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*The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (Nov., 1989), 993-1003.

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*The Journal of Politics* is currently published by Southern Political Science Association.

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# *Multiple Party Identifiers in Canada: Participation and Affect*

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Many Canadians identify with one party at the federal level and another in provincial politics. Split-level partisanship is far less frequent in the United States. Nevertheless, it is an open question whether such dual partisanship is traceable to the same determinants in both countries. Following Niemi et al. (1987), I examine whether split-level identifiers are less likely to participate in politics, as well as to have lower levels of efficacy than people who identify with one party (either being fully consistent or partially consistent). No support for either hypothesis is found. Split-level identifiers participate just as much as fully consistent and partially consistent partisans. Their efficacy is generally equal to that of other groups as well. The only exceptions suggest that split-level partisanship reflects citizens' political environments. If people face two very different party systems at the federal and provincial tiers, they are likely to have different patterns of identification regardless of their levels of participation and efficacy.

**T**he concept of party identification has played a critical role in understanding political behavior in the United States. Partisanship in the United States is not only the major determinant of vote choice but also is marked by considerable stability over time, with respect to both direction and intensity (Converse and Markus 1979). The prominence of this "unmoved mover" in studies of American electoral behavior has led to widespread applications in other national contexts, with varying degrees of success (Budge, Crewe, and Fairlie 1976; Converse and Dupeux 1967). To what extent is the American model of partisanship transferable to other countries? If it has applicability anywhere, the concept of party identification should perform best in Canada, which shares life-styles, material well-being, and culture with its southern neighbor.

There has been a long-standing debate as to whether partisanship in Can-

The support of the General Research Board and the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences of the University of Maryland—College Park as well as the Embassy of Canada (for Faculty Research and Faculty Enrichment Grants) is gratefully appreciated. The data analysis was performed through the University of Maryland Computer Science Center funding with data supplied by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (which bears no responsibility for any interpretations herein). The research assistance of Gregory Rost is gratefully appreciated, as are the comments of Harold D. Clarke and Charles D. Hadley.

ada does follow the American model. Sniderman et al. (1974, esp. 287) argue that the structure of partisanship in the two countries is very similar. On the other hand, LeDuc et al. (1984) demonstrate that both the direction and intensity of partisanship is far less stable than in the United States, varying in step with the issues and leaders of the moment (Jenson 1975). To be sure, the received view in the United States now is that partisanship should be viewed as endogenous (Fiorina 1981), but even so, very large differences persist between the two countries on this perspective.

One key indicator of the weakness of partisanship in Canada is identification with different parties at the federal and provincial levels, reflecting "two political worlds" (Blake et al. 1985) that largely do not intersect. Only 44%–45% of Canadians had fully consistent partisan identifications from 1974 to 1980 (LeDuc et al. 1984, 479); an identification is fully consistent if a voter selects the same party with the same strength at the federal and provincial levels. Niemi et al. (1987) and Hadley (1985) find considerable split-level identification in surveys of contributors to national campaigns and among Louisiana voters and argue that this is an indicator of a dealigning party system. LeDuc (1984) holds that the Canadian party system is already "dealigned" and citizens have a different set of partisan choices to make. In many Canadian provinces, the partisan struggle for seats does not involve at least one of the two major parties at the federal level.

Slightly more than 60% of Canadians identify with the same party at both levels across the three surveys of the 1974–1979–1980 panel. In the 1979 survey to be analyzed in this article, 47.4% of the respondents had fully consistent identification, 22.4% were partially consistent, and 23.9% were multiple identifiers.<sup>1</sup> The extent of split-level identification in Canada appears quite similar to the findings of Niemi et al. (1987), but the findings are not directly comparable. Niemi et al. (1987) measured partisanship at three rather than two levels and also included independents. More critically, unpublished surveys indicate substantially lower levels of split partisanship nationally in the United States and in several states.<sup>2</sup> These results suggest that dual partisanship in the United States may not be a good indicator of realignment since there are even fewer dual partisans in the United States now than

<sup>1</sup>These figures may differ slightly from those reported elsewhere, since I have excluded respondents who did not select one of the four major parties at the federal level or these same parties plus the Parti Quebecois at the provincial level.

<sup>2</sup>The 1987 pilot study of the National Election Studies found that 3% of the electorate had dual partisanship, while state studies in New Jersey (4%) and Louisiana (5%) reported similar results. These data were analyzed by Harold D. Clarke and Marianne Stewart who graciously shared the results with me. One possible explanation for the far higher rates of split identification in the contributor sample is that some contributors (such as Donald Trump) might prefer the national Republican party, but feel constrained to back the dominant Democratic party at the local level (Lynn 1989).

there were (5%) in 1958 (Jennings and Niemi 1966). Whatever the interpretation of the American results,<sup>3</sup> it is far from clear that the correlates of dual partisanship should be the same in Canada and the United States. To what extent, then, is the American model of partisanship transferable?

#### PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND PARTICIPATION

Niemi et al. (1987) argued that multiple identifiers should differ from those who consistently select the same party with the same strength of attachment. The "consistent" identifiers should demonstrate the strongest affiliations with parties, multiple identifiers the weakest, with "partially consistent" respondents (those selecting the same party at each level, but with different strengths) somewhere in between. In turn, following what we have long known about partisanship, strength of partisanship should be related to levels of political participation. Putting the chain together, we have the following argument: Strength of partisanship determines consistency of affiliations, which affects the degree of participation. They found at best a modicum of support for this logic among American campaign contributors. To what extent are either the received model of partisanship or the findings of the contributor study applicable outside the American context?

I investigate this question employing the 1979 Canadian National Election Study. My purpose is not to analyze what drives multiple partisanship, but to compare as directly as possible the results for American campaign contributors to the Canadian public.<sup>4</sup> In Canada the relationship between the strength and consistency of party identification are even stronger than in the American contributor sample (data not shown). In the American data partially consistent identifiers are least likely to identify strongly with a party; more than half are independent leaners. In Canada partially consistent

<sup>3</sup>These findings are not completely inconsistent with a dealignment thesis. Partisanship declined in the 1960s, especially in the South as voters moved away from the Democratic party at the presidential level. As more voters shifted to the Republican party at all levels by the 1980s, the level of split-level identification would decline again in the wake of a regional *realignment*. In any event, the *national* dealignment thesis does not in any way depend upon an increase in split-level identification. Wattenberg (1984) persuasively argues that dealignment involves neutrality toward both parties, not hostility toward either. Thus, we would expect an increase in the percentage of pure independents and in that for partially consistent identifiers.

<sup>4</sup>For an analysis of what drives multiple levels of partisanship in Canada, see Uslander (1989b). The 1979 survey was selected because it alone among the three waves of the panel had variables for use in that study. Many of the participation questions to be considered here, however, were asked only of half of the sample, thus reducing the number of cases available for analysis. (This same problem affected the other two waves of the survey as well.) Throughout the analyses, only the voters who identified with one of the four political parties that compete in federal politics (Liberals, Progressive Conservatives, New Democrats, and Social Credit) were included. This analysis employs the 1979 national cross-section sample, whereas Uslander (1989b) is based upon the 1974–1979 panel weights.

TABLE 1  
PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES BY CONSISTENCY OF PARTY IDENTIFICATION\*

	Consistent Identifiers	Partially Consistent Identifiers	Multiple Identifiers	Statistical Significance Level	tau-c	gamma
<u>Federal Activities</u>						
Follow in newspapers	68.8	74.1	75.6	.098	-.065	-.131
Discuss with friends	63.3	67.0	72.0	.062	-.074	-.135
Try to convince friends	22.6	24.1	21.5	.797	.005	-.011
Attend Meeting	19.5	18.2	16.7	.641	-.024	.066
Contact public officials	16.9	22.0	15.0	.110	.002	.005
Work for party/candidate	13.2	11.9	10.5	.572	.023	.089
Contribute money	11.6	9.2	9.8	.577	.019	.083
<u>Provincial Activities</u>						
Follow in newspapers	71.0	76.3	79.0	.047	-.073	-.157
Discuss with friends	61.9	63.5	71.9	.023	-.080	-.143
Try to convince friends	22.0	21.3	25.6	.460	-.025	-.058
Attend meeting	19.8	18.5	21.4	.728	-.009	-.022
Contact public officials	16.2	23.7	18.4	.052	-.035	-.092
Work for party/candidate	10.5	11.8	12.6	.687	-.019	-.074
Contribute money	10.8	10.3	14.5	.253	-.027	-.106

\* Percent of respondents answering "often" or "sometimes" as opposed to "seldom" or "never."  
N ranges from 972 to 978.

identifiers are somewhat more likely than fully consistent respondents to have weak attachments.

Niemi et al. (1987) found that, contrary to expectations, split-level identifiers participated in politics at least as much as—and often more than—partially consistent did. As hypothesized, however, consistent had the highest levels of participation. The relevant data for the Canadian sample are presented in table 1. They do not at all conform to expectations. Respondents were asked whether they engage in each of seven activities at either the federal or the provincial levels: (1) follow politics in newspapers; (2) discuss politics with friends; (3) try to convince friends about politics; (4) attend political meetings; (5) contact public officials; (6) work for parties or candidates; and (7) contribute money.

As in the American contributor study, participation rates for multiple and partially consistent identifiers were quite similar. For many activities, especially at the provincial level, split-level identifiers were actually more likely to participate than were partially consistent. However, in only three of the 14 comparisons did consistent identifiers participate more than did either of the other groups (attending meetings, working for a party or a candidate, and contributing money, all at the federal level). About a third (five of 14) of the participation activities reached statistical significance at the generous .10 level. The tau-c and gamma coefficients were all very small.<sup>5</sup> Whatever patterns are there indicate more activity by multiple identifiers.

#### PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND POLITICAL EFFICACY

If participation measures of the type considered by Niemi et al. (1987) do not show any significant differences across the categories of partisan identification, what about other indicators of activity and political efficacy and trust? Two additional measures of participation—voting and being very interested in politics—show little variation across partisan types. On questions of efficacy, just one of the four items reach significance at the .05 level (see table 2). However, consistent identifiers are more likely to agree with the argument that “sometimes politics and government are so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what is going on.” In no case does the sign of the measures of association correspond with predictions although virtually all of the measures are very modest.

Similarly, three of the four measures of political trust have correlations not in the predicted direction. Just two of the four are significant at the .05 level: Consistent identifiers are more likely to agree that the (federal) government wastes tax money and that many in government are dishonest. Even these

<sup>5</sup>All signs on the coefficients have been adjusted so that a positive correlation indicates correspondence with the hypothesized relationship and a negative sign indicates the opposite to what has been predicted.

TABLE 2  
PARTICIPATION, EFFICACY, AND TRUST BY CONSISTENCY OF PARTY IDENTIFICATION\*

	Consistent Identifiers	Partially Consistent Identifiers	Multiple Identifiers	Statistical Significance Level	tau-c	gamma
<u>Participation</u>						
Voted in 1979	91.8	90.7	89.9	.440	.017	.085
Very interested in politics	14.7	15.4	14.5	.140	.033	.059
<u>Efficacy</u>						
Government doesn't care what people like me think	55.0	53.1	47.6	.172	-.060	-.097
Politics too complicated	74.0	64.5	60.7	.000	-.124	-.225
No say about government	58.9	53.5	53.3	.226	-.056	-.091
Voting doesn't matter	14.6	15.9	9.6	.097	-.034	-.119
<u>Political Trust</u>						
Many in government dishonest	41.3	40.7	28.9	.006	-.095	-.163
Government wastes taxes	81.7	81.5	73.1	.019	-.065	-.159
Trust government to do right	72.2	67.0	66.9	.215	.053	.101
Most in government smart	70.2	68.7	74.0	.432	-.025	-.050

\*For efficacy and trust questions, entries are percentages of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with question.

N ranges from 860 to 968. N = 1968 for voting participation and 1977 for interest in politics.

TABLE 3

## PROBIT ANALYSIS OF CONSISTENCY OF PARTY IDENTIFICATION

Predictor	Coefficient	MLE/SE
Vote	-.342	-2.069*
Interest in politics	.056	.754
Government doesn't care	-.041	-1.222
Politics too complicated	-.063	-1.914
No say about government	-.011	-.329
Voting doesn't matter	.004	.093
Many in government dishonest	-.068	-2.075*
Government wastes taxes	-.026	-.677
Trust government to do right	-.067	-2.039*
Most in government smart	.027	.817
Follow in newspapers (federal)	-.056	-.972
Discuss with friends (federal)	.017	.305
Try to convince friends (federal)	-.083	-1.389
Attend meeting (federal)	.010	.168
Contact public officials (federal)	-.033	-.659
Work for party/candidate (federal)	-.048	-.681
Contribute money (federal)	-.211	-2.685*
Follow in newspapers (provincial)	.090	1.498
Discuss with friends (provincial)	.008	.152
Try to convince friends (provincial)	.092	1.523
Attend meeting (provincial)	-.031	-.554
Contact public officials (provincial)	.045	.885
Work for party/candidate (provincial)	.023	.071
Contribute money (provincial)	.172	2.318*
Constant	1.686	4.252*

-2 Log Likelihood Ratio 47.870 (24 d.f.)

Estimated R Square .082

Rank-Order Correlation (rho) .193

$N = 779$

\* $p < .05$

significant relationships are marked by modest measures of association ( $\tau\text{-}c < -.10$  and  $\gamma < -.20$ ). For most of the efficacy and trust questions, the partially consistent identifiers appear to be more similar to fully consistent partisans than to people with split-level attachments.

The standard model of partisanship treats identification as exogenous; people who have stronger ties to parties are more likely to participate in politics. However, one can also argue that the direction of causality goes the other way—or, more likely, both ways (cf. Fiorina 1981). People who are more participatory and trusting are also more likely to have stronger—and particularly more consistent—partisanship. To construct a simultaneous-equation model would take us too far afield. However, analyzing partisan consistency as a dependent variable is at least instructive in this context. The



24 measures of participation and efficacy together do a modest job at best of predicting split-level partisanship. Table 3 reports a probit analysis of multiple party identification employing these variables.<sup>6</sup> The estimated  $R^2$  is only .082 and the rank-order correlation between the estimated and actual values is just .193. Of the 24 predictors, only three are significant at the .05 level for a one-tailed test. Voters are more likely than nonvoters to be consistent identifiers, as are those who believe that the government can be trusted to do the right thing. People who give money to federal candidates are more likely to have consistent identifications, but those who contribute to provincial candidates are less likely to select the same party at both levels.<sup>7</sup> Those who argue that many in government are dishonest are less likely to split their partisanship. The multivariate analysis confirms the weak overall relationship between the consistency of partisan identification and measures of participation and efficacy. No causal path (as the zero-order correlations in tables 1 and 2 indicate) appears supported by this analysis.

#### TWO ARENAS OF PARTISANSHIP?

Split-level identifiers in Canada seem to be just as participatory, perhaps even a bit more so, than consistent partisans. What differences we find for efficacy and trust are in the same direction: Multiple identifiers score higher than consistent partisans. (Partially consistent identifiers fall closer to people with fully consistent affiliations than to respondents with split-level attachments.) These results contradict our expectations and what we know about American politics.

While the Niemi et al. (1987) findings do not fully conform to the received model of partisanship, the divergences are minor and explicable in terms of the nature of the sample. Contributors are by definition more participatory than other citizens. In most respects the contributor results support the traditional social-psychological perspective on partisan affiliation. What is surprising is that in a country with weaker and less stable partisan ties, both over time and across levels, the American model of partisanship should be so decisively rejected. The alternative thesis of a weaker basis of party ties in Canada (Jenson 1975; LeDuc et al. 1984) is no more strongly supported. If anything, it should predict an even stronger relationship between partisan-

<sup>6</sup>The dependent variable is a three-category ordinal measure of split-level identification with partially consistent identifiers in the middle. The sample size for this equation is reduced to 779 because of list-wise deletion of missing data.

<sup>7</sup>The signs of the coefficients reflect the responses to the agree/disagree questions. Unlike tables 1 and 2, the signs have not been reflected to correspond to theoretical expectations. The predictors employed in the probit analysis are, except for interest in politics, all dichotomous measures to conform to the analyses in tables 1 and 2. This does not affect the results of the analysis. Only one of the predictors (contributing money at the federal level) was statistically significant at the .01 level for a one-tailed test.

ship and participation and affect. If only a smaller subset of the Canadian electorate were strongly and consistently partisan, we should find large and robust measures of association with the participation and affect measures. Precisely the opposite obtains. However, unlike many countries in which the relationship of party identification to the vote is unstable, partisanship structures the vote in Canada in much the same way that it does in the United States (Uslaner 1989a) and with even greater consistency (LeDuc et al. 1984, 477, table 3).

To explain the different roles of partisanship (here, consistency of identification across levels), we should look less to underlying psychological processes than to the different political and historical contexts in which political parties operate. Canada's "two political worlds" are very different from the pattern of party competition in the United States. The story of Canadian provincial party systems is one qualified by many "buts." The Atlantic provinces (New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island) are marked by the same two parties that dominate federal politics. They have the lowest levels of split identifiers by far and correspondingly the highest level of fully consistent identifiers (Clarke et al. 1980, 97), but they also have the lowest levels of both efficacy and trust of all Canadians (Adamson and Stewart 1985, 321). British Columbians live in a polity almost completely divorced from federal politics. They have the highest percentage of split identifiers of any province, but have the highest efficacy of all Canadians even as they distrust the federal government (Blake et al. 1985, 57). Perhaps only Ontarians—who reside in the only province where the three largest federal parties also compete in provincial elections—fit the expected mold of believing that the federal government is responsive to them, having a high degree of political efficacy, and a relatively low percentage of split identifiers (Kornberg et al. 1982, 79–80).<sup>8</sup>

The supposedly anomalous findings make sense once we realize that provincial political culture is the intervening political variable. Consistent partisans do not appear to be higher on either efficacy or trust because many Atlantic province citizens are consistent but lack efficacy. Split-level identifiers do not appear to be low on efficacy because many British Columbia residents are inconsistent but high on efficacy. Most B.C. residents who distrust the federal government think that they can do something about it, while most Atlantic residents who believe that the federal government cannot be trusted believe that they can do nothing. Yet neither group, with very different patterns of consistency in partisanship, is high on trust. The strongest determinants of split-level identification in Canada are the historical strength of parties at the two levels and citizens' affinity for their provinces as opposed

<sup>8</sup>Ontario is marked, however, by reasonably high levels of partially consistent identifiers (25%) and of single-level identifiers (15%) so that only 49% of respondents are fully consistent (Clarke et al. 1980, 97).

to the country (Uslaner 1989b). This is reflected in the structure of party organizations. Canadian parties of the same name often maintain completely separate, if not outrightly competitive, organizations in many provinces (Whitaker 1985); in the United States, there is far greater party coordination among levels of government.

Of course, patterns of partisanship differ from one country to another. However, this does not necessarily mean that people in different countries have fundamentally different attitudes about political parties, or that if they do these orientations stem from essentially different social-psychological processes. As this study of two similar, but also culturally different, polities indicates, the answer is more likely to lie in factors largely beyond individual control. In Canada, party affiliation may have a much heavier load to pull than in the United States and, given what it has to work with, may be doing a rather remarkable job in keeping the percentage of split-level identifiers as low as it is.

*Manuscript submitted 16 May 1988*

*Final version received 10 April 1989*

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