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Party Identification and Party Enrollment: The Difference and the Consequence

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This article concerns the relationship between voters' professed party identification as determined by opinion surveys and their officially recorded party enrollment in those states having enrollment systems. It presents evidence showing the extent to which these two measurements of partisanship do and do not coincide, and the reasons for the relationship. The evidence points strongly to the conclusion that party enrollment systems affect the way some voters perceive the nature of partisanship, or at least the way they respond to the party identification question, with the result that survey responses may fail to present an accurate picture of voter feelings of party allegiance or of political independence.

The concept of party identification has long been a conspicuous component in the study of voting behavior in both the United States and abroad. Yet the concept and its measurement continue to be fraught with difficulties. Does party identification exist independently, or is a respondent's professed party allegiance simply another way of expressing a more basic commitment to a social class or to an ideology? Does a professed party allegiance represent a long-term psychological attachment, or is it a momentary preference for one party and its candidate(s) in a particular election? Granted that party identification exists and that it is long in

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duration, is it the result only of childhood socialization, or is it based also on a voter's evaluations of prior political experiences? Is party identification unidimensional, or does it include feelings, varying in intensity, toward both major parties? What do respondents mean when they say that they are political independents? These and other questions of conceptualization carry with them the problem of measurement; exactly what questions should be asked by survey investigators? Serious problems of wording and translation have confronted investigators in non-American settings; in the United States additional measures of party support were included by the Center for Political Studies (CPS) in its 1980 election survey.[1]

The present study addresses another aspect of the two-sided question of conceptualization and measurement. It investigates the relationship between voters' professed party identification and their officially recorded party enrollment, often referred to as party registration.[2] In their classic study, *The American Voter*, Campbell et al. (1960) noted that the variety of state election practices in the American states contributes to the way voters respond to the political world about them.[3] Left unanswered, however, was how party enrollment laws may influence the way voters perceive their relationship to a party and/or may influence the way they respond to the party identification question. Specifically, the hypothesis to be explored here is that voters in the twenty-seven states with party enrollment systems (appendix A)—where enrollment usually takes place at the time of initial registration,[4] where the enrollment record is used to restrict primary participation, and where partisan enrollment can be changed only well in advance of a primary election—will be conscious of their legal enrollment status much the same way that they are conscious of whether or not they are registered, and that this consciousness will influence their perception of the nature of the partisan tie and/or their response to the party identification question. Voters in open primary states, or in so-called closed primary states where the only test of partisanship is an oral declaration for a primary ballot, will not have this consciousness. Investigators in

[1] A discussion of some of these problems in non-American settings will be found in Norpoth (1978). A more recent analysis focusing on the arguments of American critics is contained in Asher (1983, pp. 354-60). The additional questions of party support and their consequences are discussed in Dennis (1983).

[2] Despite the fact that "registration" is the more common term, in this study "enrollment" will be used in order to avoid confusion with voter registration.

[3] Because of different procedures and approaches, the findings of the present study cannot be directly compared with those reported in chapter 11 of *The American Voter*.

[4] The exceptions are Kansas, New Jersey, and Rhode Island, where enrollment occurs only when voters participate in their first primary election. In Ohio a voter's choice of primary ballot is noted on the registration form, but that choice is not used to restrict subsequent primary participation; hence in this study Ohio is classified with the nonenrollment states.

TABLE 1

PERCENT PARTY ENROLLMENT AND PERCENT PARTY IDENTIFICATION COMPARED

	PARTY ENROLLMENT			PARTY IDENTIFICATION			INDEPENDENT ENROLLMENT		INDEPENDENT IDENTIFICATION	
STATE	DEM (%)	REP (%)	RANK IN DEM MARGIN[a]	DEM (%)	REP (%)	RANK IN DEM MARGIN[a]	%	RANK[b]	%	RANK[b]
N. Carolina	72	24	1	52	26	3	4	17	21	15
Maryland	69	24	2.5	61	10	1	7	12	24	12
Oklahoma	71	26	2.5	39	42	15	2	19	15	19
Kentucky	68	29	4	51	26	4	3	18	20	17
Florida	63	31	5	46	25	5	6	14	26	11
Mass.	46	15	6	30	23	11	40	1	46	1
California	53	35	7	41	32	10	9	10	20	16
Nevada	54	38	8	51	22	2	7	13	24	13
Oregon	50	36	9	34	30	12	14	9	32	7
Connecticut	40	27	10	34	23	8.5	33	5	40	4
Delaware	45	33	12	35	19	6.5	22	7	45	2
New York	46	34	12	39	28	8.5	17	8	28	8
Penn.	53	41	12	45	29	6.5	5	16	24	14
Iowa	34	32	14.5	33	31	13	34	3	34	6
Arizona	47	45	14.5	27	45	18	8	11	27	10
Colorado	32	32	16	31	32	14	37	2	36	5

Kansas	29	33	17	28	42	16	33	4	27	9
Nebraska	44	50	18	32	47	17	6	15	18	18
New Hamp.	33	40	19	18	39	19	27	6	42	3

Source: Enrollment data are as of 1982, and are taken from *Almanac of American Politics, 1984*, except for New York, taken from official data of the State Board of Elections, and for Maine and New Hampshire, taken from the 1982 edition of the *Almanac*. Party identification data are from the ABC poll of 24,438 voters, following their exit from the polling place in November, 1982. The question asked was: "Regardless of how you voted, in politics today do you consider yourself a Democrat, Republican, Independent, Something else." Six of the states listed in the table were oversampled in order to increase confidence in statewide results; these were Massachusetts, California, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, and Iowa. The frequencies for all states are nationally weighted. The table is limited to the nineteen enrollment states included in the ABC survey, and hence omits six of the enrollment states, as well as Rhode Island and New Jersey where enrollment figures are not compiled. The ABC survey and the other commercial surveys presented in this study were made available through the Roper Center, University of Connecticut.

Note: The enrollments for the six states not included in the ABC survey are as follows:

	Dem	*Rep*	*Ind*
Maine	32%	29%	39%
West Virginia	67	31	2
Louisiana	87	7	6
South Dakota	44	47	9
Wyoming	37	49	14
New Mexico	63	30	6

For a complete listing of responses to the ABC survey, see appendix B.

[a]Percentage-point margin of Democrat over Republican.

[b]Rankings based on percentages carried to decimal.

countries with mass membership parties have had to take care lest a respondent interpret the party identification question as referring to party membership. Should American investigators likewise be alert to the possible confusion or merging of the two types of partisanship which is possible in the twenty-seven enrollment states—a psychological attachment based on feelings of allegiance and a legally defined partisan status which may or may not be characterized by such feelings?

The investigation will employ aggregate enrollment data for the respective enrollment states, aggregate responses to the party identification question in these and other states, and individual-level data drawn from various election surveys.

Party Enrollment and Party Identification Compared

As a starting point to our inquiry we will compare the aggregate totals of responses to the party identification question with the aggregate enrollment figures published by the respective states.[5] The data are presented in table 1. The party identification responses are taken from the over 24,000 questionnaires administered by ABC News as voters exited from the polling place in the November 1982 midterm elections, and they cover nineteen of the enrollment states. These data are especially suitable for our purpose because: (1) they relate, like the enrollment figures, to registered voters only; (2) they are based on responses to an identically worded survey instrument in each of the nineteen states;[6] and (3) the large N gives us relative confidence in the results when they are broken down to the state level. The party enrollment data presented in the table include not only the percentage of enrolled Democrats and Republicans, but also the percentage of registered voters who have chosen not to enroll in a party. Although official records usually employ terms like "nonenrollment" to describe such voters, election officials, the media, and voters themselves usually use the term "independent."[7]

[5] Enrollment data are not published in New Jersey and Rhode Island. They are published in Kansas, but in that state the term "independent" applies to registered voters who have never participated in a primary.

[6] This point is especially important for comparing the number of self-described independents. Survey instruments that ask independent respondents which party they feel closer to end up with numbers considerably smaller than instruments, such as those used by the network exit polls, that ask only the single question.

[7] According to an election official in Oklahoma, many registrants in that state seemed to believe that nonenrollment made them members of an independent party. Signs had to be posted explaining that there was no such party in the state (letter to the author). See also below.

The most obvious conclusion emerging from table 1 is that there is a strong but not perfect correlation between the pattern of partisanship as indicated by voter enrollment figures and the pattern established by voter self-descriptions. North Carolina thus ranks as the most Democratic state in terms of Democratic over Republican enrollment, and it ranks third in terms of Democratic identification over Republican identification. New Hampshire ranks as the most Republican state in terms of both enrollment and identification. In all the Spearman rank order correlation between Democratic margin in enrollment and Democratic margin in identification is .70; the correlation between independent enrollment rank and independent identification rank is .87.

The failure of enrollment figures to bear a more exact relationship to party identification responses no doubt reflects in part a deliberate falsification by some voters at the time of their enrollment. Observers of politics in areas where one party is dominant have noted that voters may enroll in the dominant party in order to participate in that party's primary contests, the South having been the most obvious area for such a strategy. Those seeking favors from government—e.g., jobs, contracts, zoning decisions—may also believe that it is to their advantage to be identified publicly with the dominant party.[8] Or, it is possible that social pressures of the sort expressed by Berelson et al. (1954) may result in a person's wanting to be seen as a member of the dominant party. Whatever the motivation for persons enrolling in the dominant party, the greatest discrepancies between a party's enrollment and its share of party identifiers are to be found in states where one party tends to dominate. Thus the top six states listed in table 1 have been ranked by Patterson and Caldeira (1984) as being the least competitive among the enrollment states, and together these states have an average 18-point discrepancy between the dominant party's (Democratic) enrollment share and its share of the party identifiers.

The practice of independent-minded voters masquerading as partisan adherents is also apparently widespread. Thus in seventeen of the nineteen states included in table 1, the number of self-described independents exceeds 20 percent, whereas in only seven of the states is the percentage of nonenrolled voters that high. Exit polls in primaries where only enrolled partisans are eligible to participate also usually find that at least 20 percent of the participants call themselves independent. For example, an NBC exit poll of participants in New York's 1982 gubernatorial primaries found that 29 percent of the Republican participants and 26 percent of the Democratic participants described themselves as "strictly independent" rather than as

[8] Evidence of these enrollment practices in New York State is presented in Sayre and Kaufman (1965, chap. 5), and Scarrow (1983, chap. 1).

either strong or weak partisans.[9] As will be shown below, the 1984 Democratic presidential primaries produced similar findings.

Not only may independents masquerade as partisans; the opposite is also true. Partisans may refuse to make public their partisanship, preferring the status of nonenrollment. As discussed below, in some states this tactic is positively encouraged. Elsewhere, infrequent or noncompetitive primaries may offer little incentive for party enrollment (Jewell, 1984, chap. 7).

The Center for Political Studies data for the 1976 and 1980 elections provide the most complete description of the relationships between party enrollment and party identification. The relationships, which are based on validated enrollment data for the two studies, are shown in table 2. It will be seen that the number of party enrollees who initially respond that they consider themselves independent ranges between 22 percent and 27 percent, although these proportions shrink to between 5 percent and 9 percent once respondents are asked which party they feel closer to. Nevertheless, when these remaining, pure independents are combined with the enrolled partisans who express loyalty to the other party, we see that nearly 20 percent of the Democratic enrollees in 1976, and 17 percent in 1980, expressed no identification whatsoever with the Democratic party. The comparable figures for Republican enrollees was 13 percent for both years. As for the independent enrollees, 70 percent admitted to some degree of partisanship in 1976, and 87 percent in 1980.[10]

What are the implications of these findings concerning the discrepancy which may occur between a voter's enrollment and party identification? Perhaps the most obvious lesson to be drawn from the comparisons is that accurate analysis of the behavior of the American electorate, especially in primary elections, requires a recognition of the dual meanings contained in the vocabulary of partisanship. Such caution is usually not observed in press coverage, where terms like "registered Democrat" and "independent" are used ambiguously and often inconsistently. Those who worry about the party loyalties of primary participants must also take notice of

[9] NBC/Associated Press poll of 23 September 1982 (N = 2, 381).

[10] The analysis for table 2 has been confined to those respondents whose party "registration" was validated and who lived in one of the twenty-seven enrollment states. In fact, however, the CPS data show five additional states where party "registration" was validated: Illinois, Indiana, Texas, Tennessee, and Ohio (perhaps understandable). Also not clear from the CPS code book is the distinction between "Independent," "Uncommitted," "No record of party preference," and "Non-partisan." So long as these terms are used in connection with one of the twenty-seven states, it is reasonable to combine responses so coded into one category, as has been done in table 2. However, if the analysis is extended to include both the enrollment states and the nonenrollment states, then the code "No record of party preference" could refer either to the fact that the state does not maintain a record or to the fact that a respondent has not recorded a party preference in a state which does.

TABLE 2

RESPONDENT'S PARTY ENROLLMENT AND PARTY IDENTIFICATION COMPARED (%)

RESPONDENT'S PARTY IDENTIFICATION	RESPONDENT'S PARTY ENROLLMENT (VALIDATED) 1976 DEM	1976 IND	1976 REP	1980 DEM	1980 IND	1980 REP
Strong Democrat	28.6	4.0	0.8	29.9	4.3	1.3
Weak Democrat	39.5	14.2	3.4	41.6	14.5	2.5
Ind. Democrat	12.2	22.8	2.6	11.7	20.3	1.9
Pure Independent	8.5	30.1	5.8	6.1	13.0	7.6
Ind. Republican	4.9	19.1	14.1	5.1	29.0	17.2
Weak Republican	4.8	7.5	40.8	3.3	13.0	39.5
Strong Republican	1.4	2.3	33.4	2.3	5.8	29.9
N	(449)	(173)	(313)	(214)	(69)	(157)

Source: Center for Political Studies.

Note: The table includes data only for those respondents living in states which maintain records of party enrollment (see footnote 10). Some of these states were not represented in the survey: New Hampshire, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Nevada, New Mexico in 1980; Rhode Island, Delaware, Kansas, Wyoming in 1976. Included under independent enrollment are respondents coded 2, 3, and 6 for variable 5004 in 1976 (Uncommitted, Independent, and No record of party preference). For 1980 the appropriate codes were 3, 4, 5, and 8 for variable 1199 (Independent, Uncommitted, Non-Partisan, and No record of party preference).

the discrepancy between party enrollment and party identification. As has been shown in other studies (Ranney, 1972; Hedlund et al., 1982), party enrollment systems do not guarantee that only party loyalists will participate in primary elections. Additional examples of independent participation in Democratic presidential primaries in states with strict enrollment systems are presented below.[11]

PARTY ENROLLMENT OR PARTY IDENTIFICATION: WHICH ONE ARE WE MEASURING?

Having discussed the extent to which enrollment and identification do not coincide, we now turn to the more interesting question of why they coincide as much as they do. At first, this might seem to be a question unworthy of investigation. Presumably most voters are honest and forthright, choosing to become enrolled in the party with which they identify, and later answering survey questions accordingly. But such a conclusion

[11] The 1984 presidential primaries also demonstrated that enrollment systems do not prevent Republican participation in Democratic contests. The ABC exit poll showed that 9 percent of Florida's enrolled Democratic participants were self-described Republicans, while in Wisconsin's "beauty contest" primary, where not even an oral declaration for a ballot is required, the proportion was only 8 percent.

assumes that answers to the party identification question measure the respondent's feelings of partisan allegiance, or of neutrality. What if some respondents answer the party identification question not in this manner, but rather in terms of their enrollment status? If this be the case, it is not surprising that the enrollment data are highly correlated with self-description data; they are both measuring the same thing.

Survey respondents do not distinguish between party enrollment and party identification, at least when presented with a single question. Beginning in the 1950s and continuing through the early 1970s, the Gallup organization asked successive samples of Americans not only what they "considered" themselves, but also asked successive different samples the following question: "If you had to register again today, would you register as a Democrat or as a Republican?" Given the fact that some 40 percent of Americans lived in states where there was no party "registration," it is a wonder that a high proportion of respondents—or interviewers—did not express consternation at the question being asked. But such was not the case, and for over fifteen years the question was periodically included in the Gallup surveys. An analysis of one of the last of these surveys reveals that the number of respondents choosing the "undecided" option—the only seemingly correct option available to respondents in nonenrollment states—was only slightly higher in those states without "registration" systems than it was in those states with such systems.[12] But the most telling evidence that respondents do not differentiate between the two indices of partisanship is provided by the fact that during the time Gallup was posing the two questions, the results of the respective surveys were virtually identical. Thus in 1971 the party registration survey yielded the result of 47 percent Democrat, 28 percent Republican, and 25 percent undecided, while the "consider yourself" survey that year produced the result of 45 percent Democrat, 29 percent Republican, and 26 percent independent.[13] (For this reason, as well as for its inappropriateness in some states, Gallup dropped the question from its standard list of items.)

Responses to the CPS surveys also reflect the considerable confusion which can surround the distinction between party enrollment and party identification. The 1980 postelection survey shows that 76 percent of the respondents who lived in nonenrollment states nevertheless gave an answer to the question "Were you registered in this election as being a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?" That is, only 24 percent were

[12] American Institute of Public Opinion 834, 15-18 July 1971 (N = 1,562).

[13] Both results are taken from the three-volume *Gallup Poll, Public Opinion 1935-1971* (Gallup, 1972, pp. 2322, 2274).

coded as "voter not required to declare a party."[14] Even more bewildering, 13 percent of the respondents in the nonenrollment states actually said that they were registered in one party, while earlier in the interview they had chosen the other party or independence when responding to the identification question.

These results will come as no surprise to those who have taught courses on political parties to students who live in New York State. When students are asked whether they are Democrats, Republicans, or what, they will usually interpret the question as an inquiry into their party enrollment—or perhaps their parents' enrollment. Thus when asked, say, *why* Republican, the reason given may be the hope to be hired as a lifeguard at one of the town beaches. It comes as a surprise to most of these students to be told that in close to half the American states party enrollment does not exist.

At least some survey respondents appear to be able to make the distinction between enrollment and identification, as seen from the fact that some of those who report their enrollment one way report their party identification another—a proportion usually close to 30 percent when both questions are asked in a single survey.[15] But how many respondents are there who do not make the distinction? That is, are there any respondents to the party identification question who, like the New York students, (1)respond to the question in terms of enrollment, and (2) have chosen an enrollment status for reasons not necessarily related to feelings of party allegiance? If so, the survey will not present an accurate picture of the distribution of basic party loyalties helping to determine voter choice, but rather will reflect voters' perception of a quite different dimension of the partisan tie. We present three kinds of evidence which suggest an affirmative answer to our question: (1) the concentration of independents; (2) a comparison of the total adult electorate with the registered electorate; and (3) the pattern of voter defection.

[14] In no state is a voter "required" to declare a party affiliation. It is assumed that as used in the CPS survey this option refers to states without enrollment systems.

[15] In the two CPS surveys reported in table 2, some 30 percent of the party enrollments were at variance with the respondent's party identification, before the "closer to" question was posed to independents. Similar results were obtained in two other surveys where both the enrollment question and the identification question were asked: a survey of the New York State voters by the *New York Times* and *CBS News* in 1980, and a national panel study by *Newsday* in which the enrollment question was asked in 1982 and the identification question in 1984. Both surveys found more than 20 percent of all respondents reporting party identification at variance with their party enrollment. The authors are indebted to Stephen Cole, Department of Sociology, State University of New York at Stony Brook, for the data from the *Newsday* poll.

Concentration of Independents

The first kind of evidence is provided by the state-by-state concentrations of self-described independents. Table 1 has shown that the proportion of such independents varies widely among the states, just as the proportion of self-described Democrats and Republicans varies widely. But while our knowledge of American history and politics prepares us for the finding that Arkansas and Maryland are the two strongest Democratic states in terms of self-description, with, respectively, 60 percent and 61 percent of respondents describing themselves as Democrats (appendix B), and that Nebraska and Idaho are the two strongest Republican states, with 47 percent of the respondents in both states describing themselves as Republicans, nothing we know prepares us for the finding that the largest proportion of self-described independents is to be found in Massachusetts (46 percent), and that the smallest proportion is to be found in Oklahoma (15 percent)—nothing, that is, unless we have taken a close look at the enrollment data for these states and have been alerted to the mechanics of their enrollment systems.

Massachusetts ranks first among all the states in the percentage of enrolled independents, with 40 percent of the registered voters so enrolled, and Oklahoma ranks last, with only 2 percent. The explanation for this great disparity seems unquestionably to be found in the mechanics of the respective enrollment systems. In Massachusetts it is possible for a nonenrolled voter to appear at the polling place on primary election day, formally declare a party affiliation, vote, and then formally change affiliation back to that of nonenrollment. A voter who takes advantage of this opportunity can maintain partisan anonymity during the period between primaries and flexibility of partisan choice on the day of the primary. Oklahoma not only prohibits primary participation by voters who have not enrolled in a party, but the election officials there have consciously undertaken to educate new registrants about primary participation, warning them with posted signs that they will not be able to participate in Republican or Democratic primaries unless they enroll with one of these parties.

Massachusetts is not the only state which allows enrolled independents to declare a party affiliation on primary day. That practice is allowed also in Colorado, Iowa, Maine, New Hampshire, Wyoming, and Rhode Island. As demonstrated in table 1, these are precisely the states which, along with Massachusetts, rank among the highest in the percentage of independent enrollees, with proportions of 37 percent, 34 percent, 39 percent, 27 percent, and 14 percent, respectively. Rhode Island does not maintain enrollment figures, but the practice of primary participation followed by deenrollment is reported to be widespread there as well. Of the seven states with independent enrollments of 20 percent or more, only Connecticut and

Delaware do not follow the liberal practice toward independents.[16]

There is no apparent explanation for the very small number of independent enrollees found in many states. In addition to Oklahoma, four states have independent enrollments of 5 percent or less, and 9 others (including California) have enrollments of less than 10 percent. Perhaps the explanation is the logical one—that most voters want to participate in primary elections. Or perhaps, as in Oklahoma, the mechanics of election administration have produced these results. In New York, for example, it was found that a seemingly trivial feature of the enrollment form had the effect of reducing the number of independent enrollees (Scarrow, 1983, chap. 1).

Whatever the explanation for the pattern of high and low independent enrollments among the states, it seems clear that the variation has been influenced by factors which have nothing to do with feelings of partisan neutrality. Accordingly, we should hardly expect there to be a high correlation between independent enrollment figures and independent responses to the party identification question. Yet, as we have seen, that correlation is .87; the top eight states in terms of independent enrollment parallel perfectly the top eight states in terms of independent responses, and the lowest eight states in terms of independent enrollment parallel seven of the lowest states in terms of independent responses. We can only conclude that some portion of the respondents to the 1982 network poll were influenced more by the consciousness of their legal enrollment than by their feelings of nonpartisanship. In an essay on Massachusetts politics, Seasholes (1973, p. 39) reached this same conclusion. Finding a very large number of self-described independents in his survey, he concluded that a person's legal enrollment "probably affects self-designation no matter what level of government an interviewer may specify"—state, local, or national.

Data from the network exit polls in the 1976 and 1984 presidential primaries show the same concentration of independent responses as found in the 1982 exit poll, although now the respondents are primary participants. It would be expected that the highest proportion of self-described independents participating in party primaries would be in the nonenrollment states. As can be seen from table 3, however, that expectation is not confirmed for the enrollment states which allow participation by nonenrolled voters; only in Vermont in 1984 did the number of self-described independents reach the level it did in these states. Again the conclusion is

[16] The high proportion shown for Kansas results from the fact that in this state the figure refers to registered voters who have never participated in a primary; hence it cannot be meaningfully compared with figures from other states.

TABLE 3

PERCENT OF SELF-DESCRIBED INDEPENDENTS PARTICIPATING IN PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES, BY TYPE OF ELECTORATE

1976 PRIMARIES[a]

ENROLLED PARTISANS ONLY		ENROLLED PARTISANS AND NONENROLLED REGISTERED VOTERS		NO PARTY ENROLLMENT	
Florida	23	New Hampshire	39	Illinois	24
Pennsylvania	24	Massachusetts	36	Indiana	23/29
California	21/21			Michigan	31/34
				Ohio	29/30
				Wisconsin	31

1984 DEMOCRATIC PRIMARIES

	ABC	CBS	NBC		ABC	CBS	NBC		ABC	CBS	NBC
FL	16	NA	22	NH	41	40	38	AL	22	19	25
CT	20	20	20	MA	40	35	34	GA	20	24	27
NY	16	16	26	RI	36	NA	33	IL	23	26	24
PA	16	16	20					WI	NA	NA	29
MD	NA	19	20					VT	NA	45	NA
NC	NA	17	17					OH	19	25	23
NB	NA	21	NA					IN	NA	22	29
NJ	23	22	25								
CA	17	16	20								
NM	NA	NA	22								
SD	NA	NA	18								
WV	NA	NA	17								
OR	NA	24	NA								

Source: CBS/*New York Times* exit polls for 1976. CBS, ABC, and NBC polls for 1984. The authors wish to express their appreciation to the polling units of the three networks for their furnishing the 1984 figures.

Note: The 1980 presidential primaries are not shown in the table because the CBS/*New York Times* exit poll did not ask the party identification question in the states of New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

[a]Where two separate party surveys were administered, the first figure refers to the Democratic primary electorate, the second to the Republican primary electorate.

that consciousness of enrollment status apparently influences survey response.[17]

To test further the claim that states' enrollment practices influence the number of self-described independents, a probit analysis was run on the party identification question in the 1980 CPS election data. The model attempts to predict whether or not a respondent will initially identify as an independent, and it includes as independent variables several factors which have been suggested as being associated with political independence: age, education, sex, and political interest (Flanigan and Zingale, 1983, chap. 4; Abramson et al., 1983, p. 194). In addition to these factors, dummy variables for states' independent enrollees were also included, one for states where records show "independent" enrollment in excess of 10 percent (most are above 20 percent), and one for the remainder of the

TABLE 4

PROBIT ESTIMATES OF INDEPENDENCE MODEL, 1980

VARIABLE	MAXIMUM LIKELIHOOD ESTIMATE (M.L.E.)	M.L.E./STANDARD ERROR
High Ind. States	.32	3.0 **
Other Enrollment States	-.19	-1.9 *
Interest	.01	.47
Sex	-.29	-3.4 **
Education	.01	.28
Age	-.01	-3.4 **
Constant	.29	
Estimated R^2	.07	
Percent Correctly Categorized	.68	
-2 x LLF	44.0 (chi-squared with 6 *df*)**	
N = 1102		

*$p < .05$.
**$p < .01$.

[17] There is an additional possible explanation for the large number of independents in the three states in 1984. Laurily Epstein of the NBC election unit has noted that presidential primary participation by nonmembers of the party increases when there are no other primary contests being decided at the same election. Since there were no other primary contests in our three states in 1984, that fact might possibly explain the large number of independents who participated. However, the same absence of other contests was true for Florida, Connecticut, and New York in the first column of states in table 3, and for Alabama, Georgia, and Wisconsin in the third column of states. Hence this factor does not seem a likely explanation. Since younger voters have been shown more likely to be self-described independents, we also examined the age distribution for the various states but found no pattern which might explain the large number of such persons in some states but not others.

enrollment states.[18] We expected to find the strongest propensity for self-description as "independent" in the states with the highest number of independent enrollees, and the weakest propensity in the other enrollment states. In between these groups should be those states with no enrollment systems to influence, one way or the other, a respondent's self-description.

The results of the analysis are presented in table 4, and they confirm our expectations. Using the nonenrollment states as a baseline, the model shows that persons in our high independent enrollment states are indeed significantly more likely to call themselves "independent," controlling for the influences of the other independent variables, of which age and sex prove statistically significant as well.[19] Respondents in the other enrollment states are least likely to be independent, as the significantly negative coefficient for that variable indicates. This is strong evidence that survey responses to the party identification question are influenced by enrollment status.

Adult Electorate and Registered Electorate Compared

Table 5 presents another kind of data which strongly suggest that consciousness of one's enrollment may influence response to the party identification question. The table presents responses to the party identification question posed in five Gallup surveys, one in 1979, three in 1980, and one in 1981. In each survey respondents were asked not only whether they considered themselves Republicans, Democrats, or independents, but also whether they were registered voters. The table thus presents party identification responses for the total adult electorate as well as for the more selective registered electorate, with the respective responses broken down into the two types of states, enrollment and nonenrollment. If the enrollment system does influence replies to the party identification question, then we would expect that in states with such systems the pattern of responses for registered voters would differ from the pattern for the nonregistered, those who have never been exposed to the enrollment

[18] The states with over 10 percent independent enrollees, and that were included in the CPS survey, are Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine, New York, Delaware, New Jersey, Iowa, Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming, and Oregon. (Although official figures are not available for New Jersey, estimates of nonprimary participants are well in excess of 10 percent.)

[19] It should be noted that the model includes only those respondents who have registered to vote and thus who could be influenced by their enrollment status. In a model which includes all respondents, education and interest do show significant effects on independence. By excluding the nonregistered, who have lower levels of education and interest, we have truncated the variance on these variables, which diminished their influence in this model. Inclusion of nonregistered respondents, of course, would be theoretically and logically inappropriate.

TABLE 5

PARTY IDENTIFICATION OF TOTAL ELECTORATE COMPARED WITH PARTY IDENTIFICATION OF REGISTERED VOTERS ONLY, AGGREGATE TOTALS IN ENROLLMENT STATES AND IN NONENROLLMENT STATES, 1979, 1980, 1981

YEAR OF SURVEY		STATES WITH PARTY ENROLLMENT REP	DEM	IND	TOTAL PERCENTAGE POINT DIFFERENCE	STATES WITHOUT PARTY ENROLLMENT REP	DEM	IND	TOTAL PERCENTAGE POINT DIFFERENCE
1979	Total Electorate	22.8	44.9	29.3		15.9	45.8	37.3	
	Registered Only (71 Percent)	27.4	51.0	20.2	19.8	18.3	47.3	34.3	6.9
1980 [3 Surveys]	Total Electorate	23.4	47.4	26.4		20.5	43.9	34.0	
	Registered Only (71 Percent)	27.1	51.0	21.1	12.6	22.8	45.3	30.6	7.1
1981	Total Electorate	23.8	51.2	22.7		24.0	48.2	26.7	
	Registered Only (70 Percent)	26.2	53.2	20.6	5.6	24.8	49.6	24.8	4.1

Source: Gallup Poll 1148G, 1-4 Feb. 1979 (N = 1,584); 1146G, 5-8 Jan. 1980 (N = 1,620); 1160G, 1-4 Aug. 1980 (N = 1,538); 1163G, 9-12 Oct. 1980 (N = 1,593); 1161G, 14-17 Aug. 1981 (N = 1,600).

Note: The three 1980 polls have been combined making for an N three times the normal size. All frequencies are nationally weighted. For the five surveys, the party enrollment states numbered from twenty-two to twenty-four; the nonenrollment states numbered from eighteen to twenty-two. The question used by Gallup is: "In politics, as of today, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?"

process. On the other hand, for states without enrollment systems there is no reason we would expect a difference in the pattern of responses from these two segments of the adult electorate, except that the number of self-described independents might be expected to be higher in the total electorate than in the more active, registered electorate.

The Gallup surveys are, of course, intended as national samples, and we must treat with caution results which are broken down into two groups, one containing some 57 percent of the respondents (the enrollment states) and the other only 43 percent. It is for this reason that the three 1980 surveys are presented as combined frequencies. With this cautionary note, it will be seen that the results do confirm our expectations: for all three years the total percentage-point differences between the registered and nonregistered respondents are about twice as large for the enrollment states as for the nonenrollment states.

Defection

The final type of evidence we present relates to voting behavior. Political scientists have often distinguished between party-line voters and defectors, the latter defined as those voters who identify with one party yet cast their vote for the candidate of another party. If it is true that the measurement of party identification is sometimes flawed in those states with enrollment systems, then we would expect that, due to measurement error, the number of apparent defectors would be greater in those states with enrollment systems than in those states without enrollment.

The defection rates for two presidential elections and three congressional elections are shown in table 6, broken down into the two types of states. The table further breaks down the data in terms of three regional groupings. Again our hypothesis is confirmed. In four of the five elections the rate of defection was higher in the enrollment states than in the nonenrollment states; only the 1980 congressional elections show virtually identical defection rates in each group of states. The pattern also holds for most of the regional groupings. Of all the figures shown in both parts of the table, we can have greatest confidence in those for the 1982 congressional elections, since these are based on the over 24,000 responses to the ABC exit poll. Those figures show the pattern of greater defection in enrollment states holding for each of the three regions.

The defection hypothesis was again analyzed using an individual-level probability model with 1976 and 1980 CPS presidential election data. Here, the dependent variable was whether an individual defected from the professed party identification or not, and the major independent variable

TABLE 6

PERCENT DEFECTORS FROM SELF-DESIGNATED PARTY BY TYPE OF STATE, AND BY REGION

	States with Party Enrollment	States without Party Enrollment
Presidential Candidate		
1976	16.8	12.7
1980	24.8	18.8
Congressional Candidate		
1976	20.9	16.3
1980	22.4	22.5
1982	20.4	17.0

States with, without Enrollment	Northeast and Midwest	South and Border States	West
		Presidential Candidate, 1976	
With Enrollment	16.6	17.8	16.6
Without Enrollment	14.1	12.1	5.1
		Presidential Candidate, 1980	
With Enrollment	25.4	14.9	23.6
Without Enrollment	20.2	17.0	21.4
		Congressional Candidate, 1976	
With Enrollment	23.7	19.4	15.5
Without Enrollment	16.1	14.4	24.5
		Congressional Candidate, 1980	
With Enrollment	11.0	28.8	17.9
Without Enrollment	19.3	24.9	26.3
		Congressional Candidate, 1982	
With Enrollment	19.7	23.9	19.7
Without Enrollment	16.3	18.6	13.8

Source: CPS Election Studies and, for 1982, ABC exit poll. Following conventional definition, self-identified partisans include strong, weak, and independent leaners. However, the 1982 ABC question offered the respondent only the three options of Republican, Democrat, Independent. The ABC survey included 40 states, 20 with enrollment systems and 20 without. For the CPS surveys, the respective numbers were 23 and 19 (1976); 22 and 16 (1980).

was a dummy term for states with enrollment practices. As control variables, strength of partisanship and candidate evaluation differences (opposing party candidate minus own party candidate) were also included. It was expected that, independently of how strong or weak people's measured partisanship was and how much they favored or opposed the candidate of their professed party, the defective (no pun intended) measurement of partisanship in enrollment states would produce a higher probability of voting for the opposing party.

TABLE 7

PROBIT ESTIMATES OF DEFECTION MODEL, 1976 AND 1980

VARIABLE	1976		1980
States with Record of Enrollment	.29	M.L.E.	.17
	(2.8)**	M.L.E./S.E.	(1.4)*
Strength of Partisanship[a]	.32	M.L.E.	.55
	(4.4)**	M.L.E./S.E.	(6.5)**
Candidate Evaluation Difference[b]	.04	M.L.E.	.03
	(16.84)**	M.L.E./S.E.	(13.8)**
Constant	-1.3		-1.5
Estimated R^2	.64		.64
Percent Categorized Correctly	90		88
-2 x LLF	546.6		379.4
	(chi-squared with 3 *df*)**		(chi-squared with 3 *df*)**
N	1448		876

[a]Coded so that high values indicate weaker partisanship.
[b]Coded so that high values indicate stronger attraction to the opposing party candidate.
*$p < .08$.
**$p < .01$.

The results, presented in table 7, confirm our hypotheses in these elections. Candidate evaluation differences and strength of partisanship are significant predictors of defection in both years, and the state enrollment term is highly significant in 1976 and marginally so in 1980. This indicates that defection is predicted to be significantly higher in the twenty-seven enrollment states than in the nonenrollment states, controlling for party and candidate factors in a given election period. The difference in expected probability of defection for respondents in enrollment states from the mean is .10 in 1976 and .05 in 1980, not insubstantial figures. In short, the difference in the rate of defections for the two types of states is evident from both a comparison of simple percentages and from individual-level analysis which controls for other factors that may also contribute to voting for an opposing party's candidate.[20]

CONCLUSION

The evidence in this study points strongly to the conclusion that party enrollment systems affect the way some voters perceive the nature of

[20] These probit models in fact *underestimate* the defection tendency attributable to the state variable since the indirect influences of faulty party identification measurement on strength of partisanship and candidate evaluations, the two other independent variables, were not taken into account.

partisanship, or at least the way they respond to the traditionally worded party identification question. The result is that some responses to that question cannot be taken as evidence of basic feelings of partisan allegiance or of partisan neutrality. By implication, we may also conclude that for some voters whose party enrollment is not at variance with their party allegiance, a consciousness of enrollment status provides an additional anchor to their perception of the partisan tie; this factor helps to impart to the tie a component not present in other democracies.[21] In either case, this study has provided additional support for the proposition, advanced in *The American Voter* and confirmed in subsequent studies (Butler and Stokes, 1971), that voters' perceptions of the political universe are affected by the institutional milieu in which they find themselves.

The evidence also underscores the wisdom of including in survey instruments questions concerning party support which are in addition to the traditional "consider yourself" question. Questions which ask more directly about a respondent's positive or negative feelings toward the parties seem less likely to tap a respondent's consciousness of legal enrollment when that information is not being sought. In short, as other critics have argued, there is more than one dimension of partisanship and more than one dimension of independence, and this refinement of conceptualization carries with it the challenge of refinement of measurement.

[21] Jewell (1984, chap. 7) reached a similar conclusion.

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APPENDIX A

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION IN AMERICAN STATES: SYSTEMS OF PARTY AFFILIATION BY REGION

NORTHEAST	MIDWEST	BORDER	SOUTH	WEST
1. Declare party affiliation at time of registration.				
Connecticut	Iowa[a]	Kentucky	Florida	Arizona
Delaware	Nebraska	Oklahoma	N. Carolina	California
Maine[a]	S. Dakota	W. Virginia	Louisiana	Colorado[a]
Maryland				Nevada
Massachusetts[a]				New Mexico
New Hampshire[a]				Oregon
New York				Wyoming[a]
Pennsylvania				
2. Notation made of choice of primary; change of affiliation requires notification prior to next primary (e.g., fifty days prior notice).				
New Jersey	Kansas			
Rhode Island[a]				
3. Notation made of choice of primary, but past choice does not restrict choice in subsequent primary.				
	Ohio			
4. No notation of any kind made on voter's registration record.				
Vermont	Illinois	Missouri	Alabama	Alaska
	Indiana		Arkansas	Hawaii
	Michigan		Georgia	Idaho
	Minnesota		Mississippi	Montana
	N. Dakota		S. Carolina	Utah
	Wisconsin		Tennessee	Washington
			Texas	
			Virginia	

Source: Council of State Governments, *Book of the States, 1982-1983* (Lexington, 1982), supplemented by correspondence with officials of state boards of election. The regional classification follows that of Jewell and Olson (1982, p. 110).

[a]Nonenrolled voters may declare party affiliation on day of primary, then revert back to nonenrolled status upon exit from polling station.

APPENDIX B

PARTY IDENTIFICATION IN FORTY STATES INCLUDED IN ABC EXIT POLL, NOVEMBER 1982 (%)

	DEMOCRATIC	REPUBLICAN	INDEPENDENT
Alabama	52.6	11.8	31.4
Arizona	27.4	44.5	26.8
Arkansas	60.0	6.7	30.0
California	40.7	32.1	20.3
Colorado	31.0	32.1	35.5
Connecticut	34.2	22.9	40.0
Delaware	35.2	18.8	45.3
Florida	46.3	25.4	25.7
Georgia	55.6	16.0	25.1
Idaho	22.2	47.2	19.4
Illinois	38.7	29.4	29.5
Indiana	36.8	35.4	23.3
Iowa	33.0	30.6	34.0
Kansas	28.1	42.1	26.8
Kentucky	51.4	25.6	19.9
Maryland	60.8	9.8	24.2
Massachusetts	29.8	22.9	45.7
Michigan	40.0	22.6	30.6
Minnesota	44.7	14.3	38.2
Mississippi	56.3	16.8	21.9
Missouri	34.9	18.5	41.8
Montana	24.2	31.8	34.9
Nebraska	32.6	47.3	18.3
Nevada	51.0	21.8	24.3
New Hampshire	17.7	39.2	41.8
New Jersey	42.0	20.5	34.3
New York	38.5	28.1	28.3
North Carolina	52.0	25.7	20.5
Ohio	43.5	25.8	27.7
Oklahoma	39.1	42.4	15.2
Oregon	33.7	30.3	31.5
Pennsylvania	44.9	29.1	23.5
South Carolina	52.1	17.1	26.4
Tennessee	46.4	23.6	25.5
Texas	48.3	20.6	28.5
Utah	45.5	27.3	21.2
Vermont	35.6	22.2	40.0
Virginia	37.6	26.2	33.5
Washington	53.1	10.8	33.1
Wisconsin	35.6	25.2	32.9

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because the fourth category, "something else," is omitted.