replication. Doubtless, putting a hypothesis to a second independent test is always a good idea. But the need to so here goes beyond methodological piety. Our argument is that attempts to induce partisans to

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159 e.g., Rahn, (1993); Jacoby, (1988); Squire and Smith (1988); Kam (2005); Merolla, Stephenson and Zechmeister (2008).
take immoderate or polarized stands, even in the heat of the moment as it were, are likely to fail. But it is easy to dismiss failure of a manipulation in a survey experiment to produce a bankable result on the grounds that the manipulation was too weak. There are practical, not to mention ethical, constraints on what can be done in a public opinion interview, after all. And precisely because the failure of an experimental treatment to polarize preferences counts in favor of our hypothesis, we are under a special obligation to try again. Failing to find something counts as finding something only if one has done one’s very best and still come away empty-handed.

So we conducted a second Polarization Experiment. The backdrop idea was to put respondents in a position where they could, literally, picture where their party stood on an issue, to put them in the best possible position to say to themselves, well yes of course, as a Democrat (Republican) that is where I stand. In terms of experimental manipulations, the idea was to see how partisans respond to the movements of candidates. So the second experiment includes four conditions: (i) both parties take moderate positions; (ii) the Democratic Party takes an extremely liberal position while the Republican Party takes a moderately conservative one; (iii) the Democratic Party takes a moderately liberal position while the Republican Party takes an extremely conservative one; and (iv) both parties take extreme positions.

The use of the adverbs ‘moderately’ and ‘extremely’ deserves a word. On the one side, the objective is to have candidates take sharply contrasting positions; on

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160 See Study 8, Appendix B.
the other side, the positions they take should be credible. So we ruled out self-defeatingly dramatic possibilities – say, positioning the Democratic only a finger nail to the left of dead center while placing the Republican candidate to the right, as it were, of Louis XIV. So again we used a scale running from -5, the most liberal position, to 5, the most conservative, at 5, locating the Democratic Party either at a moderately liberal (-2) or a manifestly liberal (-4) position and the Republican Party is located either at a moderately conservative (2) or manifestly conservative (4) position.

Since replication is the goal, the second Polarization Experiment examines responses on two issues – immigration and stem cell – employed in the first – worded and formatted in the second just as in the first, naturally. And just as in the first Polarization Experiment, so in the second, after seeing where their party stands, partisans are asked where they themselves stand on the issues. Table A.3 shows the responses of Democratic and Republican Identifiers, first on the issue of immigration then on the issue of stem cell research, in each of the four experimental conditions.

Insert Table A.3 About Here

Consider the issue of immigration first. The Democratic Party finds its position a hard sell, even to its own supporters. In the baseline condition, the mean position of Democratic identifiers is virtually dead center between the idea that immigrants who are living in the U.S. should be allowed to stay here legally if they pay a fine and meet other requirements, the liberal position, and that they should be sent back to their native countries, the conservative position. They are slightly more
supportive of legalizing immigrants if either Party takes a more extreme position, though the emphasis should be on the word “slightly.” In the baseline condition Democrats locate at an average of .06; even when both parties take extreme positions, though one can see a movement to the left, it is no more than twitch, the same half-point difference we saw in the maximum contrast in the first Polarization Experiment (mean = -.55). The responses of Republican identifiers are dissimilar in one respect, but similar in another. The respect in which they are dissimilar is that they stand with their party on the policy of deporting illegal immigrants: in every experimental condition, they take a unambiguously conservative position but a moderate one, locating themselves on average slightly in the neighborhood of 2. The respect in which Republican identifiers are similar to their Democratic counterparts is that, again between the maximum contrast conditions, Republican identifiers move a half-point to the right. This ‘change’ is visually evident but not statistically let alone substantively significant.

The second issue is stem cell research. As the second panel in Table A.3, there is virtually no variation from one experimental condition to another. Democratic identifiers take a position on the left, though very from an immoderate one; Republican identifiers take a position on the right, though not as far to the right as their Democratic counterparts take on the left. The parties do not have the power to goad, or gull, the ranks of their supporters to take extreme or immoderate positions on this issue, to judge from these results.

Here again, though, we confront the question of whether moderates respond to party cues—in this case, spatial cues—in the same way as partisans more
generally. Consider the issue of immigration. When both parties locate in a moderate position, moderate Democrats express an average policy position of .29. If the parties locate at the extremes, moderate Democrats report an average policy preference of -.37. Similarly, moderate Republicans report an average immigration preference of 1.67 when the parties espouse moderate positions; this average preference increases to 2.26 when both parties adopt extreme positions. As evident in Table A.3, the story is essentially the same for the issue of stem cell research. Thus, polarized parties induce movement in the preferences of moderate partisans—but, even for this group of partisans, the movement is modest. In all cases, the polarization effect is less than 1 point on an 11 point scale; generally, the polarization effect is less than one-half of one point on this scale.

Insert Table A.4 About Here

In sum, the findings are all of one piece: whatever we have done we have been unable to induce partisans to take more extreme positions to any substantively significant degree.

VI. Precis

The possible polarization of American public opinion has been one of the most contested issues in the contemporary study of politics. Has the American electorate become more extreme, more immoderate in their political beliefs? To this point, the evidence brought to bear on this question has come from standard public opinion surveys. And rightly so. Trend studies tracking representative
national cross-sectional samples provide the most direct answer to the question of polarization.

Though there are pluses and minuses in the evidentiary ledger, primarily because of the multiple uses of the concept of polarizations, we read the evidence as at odds with headline claims that ordinary Americans have become extreme or immoderate in their political views. At least, if 1970 is the baseline, Americans, on average, appear to hold roughly the same views today as they did 30 years ago. All the same, they now form camps committed to opposing political programs under the banner of political parties in a way that they did not then, and at least part of the program – the so-called traditional values agenda – has the flavor of a culture war.

Still, as it looked to us, there was a key political possibility that had not been investigated. Even if one accepts the basic premise of an unpolarized electorate, though, this does not necessarily imply that the electorate is unpolarized in the heat of an election—*when it matters*. That is, the electorate can hold fundamentally centrist views for most of the time, but, like citizen-soldiers called to battle, partisans may take up the more polarized views of candidates or parties. This period just before decision day is no more than historical moment, but what happens in this historical moment can define the politics of decades. We are not talking about party supporters becoming extremists, only their being willing to move somewhat nearer the polar positions that their parties hold, and then only moving for a moment, in the heat of a political argument, as it were.

Social scientists have been known to tout methodological remedies as substantive cure-alls. The introduction of survey experiments exploiting computer-
assisted interviewing has been the biggest methodological innovation in public
opinion studies of politics in a half century. So critical examination of the limits of
survey experiments is a healthy development.\textsuperscript{161}

For our part, the limits in carrying out survey experiments in public opinion
interviews have always seemed the limits of good manners in everyday
interchanges: consideration of the well-being of your guest and respect for the
conventions of hospitality. True, the very fact that you are having a conversation
and that you are assured that the other person is listening, say, when you tell them
that a leader of a political party has taken a particular position on an issue,
introduces a consideration that needs to be taken into account. In real life, citizens
tend to pay modest attention to politics and public affairs. In turn, elite efforts at
persuasion tend to pass them by, unnoticed.\textsuperscript{162} Inattention acts as a protective
filter, so to speak. By, contrast, in a survey experiment, the “treatment” is designed
to be immediately intelligible and every respondent who is intended to receive it is
guaranteed to receive it, however turned off and tuned out to politics they ordinarily
are. Moreover, the bar in measurement of the dependent variable barely clears the
ground. It is necessary only that respondents take a somewhat less centrist position
—not that that they take an extreme one—and they need do so only for the length of
time it takes for their fingers to strike a keyboard. If partisan and ideological
appeals cannot induce partisans to take more extreme positions even under the

\textsuperscript{161} For the most searching examination of the limits of survey experiments as a method for the study
of political belief, see Gaines, Kuklinski and Quirk (2007b). For a statement of the thesis that survey
experiments can only—and should only—induce respondents to do what they already are
predisposed to do, see Sniderman forthcoming.

\textsuperscript{162} To our knowledge, Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee (1986) were the first to make the argument
that citizen inattention to politics was a protective filter against elite manipulation. See also Zaller,
most favorable conditions, the only sensible conclusion is that this possibility is even more remote in the real political world.

This should not be taken as apologetics. Critics say that survey experiments in public opinion interviews are artificial, and so cannot speak to what people will do in real life. This seems to us self-righteousness recollected in absentmindedness. The same criticism used to be made of public opinion interviews across-the-board. The difficulty is the other way round: in an interview, we (that is, experimenters) can do all and only what we can do in a conversation in real life – which is to say, respect social conventions and so manage to have an exchange satisfactory to all parties, the person being interviewed, the person doing the interview, and the survey researcher analyzing the interaction between the two.

A number of studies indicate that party leaders may be able to bring some supporters over the line to side with their party. But this is quite different from party leaders being able to induce their supporters to adopt less moderate positions in support of the party’s program. They are unable to do so to any politically significant degree, our findings indicate. This unwillingness to give up moderate positions, even for just a moment and even in the face of direct partisan and ideological appeals, adds a new piece of evidence against the polarization claim, we believe. Yet, sometimes politics erupts, setting loose forces that overflow the boundaries of everyday expectations, and the drama of the choices that follow in their wake threatens to overwhelm us. Some times is not many times, to be sure. Then again, in politics the extraordinary moments can dominate the ordinary ones. That party leaders cannot do much in the way of polarizing the preferences of their
supporters during the regular season or even, possibly, the play-offs, that is as far as
our findings go. What they can do in at a critical moment in the Super Bowl is
another matter. Hence the relevance of our experimental findings on the inability of
party leaders, even under extremely favorable conditions, to induce their
supporters to take extreme or polarized positions.
Table A.1: Weak Evidence of a Polarization Effect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Ideology Cue</th>
<th>Party Cue</th>
<th>Party &amp; Ideology Cues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health Insurance</td>
<td>-1.83</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>-2.09</td>
<td>1.75</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(0.18)</td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=312</td>
<td>N=301</td>
<td>N=359</td>
<td>N=306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stem Cell</td>
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<td>0.98</td>
<td>-2.14</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
</tr>
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<td>N=312</td>
<td>N=301</td>
<td>N=359</td>
<td>N=305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
<td>(0.2)</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=310</td>
<td>N=301</td>
<td>N=358</td>
<td>N=305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov. Assistance</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>-0.98</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
<td>(0.15)</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=311</td>
<td>N=302</td>
<td>N=359</td>
<td>N=304</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Standard errors located below means in parentheses. The number of observations in each cell located below standard errors.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Ideology Cue</th>
<th>Party Cue</th>
<th>Party &amp; Ideology Cues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>-1.89</td>
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<td>(0.25)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=186</td>
<td>N=130</td>
<td>N=219</td>
<td>N=148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stem Cell</td>
<td>-1.39</td>
<td>-0.44</td>
<td>-1.83</td>
<td>-0.52</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.25)</td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
<td>(0.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=186</td>
<td>N=131</td>
<td>N=218</td>
<td>N=148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.3)</td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.25)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>N=185</td>
<td>N=131</td>
<td>N=217</td>
<td>N=148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov. Assistance</td>
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<td>1.62</td>
<td>-0.95</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.24)</td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.2)</td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=185</td>
<td>N=131</td>
<td>N=218</td>
<td>N=147</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Note: Standard errors located below means in parentheses. The number of observations in each cell located below standard errors. Results based on subset of moderate respondents (slightly liberal, moderate, slightly conservative).
Table A.3: Weak Evidence of Polarization Effect With Spatial Cues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Both Moderate</th>
<th>Dem. Moderate &amp;</th>
<th>Rep. Moderate &amp;</th>
<th>Both Extreme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>2.29</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.218)</td>
<td>(0.211)</td>
<td>(0.219)</td>
<td>(0.205)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=248</td>
<td>N=189</td>
<td>N=241</td>
<td>N=210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stem Cell</td>
<td>-2.26</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>-2.23</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.197)</td>
<td>(0.241)</td>
<td>(0.186)</td>
<td>(0.227)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=247</td>
<td>N=189</td>
<td>N=240</td>
<td>N=211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Standard errors located below means in parentheses. The number of observations in each cell located below standard errors.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.29 (0.28)</td>
<td>0.04 (0.27)</td>
<td>-0.37 (0.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dem.</td>
<td>1.67 (0.33)</td>
<td>1.97 (0.35)</td>
<td>2.08 (0.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rep.</td>
<td>0.45 (0.31)</td>
<td>2.08 (0.31)</td>
<td>2.26 (0.3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
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<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Stem Cell            |               | -1.55 (0.23)                | -1.49 (0.41)                | -2.06 (0.26)  |
|                      |               | -0.31 (0.26)                | 0.4 (0.4)                  | -0.17 (0.35)  |
|                      |               | -1.67 (0.26)                | 0.31 (0.31)                | 0.26 (0.35)   |
|                      |               | -0.24 (0.26)                | 0.26 (0.26)                | 0.86 (0.35)   |
| N                    | 159           | 75                          | 134                         | 95           |
|                      | N             | 142                         | 78                          | 167          |
|                      | N             | 95                          | 78                          | 86           |

Note: Standard errors located below means in parentheses. The number of observations in each cell located below standard errors. Results based on subset of moderate respondents (slightly liberal, moderate, slightly conservative).
APPENDIX B:

STUDY DESCRIPTIONS

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF METHODOLOGY

Description of KnowledgePanel®

The Knowledge Networks (KN) Web panel is a probability-based panel. By definition, all members of the KN Web panel have a known probability of selection. As a result, it is mathematically possible to calculate a proper response rate that takes into account all sources of nonresponse. In contrast, opt-in Web panels do not permit the calculation of a response rate since the probabilities of selection are unknown. Consequently, opt-in panels are mathematically capable of computing only the survey completion rate representing the final stage of gaining cooperation of survey research subjects, excluding the nonresponse resulting from panel recruitment, connection, and panel retention.

The panel sample selection methodology used for this study was developed by KN in recognition of the practical issue that different surveys target different subpopulations. The methodology was also developed to attempt to correct for nonresponse and noncoverage error in the panel sample that could be introduced at the panel recruitment, connection, and panel retention stages of building and maintaining the panel.\textsuperscript{163} The panel sample selection methodology, which has been

\textsuperscript{163} In K.N.’s patented solution (U.S. Patent No. 7,269,570), a survey assignment method uses a weighting factor to compensate for members which are temporarily removed from a panel because of an earlier draw of sample. This weighting factor adjusts the selection probabilities of the
used by KN since 2000, provides statistical control on the representativeness of KN panel survey samples as measured by their proximity to population benchmarks.

remaining panel members. The sample is drawn using systematic PPS sampling where the panel poststratification weights will be the Measures of Size (MOS). If the user requirements call for independent selection by stratum, the panel weights (MOS) will are adjusted in the following procedure: Sum the MOS for each stratum, call this sum Sh for stratum h. Consider the user-specified or system-derived target sample size for stratum h to be nh. Then multiply each MOS for Members in stratum h by nh/Sh. Then use an interval of k=1 and apply systematic PPS sampling to achieve the desired yield per stratum.
STUDY ONE:

Spatial Reasoning - Study One  
Final Survey Completion Rates

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<th>Field Start Date</th>
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<th>Number Completed</th>
<th>Completion Rate</th>
<th>AAPOR RR3</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>9,313</td>
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Study Title: Political Opinion Survey

STUDY SEVEN

7a  
Final Survey Completion Rates

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<th>Completion Rate</th>
<th>AAPOR RR3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>10/31/07</td>
<td>1701</td>
<td>1280</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
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7b  
Final Survey Completion Rates

<table>
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<th>Field Start Date</th>
<th>Field End Date</th>
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<th>Completion Rate</th>
<th>AAPOR RR3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>01/08/08</td>
<td>01/17/08</td>
<td>1412</td>
<td>1166</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
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7C  
Final Survey Completion Rates

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<th>Field End Date</th>
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<th>Number Completed</th>
<th>Completion Rate</th>
<th>AAPOR RR3</th>
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<tr>
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<td>09/28/07</td>
<td>1596</td>
<td>1222</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
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### 7d
**Final Survey Completion Rates**

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<th>Completion Rate</th>
<th>AAPOR RR3</th>
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<tr>
<td>08/13/08</td>
<td>08/25/08</td>
<td>1657</td>
<td>1052</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
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</table>

### STUDY EIGHT

**Final Survey Completion Rates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field Start Date</th>
<th>Field End Date</th>
<th>Number Fielded</th>
<th>Number Completed</th>
<th>Completion Rate</th>
<th>AAPOR RR3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>06/27/08</td>
<td>07/08/08</td>
<td>3216</td>
<td>2027</td>
<td>63.0%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### STUDY TEN

**Final Survey Completion Rates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field Start Date</th>
<th>Field End Date</th>
<th>Number Fielded</th>
<th>Number Completed</th>
<th>Completion Rate</th>
<th>AAPOR RR3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09/12/08</td>
<td>09/29/08</td>
<td>2496</td>
<td>1501</td>
<td>60.1%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### STUDY ELEVEN

**Spatial Reasoning – Wave 11**

**Final Survey Completion Rates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field Start Date</th>
<th>Field End Date</th>
<th>Number Fielded</th>
<th>Number Completed</th>
<th>Completion Rate</th>
<th>AAPOR RR3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/16/08</td>
<td>12/28/08</td>
<td>4920</td>
<td>3378</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>