THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DYNAMICS OF
GROUP-BASED CONSIDERATIONS ON PARTISANSHIP:
A CASE STUDY OF CHRISTIAN CONSERVATIVES
AND CONFLICT IN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

Although party identification is generally long-lasting and stable, alterations to partisanship do occur. Because partisanship is a form of social identification, the social groups that comprise political parties serve as meaningful reference points for individuals. This study thus investigates the psychological dynamics underlying the ways in which group-based considerations shape partisanship to better understand the conditions under which individuals become disaffected with their own party – particularly to the extent that they potentially defect. Specifically, the project examines the conditions under which affect toward subgroups translates to affect toward the political party, thus shaping attitudes toward its presidential primary candidates, partisan identity and the strength of partisanship. The primary proposition of this study is that party images – or their perceptions of subgroup influence on the party – condition these effects, particularly for those who are not members of the subgroup in question. In other words, affective and cognitive reactions to these groups interact such that those who perceive that a negatively evaluated group is “taking over” the party should cause some partisans to weaken their attachments.

This project utilizes the conflict occurring within the Republican Party’s coalition as the result of the mobilization of Christian conservatives into its base as a case study.
Over past 30 years, the core of the Republican Party has altered substantially. Once dominated by economic conservatives, the GOP has experienced considerable growth in its Christian conservative constituency. Although this group’s financial and electoral support has provided many short-term gains for the party, some have questioned whether the inclusion of this group may have negative, long-term consequences for the party – as the increasing influence of Christian conservatives on the party may alienate the traditional core of the party and cause them to defect.

Relying on data obtained from an original mail survey of registered voters in Franklin County, Ohio, during the 2008 presidential campaign, the project finds that the perception that Christian conservatives are too influential on the GOP does condition this relationship for non-evangelical Republicans’ partisan attitudes and feelings toward its presidential primary candidates. These perceptions of influence also directly shape the strength of their partisan identity and determine whether they weaken their partisanship over the course of the 2008 campaign.
FOR JUSTIN
my monkey, my love

and for my parents
RONALD AND IRENE McADAMS
who encouraged me to reach for “high apple pie, in the sky” hopes
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This dissertation would not have been possible without a substantial amount of support from a variety of individuals. However, no single person has challenged – and encouraged – me on this project more than my advisor, Herbert Weisberg, who has taught me the true meaning of being a scholar. Since the start of my graduate career, he has offered invaluable intellectual and professional advice – and he still continues to do so. I am indebted to him for regularly meeting with me, which he offered even despite his busy schedule as department chair. On this project especially, he provided excellent guidance on both methodological and substantive issues and yet gave me enough latitude to explore my own ideas. His dedication, patience and professional example have helped me to become a better scholar and person, and I remain deeply fortunate to have encountered such a wonderful teacher, role model and friend. Every student should be so lucky as to have a mentor such as him! And I offer countless and very sincere thanks to him for his enduring support of my research, of my career and of me.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Following the 2008 presidential election, news media reports and political pundits alike quickly turned to analyzing the elections results, including the meaning of this historic election for the country as a whole. It wasn’t long, however, before news media began to speculate about the consequences of this election for the future of the party of the losing candidate. Headlines such as “GOP faces identity crisis in the months ahead” (King 2008) and “Palin’s future causes Republican rift” (Mooney 2008) allude to the dilemma that the party faces in resolving the conflict between factions that had been relatively harmonious before the 2008 election. These news stories specifically suggest that the Republican strategy of shoring up the Christian conservative base may have caused some partisans to defect and vote for the Democratic candidate, which may have larger implications for the party’s current “crisis.” As the Republican Party determines its new direction, will the new face of the GOP be vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin and Christian conservatives like her? And if so, will this unite the party or divide it further?

These news media speculations may not be unwarranted. Over the past two decades, a “diminishing divide” between religion and politics in the U.S. has contributed to the emergence of a religion-based cleavage between the Republican and Democratic parties (Kohut et al. 2000) that has dramatically altered both parties’ electoral coalitions.
As Christian conservatives have gained increasing visibility and prominence within the Republican Party, the party has become more conservative on cultural issues – such as abortion, women’s and gay rights, school prayer and traditional family values (Carmines and Layman 1997; Layman 2001; Kohut et al. 2000). Some scholars have argued that this shift not only may prevent the party from appealing to moderates and political Independents in presidential elections as well as increase internal party fragmentation (Miller and Schofield 2008; Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth 1991), but the increasing influence of Christian conservatives may also have the potential to alienate other GOP partisans. In fact, this alienation could cause the party to “face serious vote defections among its own ranks, from both moderate and conservative Republicans” (Knuckey 1999: 491). Preliminary research on this topic suggests that certain groups may have already begun to align with the Democratic Party (Bolce and de Maio 1999a; Manza and Brooks 1999).

At the same time, the adoption of a conservative cultural agenda has attracted individuals who hold supportive views on these issues, and conservative Christian groups have mobilized voters and provided much financial support to conservative Republican candidates. In addition, the Republican Party was particularly successful in recent presidential elections, re-electing a born-again Christian to the White House in 2004 – an election in which “moral issues,” such as abortion, stem-cell research and gay marriage, were extremely salient. The party had previously been able to unite Christian conservatives with the traditional core of the party under the leadership of Presidents Reagan, Bush and Bush (Nesmith 1994). This may suggest that the predictions of
conflict within the party following the 2008 election may not be as consequential as many scholars have claimed.

The conflicting evidence and speculations thus lead to the following key questions: To what extent does conflict within the Republican Party – due to the tensions between Christian conservatives and other GOP partisans – exist? In other words, do those who are affiliated with the GOP but who are not members of this particular subgroup feel unfavorably toward this group? And is this conflict primarily ideological in nature, or is it driven by other factors?

Second, under what conditions do partisans’ affective reactions toward Christian conservatives impact their affect toward and evaluations of the Republican Party? Do cognitive considerations about this group’s influence on the party impact this process? And do they do so differently for Republicans who are not a part of the Christian conservative movement in comparison with those who are?

Finally, what are the consequences of this process? Under what conditions do affect toward Christian conservatives and perceptions of their influence on the party translate – not only to negative attitudes toward the Republican Party – but also to weakening party ties and change in the strength of individuals’ party identification? In other words, are the speculations regarding the potential alienation and defection of some Republicans as a result of this group’s growing prominence within the GOP correct?

The Contribution of a Study of Affect, Party Image and Partisanship

Of course, these tensions within the Republican Party are not uncommon in political parties, which are typically comprised of coalitions of diverse groups and thus
must represent the interests, goals, policies and value commitments of these varied groups (Petrocik 1981). Due to this diversity, tensions inevitably emerge within any party coalition – tensions that are, in large part, framed by the perceptions and attitudes of individuals toward the other subgroups within the party. In some cases, the party is able to unite these diverse factions under common goals. In other cases, however, these tensions lead to conflict great enough to divide the party – causing some disaffected voters to weaken their partisan attachments and defect.

However, as of yet, few Republican partisans have defected to the Democratic Party – even among those who have expressed dissatisfaction with the party. And this is to be expected. Party identification is generally long-lasting and stable because it serves as a form of social identification (Campbell et al. 1960; Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). In other words, changes in individual-level party identification should be rare. And yet, although this process often takes place over the course of several years or even decades, evidence does demonstrate that some individuals do alter their party affiliations. In other words, partisanship may be “firm but not immovable” (Campbell et al. 1960: 148).

In determining what causes these rare events to occur, much of the literature regarding partisan defection and conversion has focused on changes in aggregate party identification – whether at the national (see, for example, Erikson, MacKuen and Stimson 2002), regional (Key 1955) or state-wide level (Beck 1982), even though these theories are primarily motivated by assumptions that these changes occur at the individual level. The current project thus aims to contribute to this literature by focusing on the individual-
level processes that induce party identification change. By examining the dynamics that cause individuals to become disaffected with their own political parties – as well as the conditions under which disaffected partisans weaken their party identifications – this dissertation may provide greater insight into the micro-level dynamics of intra-party conflict and partisan defection.

Previous research pursuing such micro-level explanations has demonstrated that such defections are more likely for individuals whose well-developed partisan attitudes conflict with their party identification (Campbell et al. 1960; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008), those with weaker partisanship (Converse 1966; Maggiotto and Pierson 1977), those who perceive their party as being ideological extreme (Lawrence 1994) and those whose personal discussion networks do not support their partisanship (Beck 2002). However, given the group-based nature of partisanship, recognition of the ways in which considerations regarding the groups within a party’s coalition is needed to more fully understand partisan defection.

For example, some scholars have proposed that changes in individuals’ party images – or their cognitive assessments of the groups that are represented by the party – are an important precursor to a weakening of partisan attachments (Petrocik 1981; Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002). Other scholars have suggested that partisans’ affective (or emotional) reactions to other groups in the party’s coalition instigate these changes (Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth 1991). Despite being closely related to political psychological theories regarding social identity, in both cases, scholars fail to provide an adequate explanation of the psychological dynamics that underlie these processes.
Particularly because partisanship is largely based on reflections of the groups within the party’s coalition, psychological theories that explain how groups interact – such as social identity theory (Tajfel 1982; Tajfel and Turner 1986) and its intellectual off-shoots – can provide a deeper understanding of how these group-based considerations can alter individual-level partisanship as well as greater clarity regarding the conditions under which they are likely to do so.

Therefore, the current project relies on such approaches to explain the ways in which group-based affect and cognitive considerations influence individuals’ partisanship. Political psychology specifically emphasizes understanding the causal dynamics of micro-level political processes as well as the ways in which contextual factors impact individuals’ political attitudes and behaviors, thus providing a way “to develop ever-stronger theoretical statements about the ‘conditions under which’ political outcomes are more or less likely to occur” (McGraw 2006: 20).

Indeed, social identity theory (Tajfel 1982; Turner 1985; Tajfel and Turner 1986) has become the predominant theoretical foundation for studies of party identification; and yet, an “ambitious agenda for future research” remains in the application of this theory to American political behavior (Weisberg and Greene 2003: 93). Due to the literature’s reliance on classic laboratory experiments and relative neglect of a broad array of politically relevant identities, this theory’s application to studies of political behavior may be limited (Huddy 2001). In fact, the primary focus of the social identity literature has emphasized the psychological processes that generally lead to prejudiced attitudes or discriminatory behavior (Tajfel and Turner 1986). While social identity theory has been
applied to a broad range of ethnic, racial and national identities in the examination of inter-group prejudice and international conflict (see, for example, Hornsey and Hogg 2000; Brown and Lopez 2001; Huddy and Khatib 2007), the current study thus provides an opportunity to apply many of the recent advancements in social identity theory to partisanship.

This dissertation project may also inform the social identity literature, which has focused primarily on the dynamics of inter-group relations and the conflict that forms between groups. However, such a heavy emphasis has prevented a greater understanding of the dynamics of *intra*-group relations, such as the conflict that occurs between subgroups within a superordinate identity (Transue 2007). Indeed, “intergroup relations are almost by definition a matter of subgroup relations within a superordinate identity group…[which] is not easily captured by the typically binary ingroup-outgroup manner in which social categorization processes are believed to operate” (Hornsey and Hogg 2000: 143). Thus, a study that examines the conditions under which conflict between groups within a political party can shape individuals’ identity with that (superordinate) party may provide a greater understanding of how multiple and hierarchical identities operate.

Although such an endeavor could be applied to a variety of subgroups with both the Republican and Democratic parties throughout American history, the current project specifically examines the extent and consequences of conflict between Christian conservatives and other GOP partisans during the 2008 presidential primary contest as well as the weakening of partisan ties through the 2008 General Election. Because
Republican partisanship has typically been less group-based than Democratic partisanship – as fewer Republicans have historically made group references in their evaluations of their party in comparison with Democrats (Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth 1991) – this particular case study offers a more stringent test of a group-based theory of partisanship. To find evidence that certain group-based considerations are important in shaping Republicans’ partisan identity would thus provide even further support to such a group-based theory. Moreover, as the news headlines noted above demonstrate, this case study is particularly timely and thus offers the potential to – not only contribute to the broader literature on this topic – but provide practical advice to politicians and other party elites on the ways in which they can ensure loyalty from partisans. This contemporary case study also allows for the collection of original data that is specifically designed to fit the theoretical framework under investigation (as opposed to some historical cases for which precise data may not be available).

Therefore, the current project offers initial evidence of the psychological dynamics of intra-party conflict as a result of Christian conservatives’ inclusion in the GOP, aims to identify the conditions under which this group-based conflict is great enough to produce disaffected Republicans, and offers evidence regarding the consequences of this dissatisfaction on the strength of their partisanship. Specifically, this study examines the ways in which individuals’ affective reactions toward groups within a political party interacts with their cognitive considerations regarding the party’s image to impact their partisan attitudes and identities. In doing so, the study may provide initial evidence of whether the short-term gains enjoyed by the GOP due to the
mobilization of this group outweigh the potential long-term costs of its growing influence within the Republican Party.

The Rise of Christian Conservatives in the Republican Party Coalition

Although a dominant force in early American political life (Fowler et al. 2004), Evangelical Protestants were unengaged and inactive in American politics for more than half of the 20th century. Based primarily in the South, many practicing this faith believed that salvation was a purely personal act that did not require community-based works or efforts to redeem society (Kleppner 1979), which discouraged them from participating in any aspect of the secular realm – including politics. This theological concern with political activity was accompanied by a lack of socio-economic resources that typically encourage political participation, such as education and income (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007).

However, starting in the 1960s, Evangelicals began to have the resources and motivation to become more politically active. Evangelical congregations grew, and their members became more affluent and educated (Fowler et al. 2004). Theological concerns regarding involvement in politics dissipated as changes in American society caused a fear that the country was experiencing a “moral decline.” Supreme Court decisions banning required prayer and Bible reading in public schools and establishing the constitutionality of abortion – combined with a greater cultural acceptance of non-traditional lifestyles, family structures and women’s roles – created a feeling amongst many Evangelicals that political action was necessary to protect their beliefs and the country as a whole from the consequences of these changes (Wilcox 2000; Fowler et al. 2004).
These shifts were apparent in a number of local, grassroots movements in the mid-1970s against the inclusion of certain textbooks in public schools, gay rights legislation and the Equal Rights Amendment (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007). The successes of these local movements – and the growing dissatisfaction with the Carter administration by Evangelicals – made conservative activists realize the potential electoral gains of mobilizing Evangelical Protestants at the national level. Thus, in the late 1970s, Republican activists began to provide resources to prominent Evangelical leaders to form national organizations, such as the Moral Majority, the National Christian Action Coalition, the Christian Voice and the Religious Roundtable (Guth 1983; Moen 1989).

Thus, the Christian conservative movement was “born again” – not primarily due to the efforts of those represented by the movement itself, but due to the conscious effort of Republican Party elites to mobilize Evangelical Protestants and other conservative Christians into conservative political action. Operating under a common theme that “big government” threatened both religious and economic values (Kazin 1995), the Republican Party thus attempted to unite Christian conservatives with its traditional core (i.e., those strongly committed to limiting governmental intervention in society and the economy) to develop a mutually beneficial relationship. In exchange for votes and financial support to the party, this movement was promised greater accommodation to their views on cultural issues from the GOP (Green, Guth and Wilcox 1998).

However, Christian conservatives initially did not earn substantial victories on their agenda, despite the rhetorical support of the Reagan administration and the inclusion
of many aspects of this agenda – such as a constitutional amendment to ban abortion, opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment and the legalization of prayer in public schools – in the Republican Party platform (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007). Starting in the 1990s, though, the movement experienced more success due to greater financial stability, changes in leadership, greater organizational structure and the consequent shift in its rhetoric and strategies (Fowler et al., 2004).\(^1\) As a result, Christian conservatives have increasingly gained visibility and prominence within the GOP – at both the mass and elite levels.

Once dominated by big business, economic conservatives and libertarians, the Republican Party has become nearly synonymous with the Christian conservative movement. Approximately one-fourth of the U.S. population, Evangelical Protestants now comprise more than one-third of those who identify with the GOP (Pew Research Center 2006). Approximately three out of every four Evangelical Protestant voters cast their ballots for the Republican candidate in the 2000, 2004 and 2008 presidential elections (Pew Research Center 2008). Moreover, Evangelicals are active in the party’s apparatus; some scholars have estimated that approximately one-fourth of all delegates attending recent GOP national conventions are affiliated with the Christian conservative movement, providing an opportunity to greatly influence the party’s platform (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007). This group has also captured the party machinery in several

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\(^1\) For example, once a collection of top-down, direct-mail organizations, the Christian conservative movement emerged in the 1990s with new organizations – such as the Christian Coalition, the Family Research Council and the Traditional Values Coalition – that were created by more politically experienced leaders. Once relying on narrow, religious rhetoric to influence political elites and the public, the messages now focus instead on “defending traditional values,” for example, to appeal to a broader base. And rather than attempt massive national legislative change, the movement has capitalized on its grassroots support to focus on state-wide and local strategies, particularly in employing ballot initiatives to effect change (Fowler et al. 2004),
states (Miller and Schofield 2008). For example, Christian conservatives have penetrated the Republican local and state-wide nomination processes in the South as well as in states that have not traditionally been Evangelical strongholds, such as Minnesota, Iowa and Oregon (Conger and Green 2002).

As a result of this increasing visibility and prominence within the party, the GOP has progressively yielded to this group’s pressure to adopt its agenda. The Republican National Committee platform, for example, continues to support a constitutional amendment to ban abortion as well as legislation that applies Fourteenth Amendment protections to unborn children. The platform also advocates a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, opposes gay adoptions, and affirms the constitutionality of public displays of the Ten Commandments, prayer in public schools and the freedom of groups such as the Boy Scouts of America to deny membership to gays and lesbians (Republican National Committee 2008). During the George W. Bush administration, this group exerted substantial influence on both domestic and foreign policy and enjoyed greater access to the White House than ever before (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007).

However, the rise of Christian conservatives into the Republican Party has caused the coalitional base of the Republican Party – termed a “conglomerate coalition” of subgroups not sharing many common objectives (Seligman and Covington 1989) – to become a fragile alliance. Fundamental differences between Christian conservatives and the traditional core of the party exist over the priorities given to important social and economic issues (Knuckey 1999) as well as in their support for government intervention in society (Nesmith 1994; Dionne 1997). While the traditional core of the party favors
limited governmental intervention in society and the economy, Christian conservatives view governmental intervention in society as necessary to define and protect morality (Stonecash 2006). Although ideological tensions are often inevitable in any party coalition, the difficulty of achieving compromise on “moral” issues – particularly when Christian conservatives adhere to a uniform and dogmatic interpretation of these issues – may make this intra-party conflict intense enough to divide the party (Nesmith 1994). These differences have certainly sparked conflict at the elite level when Christian conservatives began to launch active campaigns for office or for positions of influence within the party organization, pressuring the party to generate political action on their conservative cultural agenda. This elite-level conflict has emerged most vehemently in the state- and local-level party organizations as economic conservatives and other GOP partisans have increasingly objected to the influence that Christian conservatives have in party caucuses and primary elections (Wilcox 2000); even at the national level, some moderate Republican leaders have complained that the GOP has merely become “the political arm of conservative Christians” (Danforth 2005).

These elite-level tensions have prompted several scholars to warn that the influence of Christian conservatives may drive partisans away from the party at the mass level as well. According to these speculations, this elite-level conflict has communicated to ordinary partisans the differences between this group and the traditional core of the party, causing their party images to be updated and forcing them to re-evaluate their own partisan attachments (Bolce and de Maio 1999a). Indeed, while recognizing the potential electoral gains from the mobilization of Christian conservatives into the GOP’s
coalitional base, the party’s regulars have often expressed resentment at the growing influence of this group (Hertzke 1993). As early as the mid-1990s, economic conservatives and moderates began to express their sense of alienation from the party (Miller and Schofield 2008). This dissatisfaction may have reached a climax in the 2008 election following the Republican presidential candidate’s selection of a Christian conservative as his running mate to ensure the electoral support of Evangelical Protestants (see, for example, Gilgoff 2008). As noted above, this conflict has caused some political pundits and journalists to suggest that the GOP is undergoing an “identity crisis,” as political scientists attempt to explain the implications of this intra-party conflict.

Chapter Outline

While the results of the current study may offer insight as to what these implications are for the Republican Party, this dissertation also has greater implications for research on changes to party identification and social identity more generally. To investigate the dynamics of intra-party conflict, the development of the current study is as follows. The next chapter provides the theoretical foundations for the consequences of intra-party conflict. Specifically, the chapter examines traditional theories of individual-level changes in party identification, relying on approaches from political psychology to outline the ways in which affect toward partisan subgroups interact with cognitive considerations regarding subgroup influence to shape partisan attitudes, candidate attitudes and partisan identity.
Chapter Three first describes the original data collected for this project and examines its representativeness and generalizability to national voters. This chapter also determines the extent of conflict within the Republican Party due to one of its more visible subgroups: Christian conservatives. The underlying dimension of this conflict is also examined and suggests that the ideological differences between Evangelical Republicans and their non-evangelical counterparts are central to this tension.

In Chapter Four, theory and data are combined to examine the interactive impact of perceptions of subgroup influence on the relationship between Republican partisans’ affect toward this subgroup and affect toward the Republican Party. This chapter also examines the effects of this causal mechanism on partisans’ attitudes toward two Republican presidential candidates during the 2008 primary election. Chapter Five then expands on these findings to determine the consequences of this process for partisans’ identity with the GOP as well as short-term changes in their strength of partisanship.

Chapter Six investigates the impact of feelings toward and perceptions of influence of Christian conservatives on out-group members’ attitudes toward the Republican Party. Due to the group-based nature of partisanship, Democratic identifiers also maintain images of which groups belong to the GOP’s coalition, and these group-based considerations should be a significant determinant of the attitudes that individuals have toward their own political party as well as its opposition. This chapter thus examines the role that feelings toward Christian conservatives and perceptions of their influence on the GOP have on Democrats’ attitudes toward the Republican Party.
The final chapter summarizes the findings of this project and addresses the implications of these results, specifically with regard to a greater understanding of changes to individual-level party identification and the dynamics of intra-group relations within a hierarchical partisan identity. This chapter also provides specific speculations as to potential courses of action for both major parties, given the broader findings of the project as to whether the rise of religious conservatives in the Republican Party has helped or hurt the strength of its coalitional base. Finally, the project concludes with a discussion of a future research agenda related to this work.
CHAPTER 2

A PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY OF THE GROUP-BASED NATURE OF PARTISANSHIP

As noted in Chapter One, journalists, political pundits and scholars alike have warned that the mobilization of Christian conservatives and its growing visibility in the Republican Party may have the potential to alienate other partisans in the GOP, causing them to weaken their partisan attachments and defect. Indeed, as Christian conservatives have become more influential in the party at the local, state and national levels, some scholars have suggested that – not only will the party likely face “serious” vote defections (Knuckey 1999: 491) – but that some Republicans “may be forced into the Democratic Party” (Miller and Schofield 2008:45). In fact, some evidence indicates that this defection has already begun to occur among certain groups, such as liberal (mainline) Protestants (Manza and Brooks 1999) as well as those who hold hostile feelings toward Christian fundamentalists (Bolce and de Maio 1999a).

However, the Republican Party has yet to experience large amounts of defection from its ranks, which is unsurprising given how long-lasting and relatively stable party identification is (Campbell et al. 1960; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). In fact, changes to individuals’ partisanship should be rare. On the other hand, party identification is hardly an “unmoved mover.” Contrary to the conventional wisdom of partisanship’s permanence, partisan attachments are dynamic and responsive to broader political
stimuli. For example, in their study of recent presidential elections, Lewis-Beck et al. found that approximately one in four respondents had altered their party affiliations between 2000 and 2004, largely those who had previously reported a weak attachment to the party (2008: 142). While a substantial change is not reported here, it does serve as a reminder that some individuals do change their party affiliations, which raises the question: under what conditions do individuals alter their partisan attachments?

Previous research has indicated that the potential for individuals to alter their identifications with a political party is primarily dependent upon changes in their party images – or “the cognitive representation of the political parties in terms of social groups” (Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth 1991: 1140-1141). Because partisanship serves as an important form of social identification, individuals’ partisanship is based on their perception of the social groups represented by the parties. As images of the parties are modified, some partisans realize discrepancies between their own partisan attachments and the party with which they “should” be aligned (Sellers 1965; Trilling 1976; Beck 1977), thus altering the strength of their identification with their current party.

Therefore, party image – though not synonymous with party identification – is an important element of the strength of partisanship, and changes to this image should serve as a precursor to changes in individuals’ partisan attachments. However, what remains uncertain are the psychological dynamics of this process. Particularly given the group-based nature of party identification and party images, psychological theories that explain

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2 The authors do note that measurement error may overstate this amount of partisan instability.

3 The current study proposes that changes to partisan images can occur in response to actual transformations of a party’s coalitional base or as the result of changes in individuals’ perceptions (whether accurate or not) that these transformations have occurred.
how groups interact – such as social identity theory (Tajfel 1982; Tajfel and Turner 1986) and its intellectual descendants – can provide a greater understanding of why changes to individuals’ party images can alter their partisanship. Indeed, understanding how the group-based considerations that are embedded in individuals’ party images cause them to become disaffected should provide an even greater understanding of the strength of party identification as well as the sources of partisan alienation and defection.

The Group-based Nature of Partisanship

The importance of group cleavages on party identification has been well-established and extends back to the original conceptualization of party identification developed by the Michigan school of thought. Although prior to modern psychological theories regarding social identification, the Michigan scholars explicitly characterized political parties as groups and defined “allegiance” to them as a “psychological identification, which can persist without legal recognition or evidence of formal membership and even without a consistent record of party support” (Campbell et. al 1960: 121). Comparing partisanship to a religious or ethnic identification, the authors suggest that party identification is akin to “the individual’s affective orientation to an important group-object in his environment” and that “the attracting or repelling quality of the group [is] the generalized dimension most critical in defining the individual-group relationship, and it is this dimension that [they] call identification” (Ibid.).

In its original conceptualization, then, partisanship is a psychological commitment to one political party or another – rather than a behavioral commitment to the party’s
candidates or an ideological commitment to the party’s issue positions. In describing these distinctions, James Campbell and colleagues (1986) suggest that:

[P]artisans are partisan because they think they are partisan. They are not necessarily partisan because they vote like a partisan, or think like a partisan, or register as a partisan, or because someone else thinks they are a partisan. In a strict sense, they are not even partisan because they like one party more than another. Partisanship as party identification is entirely a matter of self-definition. (100).

In other words, a Republican is Republican because she thinks of herself as a Republican. Partisanship is thus defined as identification with a political party.

Due to this psychological commitment, party identification is relatively long-lasting and stable. Moreover, this party identification is largely exogenous from short-term political events, policy preferences and other political attitudes. The Michigan scholars emphasize “the role of enduring partisan commitments in shaping attitudes toward political objects” (Campbell et al. 1960: 135). In short, party identification influences policy preferences, evaluations of the political parties, candidate evaluations and voting decisions – not the reverse.

This social-psychological conception of party identification has been challenged by theories based on a rational choice perspective, which treats party identification as an individual’s assessment of which party’s ideological and policy positions are closest to his own (Downs 1957; Key 1966). Akin to a Bayesian updating, or learning, process (Achen 1992), this alternative views an individual’s party identification as a “running tally” of his evaluations of the political parties (Fiorina 1981). This perspective thus

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4 This perspective is analogous to an “on-line” model of information processing, which suggests that – as voters receive new information about a political candidate – they evaluate it and then update an “on-line tally” of their overall evaluation of the candidate (Lodge, McGraw and Stroh 1989).
suggests that individuals change their party loyalties in response to cognitive assessments of the party’s platforms and performance while in office. As they accumulate information regarding the political parties’ stances, they adjust their party affiliations accordingly (Fiorina 1981). In this sense, rather than the exogenous nature of partisanship, party identification is the result of a summary of individuals’ cognitive evaluations of the parties. And, rather than view partisanship as a psychological or group-based attachment, party identification according to this revisionist perspective is “hollow, scarcely more than an expression of beliefs about which party will best pursue one’s interests” (Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002).

However, recent work has challenged both the methodological and theoretical underpinnings of this revisionist notion of partisanship, lending to a greater credibility of the original conceptualization offered by the Michigan scholars. Donald Green and colleagues first demonstrate that the individual-level data upon which most studies from the revisionist perspective rely is particularly sensitive to assumptions regarding measurement error (Green and Palmquist 1990; Schickler and Green 1997). Once the measurement error is corrected, party identification is only mildly impacted by short-term political forces. The authors also challenge the revisionist view on theoretical grounds, arguing that the notion of “updating a running tally” of partisan evaluations is incompatible with the stability of partisanship (Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002). Moreover, by defining partisanship in mere terms of cognitive evaluations of the parties, the revisionist view measures individuals’ evaluations of the parties – rather than their attachment with it. The authors provide additional evidence to demonstrate that party
identification is not synonymous with party performance and is rooted in individuals’ psychological attachments to the political parties as groups (Ibid.). In essence, this research confirms the notion that partisanship is an enduring social identity that is exogenous and causally prior to other political evaluations.

**Groups as Meaningful Reference Points for Individuals’ Partisanship**

This reaffirmation of the original social-psychological conception of party identification by the Michigan school of thought also reinforces the importance of group-based considerations in individuals’ sense of belonging to a political party. Relying on reference group theory, Campbell et al. (1960) suggested that individuals’ perceptions of secondary groups within the political party (particularly in terms of their membership in them) also impact their partisan attachments. This theory maintained that individuals rely on groups as reference points for evaluating their own situations, largely to compare their outcomes with members of other groups to determine their “subjective status” (Hyman 1942; Merton 1957). In this sense, individuals’ motivations to either belong to or distance themselves from a group influence their attitudes and behaviors even more so than the groups to which they actually belong. If an individual thinks the attitudes and behaviors of a group are favorable for her, the group serves as a positive frame of reference; groups whose norms are unfavorable to an individual thus serve as negative reference groups (Newcomb 1943). In terms of partisanship:
If we hear that “the labor union” is advocating a piece of legislation….we are likely to think of the labor union as a single entity or unit….And this psychological short-hand has effects on our opinions and behavior. If we know that “the union” makes a political endorsement, we may well react positively or negatively to the candidate or issue, according to whether our sympathies lie with or against this union….Groups have influence, then, because we tend to think of them as wholes, and come to respond positively or negatively to them in that form (Campbell et al. 1960: 296).

Reinforcing this notion that group-based considerations play an important role in the formation of individuals’ political attitudes and party affiliations, additional research has confirmed that Americans rely on groups to organize their general political cognitions (Lau 1989), that they typically refer to social groups when evaluating political parties and presidential candidates (Converse 1964) and that their attitudes toward the parties reflect their attitudes about the groups associated with the parties (Campbell et al. 1960; Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth 1991; Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002).

Thus, group-based considerations remain significant to partisan attitudes and evaluations: “Although much has changed in American politics in the past forty years, references to broad social groupings continue to occupy a central place in the citizens’ assessments of candidates and parties.” (Kinder 1998: 803). In fact, some research has suggested that group-based attitudes have become increasingly more important in determining political behavior and partisanship at the mass level in recent years (Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth 1991). In essence, when reflecting upon their party identification, individuals ask themselves: “What kinds of social groups come to mind as I think about
Democrats, Republicans and Independents? Which assemblage of groups (if any) best describes me?” (Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002: 8).5

*Group-based Attitudes and the Strength of Partisanship: The Role of Party Image*

These group-based considerations not only impact the direction of individuals’ partisan attachments but the strength of them as well. In other words, determining which “assemblage” of groups within a political party influences with which political party an individual identifies as well as the level of attachment to that party. This process largely occurs via partisans’ party images – or the “mental picture” that an individual has about a political party. Although closely related to party identification, this image does not consist of “purely psychological, affective components [but] more of substantive components” (Trilling 1976: 2). These party images tend to be less stable and less deeply rooted than party identification, and yet, more long-standing than candidate evaluations or issues specific to certain campaigns and elections (Matthews and Prothro 1966); it is therefore useful to conceptualize party image as a medium-term force that affects both electoral behavior as well as strength of partisanship. While early research defined this image in largely vague and inconsistent terms, recent research has conceptualized party images in a manner more consistent with the group-based nature of partisanship; that is, party image is “the cognitive representation of the political parties in terms of social groups” (Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth 1991: 1140-1141).

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5 It should be noted that the prevalence of group-related comments has historically varied by party. Democrats have consistently been more likely to make group references when discussing their evaluations of the parties, in comparison with Republicans and Independents (Campbell et al. 1960; Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth 1991). A tertiary supposition of the current project is that, due to the increased visibility and prominence of Christian conservatives in the Republican Party, group-related considerations have become more prevalent among Republicans as well.
Moreover, because partisanship serves as a form of social identification, these cognitive representations can strengthen – or weaken – individuals’ attachment with the party, depending on whether their images of the party continue to adequately represent them (Sellers 1965; Trilling 1976; Beck 1977). Should the social groups included in a party’s coalition change – or should individuals receive information that alters their perception that this coalition has changed – individuals’ party images should be modified. Should partisans perceive that this change prevents the party from representing them, they then realize discrepancies between their own partisan attachments and the party with which they “should” be aligned, thus altering the strength of their identification with their current party. For example, Petrocik (1987) demonstrates that the weakening of Democrats’ party affiliation in the South in the 1960s and 1970s was a result of changes to their party images – namely, the growing presence of African Americans in the Democratic Party’s coalition. This pattern is confirmed by Green, Palmquist and Schickler’s (2002) study of the same time period: gradual changes in the perceptions of which groups were aligned with the Democratic and Republican parties caused some Southerners to weaken their party affiliations and defect to the GOP from the 1960s through the 1990s.

However, as noted above, the psychological dynamics of this process remain unclear. In attempting to explain the psychological mechanism of how group-based attitudes influence partisan attitudes and attachment, some scholars have focused on the affective reactions (defined in terms of the emotional responses, or feelings) that individuals have toward groups that are associated with a political party. These modern
applications of reference group theory suggest that how individuals feel about groups associated with a political party influences their feelings, attitudes and evaluations of that party such that: “Theoretically, if people like certain groups and they perceive those groups as aligned with a particular party, they should evaluate the party positively. Similarly, if they dislike the group, it should have a negative impact on their judgment of the party” (Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth 1991: 1137). As a result, these studies have typically conceptualized reactions toward groups associated with the parties explicitly in terms of emotional responses.⑥

For example, relying on feeling thermometer ratings of various groups and the political parties in the 1972 and 1984 election, Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth (1991) demonstrate not only that specific groups are associated with each political party, but also that affect toward these groups has a direct and independent effect on both partisan evaluations and feelings toward presidential candidates. Positively evaluated groups increased individuals’ favorable feelings toward the parties, while negatively evaluated groups predicted less favorable reactions to the political parties. In a more targeted study, Bolce and de Maio (1999a) likewise demonstrate that negative feelings toward a particular group – Christian fundamentalists – significantly predict negative assessments of the Republican Party.

Moreover, these modern applications of reference group theory also note that these feelings toward groups within the party have important implications for individuals’ party images. Because partisans’ perceptions of who and what the party represents is

⑥ Although these studies generally define affect in terms of feelings, other political psychologists have noted that affect involves – not emotional responses necessarily – but “simple positive and negative reactions, or evaluations” (McGraw 2003: 405).
framed in terms of social groups, the association of a negatively evaluated group with a political party should depreciate the value of that party’s image; in contrast, this party image should improve when a positively evaluated group is associated with it. In the study noted above, Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth (1991) demonstrate that the association of less popular groups, such as black militants and the women’s liberation movement, with the Democratic Party not only lowered partisans’ feelings toward the party but their reaction to the party’s image as well. In this sense, the inclusion of an unpopular group in the party’s coalitional base increased internal party fragmentation. The authors conclude that this likely resulted in declining identification with the Democratic Party over this time period (1991: 1147).

However, the central premises of this study – indeed, of reference group theory more generally – also lack an adequate explanation of the psychological dynamics that underlie these processes. For example, negative affect toward a particular group may not necessarily translate to negative partisan attitudes if this group is merely associated with the larger party. Indeed, the stability of individual-level party identification (Campbell et al. 1960; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008) would suggest that not all individuals who feel negatively toward groups associated with their political parties are defecting from those parties. In fact, this translation of group-based affect to partisan attitudes should not occur unless another condition is met to explain why some partisans actually do defect while others remain loyal to party.

The central puzzle thus becomes: under what condition(s) does affect toward a group within a political party shape partisan attitudes and, thus, partisan attachment?
Although central to the Michigan school of thought’s original concept of party identification, and although it does offer a basic understanding of group-based dynamics, reference group theory has been largely superseded by social identity theory – a wider-ranging and more psychologically powerful theory regarding inter-group relations (Weisberg and Greene 2003; Huddy 2003; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). Particularly given the group-based nature of party identification and party images, social identity theory can provide a greater understanding of why changes to individuals’ party images can alter their partisanship, rather than merely providing evidence that these changes occur.

And yet, studies of the strength of partisanship and party image fail to incorporate such theories. Green, Palmquist and Schickler (2002) suggest that they remain “agnostic” to the psychological motivations underlying this process because such instrumental concerns are “unnecessary” (138). In fact, the authors explicitly distinguish their theoretical approach from social identity theory, arguing that “[c]onceiving of party identification as the solution to a strategic problem of esteem-maximization seems to lead down a blind alley” (2002:11). To the contrary, this basic feature of social identity theory – that group identification is motivated by a need for a positive self-image (Tajfel 1982; Tajfel and Turner 1986) – provides a useful way of conceptualizing why individuals respond to certain changes in their partisan images the way that they do. Other research has also recognized the utility of this theory for understanding the strength of partisanship (Hogg and Abrams 1988) – both in the American context (Weisberg and Hasecke 1999) as well as the British (Kelly 1988; 1989).
Ascertaining the psychological underpinnings of this process can also provide greater clarity as to the conditions under which changes to partisanship occur. As Green, Palmquist and Schickler (2002) themselves note, the weakening of partisan attachments does not always accompany changes in party image. Thus, further investigation is needed to determine the conditions under which changes in party image do lead to defection. Moreover, changes in party image need not be limited to actual changes in a party’s social group composition; indeed, partisans should not only be aware of which groups are included in their party’s coalition – but also what the balance of power of the groups within the party is, too. In short, examining the psychological dynamics of inter-group relations within a political party is needed to further understand how and why changes in party images may lead to defection. Given these considerations, the current project seeks to develop a theoretical framework for understanding the psychological processes underlying the group-based nature of partisanship. Relying on the foundations of social identity theory – and its intellectual off-shoots – can better explain the group-based dynamics of the strength of party identification as well as the sources of partisan alienation and defection.

A Psychological Framework for Understanding Partisan Alienation and Defection

Early work in social identity theory demonstrates that individuals naturally differentiate between in-groups (i.e., the groups to which they belong) and out-groups, and they categorize themselves and other individuals in their social environments into these groupings (Tajfel 1981; Tajfel and Turner 1986). Because individuals’ self-esteem (or a “positive self-concept”) stems from group memberships, their self-evaluations are
partially dependent upon the social groups to which they belong (Tajfel and Turner 1986). To maintain this positive self-image, individuals thus have motivation to both identify with a group and to distinguish that group from others. Indeed, “[a] key aspect of this theory is that in order to derive a sense of positive self-esteem from in-group membership, the in-group must be viewed as being distinct from other groups” (Stone and Crisp 2007: 494). The salience of these group categorizations is, in fact, a “prerequisite” for the activation of inter-group attitudes (Duckitt 2003: 581). What naturally follows is that these group distinctions generate inter-group comparisons that largely result in favoritism toward the in-group (Kramer and Brewer 1984) and – in the context of competition – negative attitudes toward any out-group (Sherif and Sherif 1979). It is important to note that group identities can be formed and can impact individuals’ attitudes and behaviors even without objective group membership (Koch 1993).

Moreover, group distinctions are created even in the most minimal of circumstances. For example, various experimental studies conducted by Tajfel and colleagues (1971) randomly assigned subjects to one of two groups and asked them to individually and anonymously award amounts of money to two other subjects, who were identified only by their group membership and an identification number. Aware of their own group memberships, subjects tended to allocate more money to in-group rather than out-group members. The scholars conclude that:
In this situation, there is neither a conflict of interests nor previously existing hostility between the “groups.” No social interaction takes place between the subjects, nor is there any rational link between the economic self-interest and the strategy of in-group favoritism. Thus, these groups are purely cognitive, and can be referred to as “minimal” (Tajfel and Turner 1986: 14).

Confirmed by additional research, the “minimal group paradigm” suggests that the mere categorization of individuals into groups can activate the processes of inter-group relations such that in-group favoritism may be evoked. In terms of politics, this suggests that “just referring to ‘Republicans’ as us and ‘Democrats’ as them can yield identification” (Weisberg and Greene 2003: 87; emphasis in original), triggering these inter-group processes. However, as noted above, these political parties or “groups” are also comprised of diverse subgroups with which individuals also identify, and these lower-level group distinctions should also lead to similar processes of group bias. Recent research has suggested that these subgroup processes also have important consequences for the cohesion of the higher-level group (in this sense, the political party) as well as individuals’ strength of identification with it.

The Distinction between Superordinate and Subgroup Identities

In the related self-categorization theory, Turner and colleagues (1987) note that individuals often adopt multiple identities whose salience can change depending on the social environment. Although acknowledging that social group identities may be nested, this early literature did not fully address the psychology of subgroup relations and the implications of maintaining multiple or hierarchical identities. And yet, “intergroup relations are almost by definition a matter of subgroup relations within a superordinate identity group” because the groups to which individuals belong often share
commonalities that exist at a higher level (Hornsey and Hogg 2000: 143). For example, Ohioans and Michiganders have a (somewhat strained!) inter-group relationship that is contextualized by their shared identity as Midwesterners, and Midwesterners and Southerners have an inter-group relationship that is contextualized by a common American identity. Similarly, in American party politics, feminists and union workers maintain distinct identities, although they may share a common identity as Democrats. Individuals thus not only identify with groups – but subgroups within those groups.

Recent research has established that individuals do maintain multiple and hierarchical identities and that the salience of these identities is conditional upon contextual concerns (Kramer and Brewer 1984; Gaertner and Dovidio 2000; Brown and Lopez 2001; Transue 2007). For example, the Common In-group Identity Model suggests that when the salience of one identity increases, the salience of another identity decreases (Gaertner and Dovidio 2000). Because of these shifts, intergroup conflict can be eliminated by increasing the salience of an existing common identity or encouraging groups to create a new inclusive identity.7

For example, in a study of how multi-party coalitions form in Chile, Gonzalez et al. (2008) find that tension between party members of a broader coalition is reduced when the parties cooperate to obtain clear advantages. As with group identification, this process occurs even in the most minimal of circumstances. For example, in Sherif and colleagues’ Robbers Cave experiment (1954), after competition between two summer boys’ camps resulted in inter-group hostility, this inter-group competition was reduced when superordinate goals were introduced. Thus, “when people identify with broader

7 For a challenge to this logic, see Stone and Crisp (2007).
groups, they deemphasize competition, conflict and negative evaluations among members of subgroups nested within those broader groups” (Transue 2007: 78).

In contrast, when subgroup identities are more salient than the superordinate identity, the expected processes of in-group favoritism and subgroup competition will emerge because individuals tend to perceive that only one subgroup will benefit from the larger group’s resources (Kramer and Brewer 1984). According to the expectations of realistic group conflict theory, this conflict is rooted not only in groups’ competition for scarce resources (Coser 1956; Blumer 1958; Bobo 1988), but also in their pursuance of incompatible goals (Sherif and Sherif 1979). Moreover, as this conflict continues and one subgroup obtains a greater amount of the superordinate group’s resources or its goals are achieved at the expense of another subgroup’s goals and values, individuals who do not belong to that particular subgroup may weaken their affiliations with the larger group. In other words, increased subgroup identity salience not only results in greater conflict between subgroups within the larger group but can alter individuals’ identity with that superordinate group as well.

The Importance of Threat

The power of this subgroup competition to alter some group members’ identity with the superordinate group is rooted in the notion of threat. Of course, the importance of threat has been well-established in the literature on inter-group relations. Not only does threat strengthen the unity and cohesion of in-group members (Giles and Evans 1986), it generates hostility and prejudice toward out-group members as well (for a review, see Duckitt 2003). For example, in a classic treatment of theories of threat, Key (1949)
found that white tolerance toward blacks was negatively related to the density of the African American population of the counties in which the whites lived. According to Key, this impact was directly due to the level of threat perceived by the whites. In this study, the high concentration of African Americans threatened “the maintenance of control by a white minority” (1949:5). In contrast, whites’ levels of tolerance were much higher in areas outside of the so-called Black Belt because “Blacks were neither so central to the local economy nor so sizable a bloc of prospective voters in local elections” (1949:10). Thus, when not considered to be a threat to whites, African Americans were no longer a target of this prejudice. Moreover, even in the most minimal of inter-group circumstances, threat yields hostility to out-group members (Tajfel et al. 1971). In other words, “group identification seems to be associated with out-group prejudice only when other conditions are present, such as intergroup threat and competition” (Duckitt 2003: 583).

As with inter-group competition, the notion of threat is generally rooted in realistic group conflict theory: as groups compete for scarce resources, each poses a threat to the potential resources obtained by the other. This threat – whether to the group’s resources, power or well-being – should evoke hostility toward the opposing group (Sherif and Sherif 1954; Coser 1956; Blumer 1958; Bobo 1988). In other words, “real conflict of group interests causes intergroup conflict” (Campbell 1965). For example, in Key’s work (1949), the threat felt by whites was attributed to “real” concerns over economic and political resources, and this threat led directly to negative attitudes toward the perceived source of this threat – African Americans.
As with this example, feelings of threat are typically experienced by groups occupying a higher societal status. Indeed, the dynamics of inter-group threat are rooted in the perceived inequalities between groups. According to social identity theory, this inequality not only creates feelings of threat, but also elicits even more hostile attitudes toward the lower-status group, particularly when the differences in status between the groups are unstable (Tajfel and Turner 1986). In this sense, because the differences between these groups’ status may change, “higher” groups will feel that their status is being threatened and will attempt to secure its threatened identity, thus engaging in greater hostility toward the lower-status group. In contrast, when the status differential between groups is determined and stable, the higher status group should not discriminate against the lower group because its advantage is not threatened in any real way.

As noted above, the basic premise of realistic group conflict theory is that inter-group competition is rooted in an actual threat over realistic interests. However, threat can be either real or imagined. In this sense, threat can be either the response to objective circumstances or to the perception that those circumstances are taking place. An individual’s perception of threat encompasses both situations, thus becoming the most theoretically important element in relation to threat. Moreover, while realistic group conflict theory assumes that threat is confined to realistic interests – such as group power, wealth or resources – threat can also be perceived in symbolic terms, such as threat to a group’s identity (Duckitt 2003; Huddy 2003). Because inter-group conflict is also rooted

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8 Higher-status groups also tend to evaluate lower-status groups more negatively as well (Duckitt 2003).

9 Relatedly, the threat that some higher-status groups feel may be rooted in unrealistic terms that are inconsistent with actual circumstances, such as “a fear of being overwhelmed or annihilated” (Kinder 1998: 806).
in the pursuance of group’s incompatible goals or values (Sherif and Sherif 1979), individuals can also feel that, by displacing the central values or goals of the group, the group’s identity is threatened. Thus, individuals’ underlying values play an important role in the perception of threat.

In fact, a threat to social identity not only induces greater inter-group conflict but can also cause individuals to weaken – and even alter – their social identities.\(^{10}\) A threat to one’s social identity is defined as “some action or communication that directly or indirectly seems to undermine the value of being a group member” (Grant and Brown 1995: 198). As noted above, individuals derive their senses of self-image from their memberships in groups; because of this, a threat to that identity can cause them to perceive that this value of membership is lowered. As this social identity becomes increasingly more “unsatisfactory,” these group members will attempt to disassociate themselves from the group and join another group that is more positively distinct (Tajfel and Turner 1986).

This discussion regarding threat has been largely predicated on the research related to inter-group relations – not intra-group conflict nested within a superordinate group. And yet, a similar process occurs in hierarchical relationships as well. As noted above, when subgroup identities are salient, conflict and competition between subgroups emerges over the resources or values of the superordinate group (Kramer and Brewer 1984; Transue 2007). As conflict between subgroups continues, individuals’ perceptions of the status of those subgroups can be altered as one subgroup gains greater influence (or

\(^{10}\) This, again, assumes that boundaries between groups are insecure and “mobility” between groups is possible (Tajfel and Turner 1986).
even dominance) within the superordinate group, thus causing a threat to the superordinate identity.

Because group membership serves as an important source of individuals’ positive self-images, the perception that a particular subgroup is “taking over” the superordinate group should cause an individual to perceive that the superordinate group no longer represents her – particularly if that subgroup is pursuing values or interests contrary to her own – thus causing her to question her loyalty to the larger group. In this sense, perceived threats to identification cause the subgroup and superordinate identities to be incompatible with each other (Turner 1987; Jetten et al. 2002). This threat to identity further exacerbates the distinctions – and thus, conflict – between subgroups and “inhibits superordinate group identification” (Hornsey and Hogg 2000). Thus, when intra-group conflict emerges, the perception that any subgroup to which an individual does not belong is becoming too influential on the superordinate group – particularly in redefining the larger group’s identity – should weaken that individual’s superordinate identity.

In determining the conditions under which affect toward a subgroup impacts attitudes toward a superordinate group, such as a political party, the perception of identity threat must therefore be considered. While affect toward other subgroups within a larger group is expected to translate to attitudes toward that superordinate group, the strength of this impact should be determined by perceptions of how influential those subgroups are on the larger group. In this sense, perceptions of threat (defined in terms of influence, whether real or symbolic) serve as an important moderating variable upon which this
impact is contingent. In other words, regardless of the sources or extent of subgroup conflict, negative feelings toward subgroups should not translate to negative attitudes toward the superordinate group unless those negatively evaluated subgroups are seen as a threat to the larger group’s identity. However, should both conditions be met, then non-subgroup members should not only feel more negatively toward the superordinate group but also weaken their identification with that larger group as well.

**Affect, Party Image and Group Conflict Within the Republican Party: Key Hypotheses**

Although the purpose of the current study is not to “revive” reference group theory, its basic assumption (namely, that groups serve as meaningful reference points for individuals) does provide an important foundation for the theory espoused here regarding conflict – not between groups, but within them. Social identity theory and its intellectual off-shoots confirm this basic premise, although – rather than relying solely on individuals’ affective reaction to groups – these theoretical approaches recognize the importance of cognitive considerations in this process and provide a useful way of conceptualizing which cognitive considerations are most important in shaping this relationship. Indeed, perceptions of subgroup threat should influence the strength of the impact that affective reactions to subgroups have on individuals’ superordinate identities.

As noted in Chapter One, much of the research relying on this theoretical framework of subgroup dynamics and hierarchical identities has emphasized the ways in

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11 The distinction between moderating and mediating variables is an important one. A mediating variable merely clarifies the relationship between an explanatory variable and a dependent variable; in contrast, a moderating variable impacts the direction or strength of the effect of an explanatory variable on the dependent variable. Because perceptions of threat are theorized to impact the strength of the impact between affect toward a subgroup and superordinate attitudes, this relationship is defined as a moderating one. Throughout the remainder of the project, the terms “moderate” (as a verb), “moderating” or “moderator” refer only to this conditional impact.
which tensions between ethnic, racial or national groups are exacerbated (and also reduced). However, the premises are applicable to partisan politics as well. Political parties are comprised of diverse subgroups, and the ways in which a party attempts to balance the interests, goals, values and policy positions of these varied subgroups can cause tension to emerge as each of these factions compete to influence the party (Petrocik 1981). As distinctions between subgroups become more salient, the conflict between these groups should increase, thus providing the potential for individuals to weaken their party identifications and defect.

As established above, partisanship serves as a social identification, and the subgroups within each party provide meaningful reference points for individuals as they consider both the direction and the strength of their partisan attachments (Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002). In the current case study, partisans’ identification with the Republican Party serves as a superordinate identity that encompasses their subgroup identities in a hierarchical relationship. For example, Christian conservatives and economic conservatives maintain distinct identities, although they share a common identity with each other as Republicans. As the theoretical framework above suggests, conflict within the party is more likely when the subgroup distinctions are clear and subgroup identities are more salient. In the Republican Party, the distinctions between Christian conservatives and other GOP partisans have become more clear since this subgroup was first associated with the Republican Party by the public in 1984 (Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth 1991). Not only have news media reports increasingly linked Christian conservatives to the GOP, they have – more importantly – emphasized the
differences between this group and other GOP partisans (Fowler et al. 2004). In particular, these subgroups differ drastically in important ideological values related to the extent of governmental intervention in American society. While the traditional core of the party places a greater weight on limited governmental intervention in American society, Christian conservatives place a greater weight on increasing governmental intervention to define and protect morality (Stonecash 2006; Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007). Therefore, as the salience of these subgroup identities increases, conflict within the party over these ideological values is expected to erupt such that:

_**H1**: Ideological conflict between Christian conservatives and other Republican partisans exists, resulting in negative affect toward this targeted subgroup amongst these other partisans._

In other words, as the post-election news articles referencing the Republican Party’s “identity crisis” suggest, Christian conservatives and other GOP partisans should be engaged in a conflict over the direction of the party. As this conflict continues, the expected patterns of in-group favoritism and out-group hostility should emerge, such that partisans who do not identify with the Christian conservative movement feel more negatively toward this group overall.

Moreover, partisans’ attitudes toward the party is likely determined by their reactions toward the subgroups associated with it. Modern applications of reference group theory would suggest that partisans’ affective reactions to this subgroup (whether positive or negative) should result in corresponding attitudes toward the political party (whether favorable or unfavorable, respectively), if that subgroup is perceived to be associated with the party. In other words, feeling positively toward Christian
conservatives should yield positive attitudes toward the Republican Party, while feeling negatively toward this group should yield negative attitudes toward the party.

However, as noted above, this impact is expected to be contingent upon partisans’ perceptions of whether Christian conservatives pose a threat to the Republican Party’s identity. In other words, the association of Christian conservatives with the GOP likely alters partisan’s party images – or their perceptions of which groups the political party represents. In fact, this alteration is not expected to impact their attitudes toward and attachments with the party unless partisans perceive that this subgroup poses a threat to the superordinate (party) identity. Particularly because this subgroup places greater weight on values contrary to the traditional party core’s values, the perception that Christian conservatives’ influence on the party is too great should cause some partisans to perceive that this group is threatening to “take over” the Republican identity. This perception of threat – or the perception that Christian conservatives have too much influence on the party – thus interacts with these partisans’ feelings toward this subgroup to reshape their partisan attitudes. Partisans who dislike Christian conservatives and whose images of the party have been altered (such that Christian conservatives are perceived as having too much influence on the party) are thus most likely to harbor negative attitudes toward the GOP as a result.

It is likely that most Republicans have, in fact, been exposed to information that may cause them to perceive that Christian conservatives have become more influential on the party in recent years. In fact, the Christian conservative movement has been increasingly linked to the Republican Party in recent news media coverage. The 1992
election marked the first election in which mainstream news accounts associated this
group with the GOP, particularly in the coverage of the party’s national convention
(Bolce and de Maio 1999b). Since then, news stories have progressively merged symbols
of the movement with the GOP, such that depictions of the Republican Party “became
almost indistinguishable from the language…used to characterize Christian
fundamentalists” (Bolce and de Maio 1999a: 512). Moreover, these media accounts
largely characterized Christian conservatives in a negative light. One study of media
coverage from 1990 to 2000 found that most of the news stories about this subgroup and
the Republican Party concentrated on conflict between this group and other GOP
partisans over policy positions. More than 25 percent of the stories linking this group
with the party contained themes that Christian conservatives are both intolerant and a
threat to basic liberties and democracy (Bolce and de Maio 2002). Thus, partisans likely
perceive that this subgroup has at least modest influence on the GOP, and partisans who
are not members of this subgroup are expected to be particularly more likely to perceive
this influence as threatening.

Therefore, the impact of affect toward subgroups on partisan attitudes is expected
to be conditioned by individuals’ perceptions of threat such that:

*H2a: Republican partisans who feel positively toward Christian conservatives –
and perceive this group as having too much influence on the party – are expected
to have more favorable attitudes toward the Republican Party.*

*H2b: Republican partisans who feel negatively toward Christian conservatives –
and perceive this group as having too much influence on the party – are expected
to have more unfavorable attitudes toward the Republican Party.*
Previous studies have also determined that feelings toward groups within the political parties’ coalitions also have an independent impact on presidential candidate evaluations (Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth 1991). Particularly if partisans perceive their party’s candidate as being a member of a negatively evaluated subgroup – or perceive him as succumbing to the influence of such a group – they likely evaluate that candidate more negatively as well. In the current case study, feelings toward and perceptions of the influence of Christian conservatives are expected to also translate into attitudes toward the party’s presidential candidates who are closely associated with the Christian conservative movement. Of course, before group-based considerations can impact one’s evaluations of a political object, that object must be associated with that group in some way (Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth 1991). The association of a group with a candidate is thus central to this causal mechanism. Therefore, the interaction of affect toward Christian conservatives and perceptions of their influence on the party are expected to only significantly determine partisans’ attitudes toward candidates who are associated with this group.

For example, two serious challengers clearly emerged in the Republican Party’s nomination contest in 2008: John McCain and Mike Huckabee. McCain – who had positioned himself as more moderate, particularly on cultural issues – had clearly alienated many Evangelicals with his previous (and sharp) criticism of Christian conservative leaders Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson (The Washington Post 2007). In contrast, Huckabee – a former southern Evangelical minister – suggested that his candidacy would provide Christian conservatives with an opportunity to “lead” the GOP
(Bacon and Eilperin 2008). Given these differences, it is likely that Huckabee was naturally associated with Christian conservatives, while McCain was not. In this case, feelings toward this group and perceptions of their influence on the party are expected to impact attitudes only toward Huckabee.

This interactive effect is expected to also play a direct role on individuals’ strength of partisanship as well, particularly for those who perceive that the party’s identity has been threatened by this subgroup. Particularly if Christian conservatives are pursuing values or interests contrary to one’s own, that individual likely perceives that the Republican Party no longer represents her, causing her to question her loyalty to the party. Should the conflict between Christian conservatives and other GOP partisans be rooted in a division over ideological values – which are the essence of a partisan identity – then GOP partisans who feel negatively toward this subgroup and perceive it as being too influential on the party are expected to devalue the party’s identity and weaken their attachments with it. Therefore:

\[ H3: \text{Feeling negatively toward Christian conservatives and perceiving their influence on the party as too great is expected to directly reduce partisans’ identity with the Republican Party.} \]

Moreover, as this alienation continues, these disaffected partisans may begin to defect by eliminating their attachments to the party altogether. As noted above, a threat to one’s social identity not only causes individuals to weaken their identities – but also to alter them – because the value of the membership in that group identity depreciates (Tajfel and Turner 1986). If the value of “being a Republican” is lowered in the minds of these partisans because of the influence of a negatively evaluated subgroup, then they
may attempt to disassociate themselves from the party and – under the right conditions – defect to attain a more positive self-image. Although the Republican Party has experienced little desertion in recent elections, some partisans may have begun to express their dissatisfaction with the GOP by weakening the strength of their party identification as an indirect result of the interaction of subgroup affect and perceptions of threat.  

Although individuals’ party affiliations are generally long-lasting and stable, the causal mechanism proposed here suggests that the potential for this partisan identity to change rests in the interplay of both affective reactions toward partisan subgroups and cognitive considerations regarding their influence. In the current case study, feelings toward Christian conservatives and perceptions of how influential they are on the Republican Party are expected to interact to shape partisans’ attitudes toward the GOP as well as to indirectly weaken their partisan attachments. Investigating the extent of intra-party conflict is thus an important first step to understanding how the Republican Party coalition has evolved as well as the processes of stability and change in individual-level party identification. In addition to describing the original data collection project conducted to analyze these proposed hypotheses, the following chapter thus begins to test these theoretical expectations by examining the extent – and nature – of conflict between Christian conservatives and other GOP partisans.

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12 As will be discussed in the following chapter, the data analyzed to examine these key hypotheses is limited to a panel study of registered voters in Franklin County, Ohio, from the primary election to the General Election in 2008 (March through November). This short amount of time precludes the current study from examining the possibility of true partisan defection; instead, a weakening of party identification will serve as a proxy indicator of the consequences of the proposed causal mechanism.
CHAPTER 3

THE EXTENT OF CONFLICT WITHIN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

The theoretical foundations outlined in Chapter Two indicate that – because political parties are comprised of such diverse groups competing to influence the party’s leadership, agenda and resources – tension or conflict within any political party is often inevitable. The potential for partisans to become disaffected, weaken their party attachments and defect, however, is dependent upon the extent of that conflict within the party. In the present case study, scholars have noted that the incorporation of Christian conservatives into the GOP’s coalitional base has caused intra-party tension to emerge (Carmines and Layman 1997; Layman 1997; Knuckey 1999; Miller and Schofield 2008), particularly between those who are members of this group and partisans who are not. How wide-spread is this intra-party conflict? And thus, does it carry the potential to divide the party as news media, political pundits and some scholars claim?

The 2008 Franklin County Election Panel Study

Studies of religion, voting behavior and partisanship typically rely on secondary analysis of the American National Election Studies (ANES) or other national surveys, such as the General Social Survey (GSS) or those conducted by the Pew Research Center’s Forum for Religion and Public Life. Although such analysis does provide the opportunity to examine multiple elections using a national sample, existing data sources
do not have an adequate measurement of the variables central to the theoretical foundations of this project. For example, while most gauge feelings toward the Republican Party as well as Christian conservatives, religious conservatives, Christian fundamentalists or the Religious Right, none also measure individuals’ perceptions of how influential these groups are on the GOP (or another similar measure that would capture the perception of threat to one’s partisan identity). The ANES does contain open-ended “likes” and “dislikes” questions about both political parties, which would allow for a measure of the number of times that “Christian conservatives” or a similar reference was mentioned as a reason for liking or disliking the GOP and thus serve as a proxy for their perceptions of influence. However, the use of recent ANES studies would limit the sample size substantially. In the 2004 ANES, for example, less than two percent of all references mentioned in these questions referred to this (or a similar) religious group.

Therefore, in the absence of an existing data source that could satisfactorily test the hypotheses for this case study, an original data collection project was conducted to examine these questions – as well as those addressed in later chapters. Partially funded by a dissertation grant from The Ohio State University, the data was analyzed primarily from the 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey, a representative mail survey of registered voters in Franklin County, Ohio, that was fielded in mid-March of 2008 following the presidential primary election in Ohio. The original sample of 4,548 potential respondents was randomly selected from the publicly available registration lists maintained by the Franklin County Board of Elections. Potential respondents received a

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13 The dissertation author served as one of two co-principal investigators on this survey project.
four-page questionnaire and a postage-paid, business-reply envelope to return the survey; the majority also received one of four incentives to participate.\textsuperscript{14} Those who did not complete their surveys within four weeks following the primary election (and whose addresses were not returned as invalid) also received an identical “reminder” questionnaire in early April 2008.

Of the 4,548 registered voters sampled for this study, 930 were invalid; 817 respondents completed the survey in either the initial or “reminder” wave, for a total response rate of 22.5 percent. Of these 817 respondents, 326 self-identified as Republicans (or 40 percent of the sample); 396 self-identified as Democrats (49 percent), and 67 self-identified as political Independents (8 percent).\textsuperscript{15} Only three percent of respondents failed to respond to the seven-point party identification item.\textsuperscript{16}

While the majority of the data analyzed throughout the current study relies heavily on this post-primary election survey, some additional data was obtained through a follow-up survey to each of the 817 respondents following the national party conventions in mid-September and again following the 2008 presidential election in mid-November, which allows for the analysis of the attitudes and party affiliations of this panel

\textsuperscript{14} These incentives were a part of a separate study on the effectiveness of cash-prize raffle incentives. Some potential respondents received a pre-paid $1 monetary incentive, while others received an opportunity to win a cash-prize ranging from $50 to $400. Approximately one-fifth of the sample served as a control group and did not receive any incentive to participate.

\textsuperscript{15} Republican and Democratic identifiers include those who indicated that they identified as Independents but “lean” toward one of the two major political parties to ensure variance in the analysis of partisan identifiers (Keith et al. 1992).

\textsuperscript{16} The determination of individuals’ party identification is their self-identification with a political party, using a standard seven-point scale, rather than the party with which respondents are registered in Ohio. Because registered partisans in Ohio reflect the primary election in which they most recently voted, the reported self-identification in the current sample may be different from that recorded by the Franklin County Board of Elections.
throughout the 2008 campaign. “Reminder” surveys were also mailed to those yet to return the questionnaires approximately three weeks following each of these latter phases of the panel study. Four hundred and ninety-six respondents completed the survey in the post-convention phase, for a response rate of 62.4 percent; 493 respondents completed the survey in the post-election phase, for a total panel response rate of 62.2 percent.17

As noted above, survey participants were randomly sampled from the county’s voter registration lists to ensure the representativeness of the survey and the generalizability of its findings. Table 3.1 compares the characteristics of the sample obtained through this survey with those of the Franklin County population, as determined by the U.S. Census (2000). A comparison of the first two columns of this table reveal that individuals who are female, very wealthy (i.e., those who report earning more than $100,000 in total family income per year), married, older, white and college-educated are over-represented in the survey in comparison with U.S. Census estimates for Franklin County, Ohio, in 2000. Of course, the sampling frame from which the random sample was drawn for this survey was a list of all registered voters in the county, rather than all adults in the county’s population (upon which the U.S. Census profile is based). Given that those who are registered to vote tend to be female, wealthy, married, older, white and more educated (U.S. Census 2006), the differences between the survey respondents and the Franklin County population are likely the result of this coverage exclusion.18

17 Sixteen of the original 817 respondents were invalid for the post-convention phase of the panel study; an additional three respondents were invalid for the post-election phase of the panel study. It should be noted that the author only had a small number of questionnaire items on these subsequent surveys; Appendix A lists the survey items used from each of these surveys.

18 Previous research has also demonstrated that female, older and more educated individuals also tend to participate in surveys more (for a review, see Weisberg 2005: 172-175).
### TABLE 3.1:
Social and Demographic Characteristics of the 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey, Population of Franklin County, Ohio Voters and U.S. Voters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008 Franklin County Post-Primary Election Survey</th>
<th>Franklin County Population</th>
<th>Ohio Voters</th>
<th>U.S. Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Family Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $20,000</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000 to $40,000</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000 to $75,000</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 to $100,000</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $100,000</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not married</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 24 years</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 44 years</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 64 years</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 years or older</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic (of any race)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Attainment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school graduate</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate or GED</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college or associate’s degree</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College degree or more</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCES: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary (for Franklin County comparison); CNN Election Center 2008 Ohio Exit Polls (for Ohio voter comparison); U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2006 (for U.S. Voter comparison)

* The 2008 Franklin County survey asked respondents to report their total family income in categories that slightly differed from the U.S. Census categories. These percentages noted above reflect those in the Franklin County survey who reported earning less than $25,000 per year and between $25,000 and $40,000 per year, respectively; the rest of the categories match the U.S. Census categories for income.

* The CNN 2008 Ohio exit poll also offered different response options for income. The percentages reported reflect those who reported earning less than $15,000 per year, between $15,000 and $30,000 and between $30,000 and $75,000, respectively.

Despite these differences, the results based on this original Franklin County survey may be representative of voters in Ohio. Table 3.1 also compares the
characteristics of those in this original sample with those of actual Ohio voters, as
determined by the exit polls reported at CNN’s Election Center for the 2008 general
election. Although a slightly higher percentage of female, wealthy (i.e., those who report
earning more than $100,000 in annual family income) and older individuals are
represented in the current study, this difference is not substantial in comparison with
Ohio voters. Moreover, with the exception of the over-representation of individuals who
indicate a racial or ethnic background as “other,” this sample is nearly identical to Ohio
voters in terms of the proportion of whites and African Americans. However, the
comparison between the Franklin County sample and Ohio voters does demonstrate a
substantial disparity in terms of one characteristic: education. While 14 percent of Ohio
voters report earning less than a high school diploma, only three percent of the Franklin
County sample does. Likewise, approximately one-third (32 percent) of Ohio voters
report being college-educated or more, while more than half (56 percent) of the current
project’s sample does. Thus, the Franklin County sample does appear to over-represent
more educated individuals.

Table 3.1 also reports the demographic characteristics of actual U.S. voters in the
2004 election, as determined by the U.S. Census (2006), and a comparison with the
survey respondents of the Franklin County study indicate that this sample may also be
fairly representative of voters across the country as a whole. As with the comparison
with Ohio voters, a slightly higher percentage of female, unmarried and wealthy
individuals are represented in the current study; however, these differences are not
substantial in comparison with the U.S. electorate. Moreover, the proportion of young
people (those between the ages of 18 and 24) in the current study accurately reflects the proportion of young people in the national voting electorate. In fact, the distribution of each age group in the current study is nearly identical to that of the U.S. Census estimates for American voters. Likewise, the racial characteristics of those who participated in the Franklin County survey largely reflect those of U.S. voters. The only exception is the lower percentage of respondents who reported being of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity – a disparity that is likely due to the lower proportion of Hispanic and Latino individuals who reside in Franklin County. As Table 3.1 indicates, the proportion of the current study’s sample who report Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (two percent) is identical to the U.S. Census reports for the Franklin County population.

As with the comparison with Ohio voters, the U.S. Census profile for the American electorate also demonstrates a substantial disparity with the current sample in terms of education. While only 36 percent of U.S. voters have earned a college degree or more, nearly 56 percent of the respondents in the Franklin County survey report earning the same. This over-representation of more educated individuals is likely due to the large number of educators residing in the area sampled for the survey. Franklin County contains nine colleges and universities (The Ohio Department of Development Franklin County Profile 2000), and more than 12 percent of those age 25 or older in the county hold graduate or professional degrees (U.S. Census 2006). It is thus unsurprising that a large proportion of the survey’s sample would be highly educated.¹⁹

¹⁹ Moreover, this survey was partially funded by The Ohio State University, and the questionnaires were distributed on university letterhead. This may have provided an additional incentive for those affiliated with the university to participate in the survey, thus contributing to the over-representation of highly educated individuals in the sample.
The most salient concern of relying on a sample in which highly educated individuals are over-represented is whether this yields systematic political differences. However, despite this disparity in terms of education, the political characteristics of the Franklin County sample also mirror those of the national population as well. Table 3.2 provides a comparison of the distribution of party identification, ideology and political participation for those in the sample obtained via the Franklin County study with those of the respondents to the 2008 American National Election Studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008 Franklin County Post-Primary Election Survey</th>
<th>American National Election Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party Identification</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat (includes leaners)</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican (includes leaners)</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Participation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display a button, bumper</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sticker or yard sign</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work for a party or candidate</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend a rally</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute money</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In terms of party identification, the current study’s sample is comprised of nearly identical proportions of Democrats, Independents and Republicans as with the national sample. Moreover, the current sample is comprised of approximately even proportions of
liberals, moderates and conservatives,\textsuperscript{20} and – although reporting slightly higher rates of contributing money to political campaigns – the current sample reports very similar rates of political participation more generally. Particularly because previous studies have determined that more educated individuals are more likely to participate in politics (Conway 2000), the lack of any substantial differences in these political characteristics suggests that the Franklin County sample is generally reflective of the larger population.

However, the case study selected to examine the dynamics of intra-party conflict in the current project is the Republican Party, and most of the analyses presented are thus limited to Republican identifiers. Therefore, what is also important to the current study is not only whether the survey’s respondents are representative of U.S. voters – but also whether the Republicans in the sample are representative of American Republicans.\textsuperscript{21} Table 3.3 compares GOP partisans in the current sample with Republicans who participated in the 2008 American National Election Studies on a variety of political characteristics, including strength of party affiliation, ideology, interest in campaigns and elections, and policy preferences on a few salient issues. In terms of strength of partisanship, Republicans in the current study are largely reflective of Republicans in this

\textsuperscript{20}The Franklin County study does yield a greater number of liberals, moderates and conservatives than found in the 2008 ANES, largely because 24 percent of the ANES sample responded “Don’t know / haven’t thought about it.” This response option was not offered in the 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey; only four percent of the sample did not answer this question on ideological self-placement.

\textsuperscript{21}Because many of the analyses also examine the differences between Christian conservatives within the party and other GOP partisans, a related concern is whether the Evangelical Protestants in the sample are representative of Evangelicals nationally. According to the Association of Religion Data Archives (2000), Evangelical Protestants comprise approximately one-fourth of the population in Franklin County, which mirrors the national population. Evangelical Protestants also comprise approximately one-third of the sample in the current study – a proportion identical to the national party as well (Pew Research Center 2006). There is no reason to expect any theological differences between Evangelicals in Franklin County and those in the national population.
2008 national survey. Although a slightly higher proportion of those in the current sample report “strong” identification with the GOP, this difference is not substantial.

**TABLE 3.3:**
Political Characteristics of Republicans in the 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey and Republicans in the 2008 American National Election Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>REPUBLICANS ONLY (includes leaners)</th>
<th>2008 Franklin County Post-Primary and General Election Survey</th>
<th>2008 American National Election Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strength of Partisanship</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Leaning” Independent</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interest in Campaigns and Elections</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report being “very interested”</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>52% *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy Preferences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive of more governmental programs and services</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree that the War in Iraq “was worth the cost”</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** American National Election Studies (2008)

*The 2008 ANES offered split question wording on this question; this percentage reflects the total number of respondents who reported being “very much interested” in political campaigns (Form A) or “very” or “extremely” interested in government and politics (Form B).

Likewise, the same proportion of GOP partisans in the Franklin County panel study self-identify as having a “conservative” ideology, although the current sample does include a slightly higher number of Republicans who self-identify as “moderate” (and fewer who self-identify as “liberal”) in comparison with the Republicans included in the 2008 ANES. A slightly greater proportion of Republicans in the current study also report being “very interested” in political campaigns and elections in comparison to those in the 2008 ANES. In terms of policy preferences, the Republicans in the Franklin County
sample and the 2008 ANES are nearly equally opposed to greater governmental programs and services. However, GOP partisans in the 2008 ANES are somewhat more supportive of the War in Iraq in comparison to those in the Franklin County survey. These differences are likely the result of differences in the populations of interest for these surveys; registered voters (the population of interest for the Franklin County survey) may be more interested in political campaigns and elections and hold divergent political opinions in comparison with the adult population in the U.S., which is the population of interest for the ANES.

Thus, despite the potential bias due to differences between the current sample and the Franklin County population, the 2008 Franklin County panel study is fairly representative of the American electorate in both demographic and political characteristics. Moreover, the Republicans in the sample generally reflect the same political characteristics and opinions as those held by GOP partisans nationally. In short, the data analyzed in the current study may be more representative of the larger U.S. voting population than county-wide surveys are commonly thought to be.

The 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey – the initial questionnaire sent to the panel study – provides the basis for the majority of the analyses presented in this project. The survey included questions regarding political predispositions and attitudes (including issue positions on domestic and foreign policies), affect toward several political and social groups and individuals, and group-based considerations related to the two major political parties and their primary candidates. The survey also captured measures of political behavior (including political participation,
media use and vote choice in the primary election) as well as the direction and strength of partisanship and partisan identity. Finally, the survey included questions regarding standard political, social and demographic characteristics, such as ideology, gender, age, education, religion, marital status and race. Full question wording of the survey instruments used in the analyses presented throughout the project is included in Appendix A; details on the coding and creation of key variables is included in Appendix B.22

**The Extent of Conflict within the Republican Party**

As noted above, conflict often emerges within political parties due to the diverse groups that comprise them. Thus, intra-party conflict is defined as the tensions that emerge between subgroups within the party and is therefore framed by individual partisans’ attitudes toward other subgroups within the party. In an investigation of the dynamics of conflict within the Republican Party, this chapter aims to address the following key question: To what extent does conflict within the Republican Party – particularly between Christian conservatives and other GOP partisans – exist?

**Indicators of Intra-party Conflict**

Previous research has demonstrated that Christian conservatives do differ from other factions within the Republican Party in both the priorities given to and policy positions on various social and economic issues (Knuckey 1999; Nesmith 1994). In addition to these differences, the current study also confirms that Christian conservative Republicans and other GOP partisans tend to support opposing presidential primary

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22 As this survey project was a collaborative effort, the survey questionnaire also included items not related to the current project (e.g., political discussion networks). These items are not included in Appendix A as these items were not analyzed by the author.
candidates and base those electoral decisions on divergent considerations – all indicators of the extent of conflict within the GOP.

Table 3.4 reports the candidates for whom Republican identifiers voted in the 2008 presidential primary election in Ohio, distinguished by those who are likely constituents of the Christian conservative movement and those who are not. Because Evangelical Protestants serve as the core constituency of this movement, this comparison is based on whether the respondent’s religious affiliation is identified as a “born-again” or Evangelical Protestant.

Although the operationalization of which Republican identifiers are members of this Christian conservative group could be accomplished in a variety of ways, the use of “born-again” or Evangelical Protestant as a proxy for this membership is the least problematic. For example, merely asking respondents to self-identify as a Christian conservative would likely yield less accurate categorizations as the term itself is vague and ill-defined. Moreover, asking respondents whether they formally belong to a Christian conservative group fails to account for the large number of informal members of this group whose political attitudes and predispositions would certainly categorize them in this group. Thus, while not all Evangelical Protestant Republicans are Christian conservatives, members of this religious tradition do serve as the core constituency of this group, and the distinction between Republicans who do and do not identify with this religious affiliation serves as a close proxy for these conflicting subgroups.

\[23\]

Republican identifiers include partisans who self-identify as strong Republicans, weak Republicans and Independents who “lean” toward the Republican Party. Previous research has also demonstrated that partisan “leaners” are equivalent in their attitudes to “weak” partisans (Keith et al. 1992).
TABLE 3.4:
Republicans’ Vote Choice in the 2008 Presidential Primary Election in Ohio,
by Evangelical Religious Affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Evangelical Republicans</th>
<th>Non-Evangelical Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John McCain</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Huckabee</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron Paul</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Republican candidate</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Democratic candidate</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N    74    169

SOURCE: 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey

Although somewhat divided in their support, Evangelical Republicans reported voting for Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee more than any other presidential primary candidate. In fact, even though Arizona senator John McCain had essentially clinched the presumptive nomination of the Republican Party by this March election, 43 percent of Evangelical Republicans voted for Huckabee, while a smaller minority (37 percent) voted for McCain. This support for Huckabee by this group is unsurprising, particularly given his background as a former southern Evangelical preacher and calls throughout his campaign that his candidacy would provide Evangelical Protestants with an opportunity to “lead” the GOP (Bacon and Eilperin 2008).

In contrast, non-evangelical Republicans supported McCain more than any other candidate in the Ohio primary election; 61 percent reported voting for him in the election compared to only 14 percent who voted for Huckabee. While smaller minorities of both Evangelical and non-evangelical Republicans voted for Ron Paul (three and four percent, respectively), a slightly larger proportion of non-evangelical Republicans (six percent) voted for another Republican candidate, such as Fred Thompson or Mitt Romney. Approximately the same percentage of Evangelical and non-evangelical Republicans
defected and voted for a Democratic candidate in the opposing primary election; in both cases, this was likely the result of strategic voting given the amount of Republicans who did so.\textsuperscript{24}

Moreover, the salience of issues in this primary election also differed among these two groups. When asked what was the “top consideration” in their decisions between the primary candidates, the top three considerations reported by Evangelical Republicans was “moral values” (23 percent), \textsuperscript{25} “candidate character” (19 percent) and “the economy” (14 percent). In contrast, the top three considerations reported by their non-evangelical counterparts were “the economy” (18 percent), “national security” (16 percent) and “experience” (15 percent). Only five percent of non-evangelical Republicans selected “moral values” as being the top consideration in their decision to vote for the primary candidates.

\textit{An Ideological Basis for Conflict within the GOP}

Although these differences provide an indication that conflict within the GOP has emerged as a result of the incorporation of Christian conservatives into the party’s coalitional base, the potential for this conflict to cause some partisans to weaken their party attachments and defect is also dependent upon the differences between these groups in terms of ideological predispositions. Should two opposing subgroups within a political

\textsuperscript{24} The large proportion of these Republicans who voted for a Democratic presidential candidate in the Ohio primary election may seem surprising. While it is certainly possible that some of these self-identified Republicans voted sincerely for a Democratic candidate, it is more likely that – given the anticipated closeness of the General Election – these partisans voted strategically for the candidate who they thought would provide the lowest challenge to the Republican candidate in November. In fact, because the Republican nomination was essentially decided and the Democratic nomination was still so competitive by the Ohio primary, conservative commentator Rush Limbaugh encouraged Republicans to vote for Hillary Clinton to ensure “chaos” in the Democratic race (2008).

\textsuperscript{25} This category includes “moral values” and “abortion.”
party, for example, have the same attitudes regarding the appropriate extent of
governmental involvement in society, then the party should be able to unite these groups
under a common ideological goal – even if these subgroups place greater priority on
different issues and support different primary candidates. However, if the members of
one of these groups have ideological predispositions that are inconsistent with the party’s
core message, then the conflict between these subgroups should be exacerbated.

Of course, it is common for various factions within a political party to consider
different issues to be salient or to have dissimilar views on those issues, which can lead to
a small – but politically inconsequential – amount of intra-party conflict. However, the
differences between Christian conservatives and other traditional factions within the GOP
are not merely based on issue priorities and candidate support. Indeed, these factions are
engaged in an ideological disagreement regarding the appropriate role of government in
American society (Nesmith 1994) – which provides even greater potential to divide the
party.

Heavily influenced by a libertarian approach, the Republican Party has
consistently supported limited governmental intervention in American society and the
economy throughout the 20th century. While Christian conservatives and other factions
within the party have generally agreed regarding the role of governmental interference in
the economy and the extent to which the government should actively resolve social
problems, a greater amount of disagreement exists between these groups about the extent
to which the government should define social and cultural norms and actively protect
those traditionally defined “moral” values.
The results of the 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey confirm the ideological basis for this intra-party conflict. The survey included several items to gauge respondents’ ideological predispositions across two dimensions: morality and the economy. To capture the strength of respondents’ ideological predispositions regarding governmental intervention on economic matters, respondents were asked to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

- Government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest.
- The government should do more to help needy Americans, even if it means going deeper into debt.
- Too much power is concentrated in the hands of a few large companies.

The responses to these statements were combined to create an Economic Predisposition scale, which ranges from three to 15 such that higher numbers reflected a more conservative position (i.e., opposed greater government intervention). Similarly, a Morality Predisposition scale was created from respondents’ strength of agreement (or disagreement) with the following two statements:

- This country would have fewer problems if there were more emphasis on traditional family ties.
- The government should do more to protect morality in American society.

This scale ranges from two to 10 such that higher numbers reflect greater support for governmental intervention in defining or protecting traditional “morality” in the U.S.

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26 A reliability analysis of this scale yields a Cronbach’s alpha of .615. A Cronbach’s alpha value of .70 is typically considered an acceptable measure of a scale’s internal consistency (Garson 2008). However, the removal of any of the items from this scale decreases the Cronbach’s alpha, suggesting that no constituent variable reduces the scale’s reliability.

27 A reliability analysis of this scale yields a Cronbach’s alpha of .695. As noted above, a Cronbach’s alpha value of .70 is the standard level to ensure a scale’s internal consistency (Garson 2008).
Both Evangelical Republicans and their non-evangelical counterparts score highly on the Economic Predisposition scale, indicating that members of both groups tend to oppose governmental interference in American economic matters. Table 3.5 reports the percentage of Republican partisans whose scores on this scale were low (between three and five), medium (between six and 10) and high (between 11 and 15). Again, high scores on this scale indicate a more conservative economic position.

**TABLE 3.5:**

Republicans’ Political Predispositions, by Evangelical Religious Affiliation (2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Predisposition Scale (3 to 15)</th>
<th>Evangelical Republicans</th>
<th>Non-Evangelical Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>9.37</td>
<td>9.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>100% (91)</td>
<td>100% (220)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morality Predisposition Scale (2 to 10)</th>
<th>Evangelical Republicans</th>
<th>Non-Evangelical Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>8.09**</td>
<td>6.93**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>100% (90)</td>
<td>100% (223)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey

** Independent samples t-test confirms that the means on this scale is significantly different between these groups (p<.000, two-tailed)

Although a slightly higher proportion of non-evangelical Republicans (37 percent) score in the most conservative category of this collapsed scale in comparison with Evangelical Republicans (31 percent), an independent t-test reveals that there is no significant difference between the means of these two groups’ scores on this scale. As both groups tend to hold similar attitudes on these predisposition items, no ideological conflict related to economic matters appears to exist within the Republican Party.
In contrast, Evangelical and non-evangelical Republicans score very differently on the Morality Predisposition scale. Table 3.5 also reports the percentage of Republican identifiers whose scores on this scale were low (two to four), medium (five to seven) and high (eight to 10); again, high scores on this scale reflect greater support for governmental protection of morality and traditional values. A substantially greater proportion of Evangelical Republicans (69 percent) score in this “high” category in comparison to their non-evangelical counterparts (38 percent). While a slight majority of non-evangelical Republicans (52 percent) do reflect medium support for these predisposition items, 10 percent report disagreement with these statements – compared to only two percent of Evangelical Republicans.

In addition, the differences in mean scores on the Morality Predisposition Scale are statistically significant. On average, the amount of support for governmental protection of morality and traditional values was significantly greater for Evangelical Republicans in comparison with non-Evangelical Republicans ($t(311) = -5.391, p = .000, r = .292$). The effect size estimate also indicates that the difference in these predispositions represents a medium-sized effect (accounting for nearly nine percent of the variance).28 Thus, while these two subsets do not differ substantially in their predispositions regarding governmental interference on economic matters, they do differ significantly in their predispositions regarding governmental intervention on “moral” matters related to traditional values.

Moreover, 84 percent of the non-evangelical Republicans who score in either the “low” or “medium” category on this Moral Predisposition scale do not agree that they are

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28 See Cohen (1988; 1992) for a discussion on the accepted standards for small, medium and large effects.
“enthusiastic about the direction this party is headed.” This suggests that the intra-party conflict between Christian conservatives and other Republicans who do not identify with this group is not only rooted in an ideological tension regarding the appropriate role of the government – but is also potentially great enough to cause non-evangelical Republicans to become disaffected with the party.

A Caveat: A Religious Basis for Conflict within the GOP?

Because this conflict is rooted in differences on moral predispositions, the potential for this conflict to be religious in nature – rather than ideological – exists, particularly as the conflicting factions within the Republican Party have been operationalized in the present study according to an Evangelical religious affiliation. Some religion and politics scholars, for example, have suggested that the American political party system has experienced a religious divide between those who hold more orthodox religious views (such as Evangelical Protestants) and those with more progressive views on morality in general (Hunter 1991; Layman 1997). According to this view, those with more progressive views may be other religious groups who hold less orthodox religious beliefs (such as Mainline Protestants) or secular individuals who lack any religious affiliation or commitment (Leege and Kellstedt 1993).

Thus, in this “culture war” perspective, conflict regarding traditional moral values and the government’s protection of these values would be rooted in this religious dimension such that Evangelical Protestants are pitted against more progressive religious groups or secular individuals within the Republican Party. In this view, then, any Republican who becomes disaffected as a result of their attitudes toward Christian
conservatives may defect only to realign with the opposing party that best represents his particular religious (or secular) beliefs. Should this perspective hold, the differences in moral predispositions between these groups are merely the result of this religious division.

Although this initially appears to be a plausible proposition, this perspective assumes that Republicans who are not “born-again” or Evangelical Protestants are homogeneous in their religious views. In other words, a systematic conflict between Evangelical and non-evangelical Republicans according to this religious dimension would presume that – if there were an Evangelical vs. Secular Republican divide – most (or at least a substantial majority of) non-evangelical Republicans would be non-religious as well. Similarly, if the divide was between Evangelical Protestants and Mainline Protestants – a religious group that holds less orthodox beliefs and has historically identified with the economic conservative wing of the GOP – then non-evangelical Republicans would primarily be Mainline Protestants.

In fact, the non-evangelical Republicans who participated in the 2008 Franklin County Election study are both religious and very diverse in their religious views. Only nine percent of the non-evangelical Republicans surveyed self-identified as non-religious or secular; in fact, 83 percent of this subset of Republican identifiers reported that religion is “somewhat” or “very” important in guiding their lives. Moreover, this subset is not homogeneous in their religious affiliations. While nearly half (47 percent) of non-evangelical Republicans surveyed are Mainline Protestants, nearly one-third (32 percent) identify as Catholics and one in ten reported an “Other” religious preference – ranging
from those with more conservative (e.g., Mormon) to more progressive (e.g., Unitarian-Universalist) religious beliefs. These divergent religious views suggest, then, that the differences in moral predispositions between Evangelical and non-evangelical Republicans are not rooted in religious differences – but ideological disagreements.

**Associating Christian Conservatives with the GOP**

Republicans who likely identify with the Christian conservative movement and those who do not clearly have many differences in issue saliency, support for candidates, ideological predispositions related to morality and – as previous research has demonstrated – policy positions and priorities. Moreover, the extent of this conflict indicates that the potential for some GOP partisans to weaken their party attachments as a result of the incorporation of this group into the party’s coalitional base may be real. Particularly because group-centric considerations have become more important in determining partisanship, partisans’ attitudes toward Christian conservatives should shape both their attitudes toward the political party and, consequently, the strength of their partisan attachments.

However, before this subgroup can serve as a meaningful reference point for partisans, it must first be formally associated with the political party. Clearly, if a particular group was *not* perceived to be aligned with the party, then partisans’ attitudes toward that group would not translate into their attitudes toward the party (Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth 1991). Association of the subgroup with the political party is thus central to this causal mechanism. In the 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey, respondents were asked to report which groups they associated with the
Republican and Democratic parties as well as various presidential primary candidates. Respondents were instructed to circle as many of the following groups that they thought applied: Christian conservatives; environmentalists; feminists; big business; labor unions; military personnel; and other (which provided an opportunity for open-ended responses). Table 3.6 reports the percentage of Republican identifiers who associate each of these respective groups with the Republican Party.

### Table 3.6:
Groups that Republicans Associate with the Republican Party, by Evangelical Religious Affiliation (2008)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Republicans</th>
<th>Evangelical Republicans</th>
<th>Non-Evangelical Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian conservatives</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big business</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military personnel</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmentalists</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor unions</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminists</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey
* Cells indicate the percentage of respondents who associate each group with the Republican Party. The percentages do not add up to 100% because multiple responses were allowed.

Unsurprisingly, these partisans tend to associate groups that have been traditionally accepted as a part of the GOP’s coalitional base: Christian conservatives; big business and military personnel. In fact, as the “All Republicans” column indicates, Republican identifiers actually associate Christian conservatives with the GOP more than any other group, although this percentage (83 percent) is only slightly higher than the proportion of Republicans who associate “military personnel” with the GOP (81 percent). While a large portion – nearly three-fourths of the Republicans surveyed – also associate “big business” with the GOP, it is somewhat surprising that this group, which has
historically had the closest ties with the Republican Party and remains an important part of the party’s coalition, is associated less with the party by Republican identifiers than are Christian conservatives and military personnel. As social identity theory would suggest, achieving and maintaining a positive self-image is an important motivation of group categorization and identification. Should the term “big business” be perceived to have a negative connotation for Republicans, they may be less likely to report an association between this group and their party.²⁹

However, subgroups within the Republican Party do not associate these groups with the party to the same extent. Table 3.6 also reports whether these groups are associated with the GOP by Republicans who are likely constituents of the Christian conservative movement (Evangelical Protestants) and those who are not (non-evangelical Protestants). More than nine out of 10 Evangelical Republicans associate Christian conservatives with the Republican Party, compared to only 79 percent of non-evangelical Republicans. Moreover, a greater percentage of non-evangelical Republicans (81 percent) associate big business with the GOP, compared to only 58 percent of Evangelical Protestant partisans. Because evangelical Republicans are more likely to identify as Christian conservatives (and, conversely, non-evangelical Republicans are more likely to identify with the traditional core of the GOP), it is likely that these differences are the result of in-group members associating their own particular subgroups with the larger political party. These differences also indicate that those who identify with the party do not have the same images of their party; clearly, Evangelical and non-

²⁹ Only a very small proportion of Republicans surveyed associate “environmentalists,” “labor unions” or “feminists” with the Republican Party, which is expected given these groups’ historical ties to the Democratic Party.
evangelical Republicans hold divergent perceptions regarding which groups the Republican Party best represents.

**Conclusion**

Regardless of these differences, a substantial majority of both Evangelical and non-evangelical Republicans do associate Christian conservatives with the Republican Party, which suggests that the potential for this group to serve as a meaningful reference point for Republicans in shaping their partisan attachments is real, particularly for those within the GOP who dislike this particular group. Conflict within the Republican Party between Christian conservatives and other GOP partisans exists, as indicated by their support for opposing primary candidates and differences in issue saliency. Moreover, this conflict is rooted in an ideological – not religious – dimension; having such divergent predispositions regarding the proper role of government in the definition and protection of traditional moral values provides an even greater challenge to the party as it attempts to unite these conflicting groups.

This conflict – as well as the association of Christian conservatives with the Republican Party – provides a ripe context for some partisans to become disaffected with the party and to weaken their partisan attachments. As outlined in Chapter Two, the causal mechanism for this process is rooted in the interaction between affective reactions toward and cognitive considerations about the influence of the subgroup in question. The next chapter examines the consequences of this intra-party conflict, particularly the ways in which this interaction impacts Republican identifiers’ feelings toward their own political party and two of its presidential candidates in the 2008 primary election in Ohio.
CHAPTER 4
THE IMPACT OF GROUP-BASED CONSIDERATIONS
ON PARTISAN AND CANDIDATE ATTITUDES

Growing evidence suggests that group-centric considerations have become increasingly more important in determining partisanship at the mass level (Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth 1991), particularly as differences between subgroups become more distinct. In fact, individuals’ party evaluations are largely dependent upon their attitudes toward and evaluations of other groups within the party (Kinder 1998), particularly their affective reactions toward – or how individuals feel about – subgroups of the party. In other words, “if people like certain groups and they perceive those groups as aligned with a particular party, they should evaluate the party more positively. Similarly, if they dislike the group, it should have a negative impact on their judgment of the party” (Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth 1991: 1137).

However, negative affect toward a particular faction may not necessarily translate to negative attitudes toward the party in question if this subgroup is merely associated with the larger party. In contrast to this basic premise, the theory outlined in Chapter Two proposes that partisans’ images of the party play an important conditional role in determining whether affect toward a subgroup translates to attitudes toward (and consequent strength of identification with) the larger political party. Particularly if a subgroup places greater weight on values contrary to those held by the traditional core of
the party, the perception that this subgroup has too much influence on the party is expected to cause some party members to perceive that this group is threatening to “take over” the superordinate identity. In the current case study, this perception of threat – or the perception that Christian conservatives have too much influence on the Republican party – is expected to interact with these partisans’ feelings toward this subgroup to reshape their partisan attitudes. Republicans who dislike Christian conservatives and whose images of the party have been altered (such that Christian conservatives are perceived as having too much influence on the party) are thus most likely to harbor negative attitudes toward the party as a result, particularly if they are not members of the subgroup in question.

Given these theoretical expectations, this chapter thus examines the ways in which perceptions of this group’s influence on the GOP impacts the relationship between affect toward Christian conservatives and attitudes toward the Republican Party. Specifically, the chapter aims to address the following key questions: Under what conditions do partisans’ attitudes toward this subgroup translate to attitudes toward the Republican Party? And under what conditions do these attitudes shape partisans’ attitudes toward the party’s presidential candidates in a primary election campaign?

**Affect toward Christian Conservatives and the Republican Party**

The 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey included questions regarding individuals’ affect toward several political and social groups, including Christian conservatives and the Republican Party. These questions gauged respondents’ affect toward these groups on an 11-point scale, ranging from very unfavorable (0) to
very favorable (10). In addition to capturing respondents’ feelings toward these political groups, the ratings on the feeling thermometer scale also capture individuals’ global evaluations of the parties (Weisberg and Rusk 1970); these feeling thermometer ratings of the parties thus serve as a proxy of respondents’ overall attitudes toward the parties.

Table 4.1 reports Republican identifiers’ affect toward these two key groups and notes the differences between Evangelical and non-evangelical Republicans to examine separately those who are likely members of this subgroup and those who are not. Unsurprisingly, those who identify with the Republican Party feel favorably toward their own political party, as indicated by the “All Republicans” column.

TABLE 4.1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affect toward the Republican Party</th>
<th>All Republicans</th>
<th>Evangelical Republicans</th>
<th>Non-Evangelical Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>6.76</td>
<td>6.89</td>
<td>6.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>100% (320)</td>
<td>100% (92)</td>
<td>100% (219)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affect toward Christian Conservatives</th>
<th>All Republicans</th>
<th>Evangelical Republicans</th>
<th>Non-Evangelical Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>4.39**</td>
<td>7.52**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>100% (317)</td>
<td>100% (90)</td>
<td>100% (218)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey

** An independent samples t-test confirms that the means on this scale is significantly different between these groups (p = .000, two-tailed)

Fifty-eight percent of Republicans surveyed report positive feelings toward the GOP, with a mean feeling thermometer score of 6.76 (on a scale that ranges from zero to 10). While Evangelical Republicans do feel slightly more favorably toward the GOP, the
differences in affect of this subgroup and non-evangelical Republicans are not substantial nor are the means between these two groups significantly different.

Greater variation exists among Republican identifiers in their feelings toward Christian conservatives. While 35 percent of Republican identifiers hold neutral feelings toward this group, nearly one-third (30%) of GOP identifiers surveyed feel negatively toward it. Distinct differences in feelings toward this group, however, emerge for those who are likely members of it and those who are not. As expected, Evangelical Republicans tend to feel more positively toward Christian conservatives, with 66 percent reporting favorable feelings toward them. In fact, only a very small minority – five percent – report having negative feelings toward this group. In contrast, non-evangelical Republicans feel much more negatively toward Christian conservatives with 40 percent reporting unfavorable feelings toward this group. While 38 percent of non-evangelical Republicans harbor neutral feelings toward this group, only 22 percent feel favorably about Christian conservatives.

Moreover, the differences in mean feelings toward this subgroup are statistically significant. On average, the reported feelings toward Christian conservatives by Evangelical Republicans are significantly more positive in comparison with those reported by non-evangelical Republicans ($t(306) = -10.037, p = .000, r = .50$). The effect size estimate also indicates that the difference in affect toward Christian conservatives represents a large, and therefore substantive, effect (accounting for 25 percent of the variance). Clearly, these two subsets of Republican partisans feel significantly differently about this important subgroup. The negative feelings that non-Evangelical
Republicans have toward this group suggests that the association between Christian conservatives and the GOP could potentially undermine these partisans’ attitudes and identification with the Republican Party.

**Perceptions of Christian Conservatives’ Influence on the GOP**

The second central component of the causal mechanism outlined above is partisans’ perceptions of whether negatively evaluated groups have too much influence on the party. To capture respondents’ perceptions of Christian conservatives’ influence on the Republican Party, the 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the following key statement: “Christian conservatives have too much influence on the Republican Party.” As the “All Republicans” column in Table 4.2 indicates, Republican identifiers are very evenly split on their perceptions of this group’s influence on the party. Just over one-third (35 percent) of Republicans agree that this group has too much influence over the party, while the same amount (35 percent) disagree with this statement.

**TABLE 4.2: Republicans’ Perceptions of Christian Conservatives’ Influence on the GOP, by Evangelical Religious Affiliation (2008)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree that Christian conservatives have “too much influence” on the Republican Party</th>
<th>All Republicans</th>
<th>Evangelical Republicans</th>
<th>Non-Evangelical Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree that Christian conservatives have “too much influence” on the Republican Party</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree (i.e., they do not have too much influence on the Republican Party)</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>100% (322)</td>
<td>100% (92)</td>
<td>100% (222)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey
Again, differences emerge in these perceptions between those who are likely to be Christian conservatives and those who are not. Non-evangelical Republicans tend to perceive that this group has too much influence on the GOP; 42 percent of non-evangelical Republicans agree that this group has too much influence in comparison with only 15 percent of Republicans who are Evangelical Protestants. While a sizable majority (58 percent) of Evangelical Republicans feel that Christian conservatives do not have too much influence on the Republican Party, only one-fourth (25 percent) of non-evangelical Republicans feel the same way.

Moreover, both affect toward Christian conservatives and perceptions of this group’s influence on the GOP are significantly correlated with Republicans’ feelings toward their own party. Table 4.3 demonstrates that more positive feelings toward this group are significantly correlated with more positive feelings toward the GOP for all Republicans, although this relationship is strongest for Republicans who are also Evangelical Protestants.

**TABLE 4.3:**
Correlates with Republicans’ Affect toward the GOP, by Evangelical Religious Affiliation (2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Republicans</th>
<th>Evangelical Republicans</th>
<th>Non-Evangelical Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affect toward Christian Conservatives</td>
<td>.354**</td>
<td>.610**</td>
<td>.304**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception that Christian Conservatives have “too much influence” on the GOP</td>
<td>-.267**</td>
<td>-.210*</td>
<td>-.298**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey

**Pearson correlation is significant at the .01 level, two-tailed; *Pearson correlation is significant at the .05 level, two-tailed**
In a similar vein, the negative correlation between affect toward the Republican Party and individuals’ perception of the influence of this group indicates that those who agree that Christian conservatives have too much influence on the GOP tend to have more negative feelings toward the party as well. While this relationship also holds for Evangelical Republicans (albeit at a slightly lower significance level), this relationship is strongest for Republicans who are not associated with this group.

The Role of Party Image in Determining Republicans’ Affect toward the GOP

This initial evidence does suggest that both affect toward this particular subgroup as well as perceptions of its influence do impact Republicans’ feelings toward their own political party. As the theory outlined in Chapter Two suggests, this perception of Christian conservatives’ influence on the GOP is expected to condition the impact of Republicans’ affect toward this group to shape feelings toward the political party – particularly for those who are not members of this particular subgroup (i.e., Republicans who are not Evangelical Protestants). The specific hypotheses tested are:

H2a: Republican partisans who feel positively toward Christian conservatives – and perceive this group as having too much influence on the party – are expected to have more favorable attitudes toward the Republican Party.

H2b: Republican partisans who feel negatively toward Christian conservatives – and perceive this group as having too much influence on the party – are expected to have more unfavorable attitudes toward the Republican Party.

To further investigate these claims, two ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analyses were conducted on Republicans’ feelings toward the Republican Party (as noted above, an 11-point scale that ranges from very unfavorable (0) to very favorable (10)); the first limits the analysis to those who likely identify with the Christian conservative
movement (i.e., Evangelical Republicans), while the second analysis is limited to those who would likely not identify with the movement (i.e., Republicans who are not Evangelical Protestants). The key independent variables are comprised of the items discussed above: affect toward Christian conservatives; and respondents’ perceptions of whether this group has too much influence on the Republican Party.\(^{30}\) Because the key proposition regards the moderating role of this perception of influence, a multiplicative interaction term was created to gauge the conditional impact of affect toward this group and perceptions of its influence.

In addition, the analyses include standard political and demographic variables—such as ideology, marital status, gender, age and education—to control for the independent effects that these characteristics might have on feelings toward the Republican Party.\(^{31}\) Previous research has demonstrated that those who are ideologically more conservative, older and of a higher socio-economic status (captured here via level of education) tend to have stronger associations with the GOP (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008).\(^{32}\) In addition, studies on partisanship have also found important differences in terms of marital status (Weisberg 1987) and gender (Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999), suggesting

\(^{30}\) This variable was calculated as a dichotomous measure in which those who agree that Christian conservatives have too much influence on the Republican Party are coded a “1,” and those who do not agree with this statement are coded a “0.” Given the complex nature of the anticipated interactive effect, the use of a dichotomous variable will aid in the meaningful interpretation of the interaction in the model.

\(^{31}\) Additional controls typically included in such analyses—such as income or race—have been excluded from this analysis. Due to the large amount of missing data in the income variable, education serves as a proxy for socio-economic status. In addition, only four African Americans in the survey self-identified as Republicans, so the inclusion of a control for race contributes little to models limited to Republican identifiers.

\(^{32}\) Research has also demonstrated that older individuals tend to have stronger identifications with their political parties as well (Converse 1969).
that those who are married or male should feel more favorably toward the party as well.

The results of these analyses are presented in Table 4.4.

**TABLE 4.4:**
Predicting Republicans’ Favorable Affect toward the Republican Party (2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EVANGELICAL REPUBLICANS Regression Coefficients (Standard Errors)</th>
<th>NON-EVANGELICAL REPUBLICANS Regression Coefficients (Standard Errors)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affect toward Christian Conservatives (0=Very unfavorable → 10=Very favorable)</td>
<td>.646** (.104)</td>
<td>.095 (.077)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception that Christian Conservatives Have “Too Much Influence” on the Republican Party (1 = Agrees that “Christian conservatives have too much influence on the Republican Party”; 0 = Does not agree with this statement)</td>
<td>.314 (1.595)</td>
<td>-1.794** (.574)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction Term: Affect Toward Christian Conservatives x Perceptions of Influence of Christian Conservatives on the GOP</td>
<td>.053 (.238)</td>
<td>.246* (.123)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (1=Very liberal → 5=Very conservative)</td>
<td>-.212 (.331)</td>
<td>.170 (.230)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status (1=Married; 0=Not married)</td>
<td>-.275 (.469)</td>
<td>-.151 (.308)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (1=Female; 0=Male)</td>
<td>-.229 (.432)</td>
<td>.175 (.280)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.005 (.111)</td>
<td>.027** (.099)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.080 (.158)</td>
<td>.005 (.099)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.449 (1.631)</td>
<td>4.684** (1.037)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>.400</th>
<th>.184</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.340</td>
<td>.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>6.657</td>
<td>5.647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard error of the estimate</td>
<td>1.822</td>
<td>1.979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of freedom</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N 88 208

* p<.05, two-tailed; ** p< .01, two-tailed

NOTE: The analysis is limited to those who self-identify as strong Republicans, weak Republicans and Independents who lean towards the Republican Party.

Interestingly, only one of these control variables – age – has a significant impact on Republicans’ feelings toward their own party, and this significant impact emerges only in the analysis limited to non-evangelical Republicans. The positive coefficient
indicates that – as expected – older, non-evangelical Republicans feel significantly more favorably toward the GOP in comparison with their younger counterparts. However, no other control variable included in either analysis has a significant effect. Conversely, the analyses do produce more interesting results with regard to the key explanatory variables. As the “Evangelical Republicans” column of Table 4.4 indicates, affect toward the Christian conservative movement appears to be the primary factor predicting Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward the GOP.

However, due to the inclusion of a multiplicative interaction term, the coefficients reported (as well as their standard errors and associated significance tests) may be deceptive. Coefficients in linear-additive regression models are interpreted as the effect of a one-unit increase in the explanatory variable on the dependent variable, holding all other variables constant (Schroeder, Sjoquist and Stephan 1986). In contrast, in models that employ multiplicative interaction terms, the coefficients reported can often be misleading because “each variable involved in the interaction terms of interactive models has multiple effects…depending on the levels of the other variable(s) with which it interacts” (Kam and Franzese 2007: 18; emphasis in original). In other words, the effects of the key explanatory variables on the dependent variable are conditional such that the coefficient reported for one of these variables provides its estimated effect only when the value of the other variable equals zero (Kam and Franzese 2007; Friedrich 1982).33

33 Kam and Franzese (2007) provide an excellent description of the interpretation of these coefficients as well as the effects of these variables and demonstrate that the effect of a constitutive term included in an interaction depends on: a) its coefficient; b) the coefficient of the interaction term; and c) the value of the other constitutive term included in the interaction. Thus, in a model that suggests that $x$ and $z$ interact to impact $y$, “the coefficient on $x$ gives the estimated effect of a unit change in $x$, holding $z$ fixed at zero (2006: 19; emphasis in original).
Therefore, in the “Evangelical Republicans” model presented above, the coefficient on feelings toward Christian conservatives indicates that this variable has a positive and statistically significant impact on Republicans’ feelings toward the GOP when they do not perceive this group as having too much influence on the party (i.e., when the value of this variable is zero). Specifically, when respondents do not perceive this group as having “too much influence,” an increase in Evangelical Republicans’ feeling thermometer scale toward Christian conservatives of one point would lead to a .646 increase in the feeling thermometer scale toward the Republican Party.

Moreover, the standard errors and associated significance tests of these coefficients can also be misleading because they, too, vary according to the coefficients of both variables included in the interaction as well as the values of those variables (Kam and Franzese 2007). For example, the value of significance of affect toward Christian conservatives on Evangelical Republicans’ affect toward the GOP reported in Table 4.4 only indicates that this impact is significant when the value of the other key variable in the interaction term is zero (i.e., the influence of this group is not perceived to be too great); this value cannot, however, indicate whether that impact remains significant across the range of values for this other key variable. Additional testing is therefore needed to determine whether Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward Christian conservatives significantly impact their feelings toward the GOP when this group’s influence on the party is also perceived to be too great.

Because the impacts of these variables are contingent upon each other, their effects are better interpreted through conditional, or marginal, effects – which is
calculated by taking the first derivatives of the dependent variable with respect to both of the variables included in the interaction term. This process also provides a more accurate interpretation of the significance of these impacts by calculating the confidence intervals to determine whether the effect of each variable across the range of values for the other is statistically distinguishable from zero. Thus, when the upper and lower bounds of the confidence interval around the marginal effects both fall above zero, the null hypothesis that one variable’s impact is not significantly different from zero at that particular value of the other key variable can be rejected; similarly, when the confidence intervals both fall below zero, this null hypothesis can also be rejected (Kam and Franzese 2007: 30-32). In other words, finding that the upper and lower bounds of the confidence interval are both on the same side of zero is equivalent to determining that the variable’s impact is statistically significant.

Therefore, to determine if the significant impact of affect toward Christian conservatives on affect toward the Republican Party holds even when Evangelical Republicans do perceive this group as having too much influence on the party, the marginal effects of this variable were calculated and graphed. The solid line in Figure 4.1 thus indicates how the marginal effect of feelings toward Christian conservatives changes whether respondents perceive this group as having too much influence on the party.\(^{34}\) The confidence intervals around this solid line indicate the conditions under which Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward Christian conservatives has a statistically significant effect on their feelings toward the Republican Party – as noted

\(^{34}\) Although the “perceptions of Christian conservatives’ influence” variable is dichotomous, this graph includes some values of this variable that do not exist empirically (e.g., those that fall between zero and one) for greater ease in interpreting the graph (Kam and Franzese 2007:30).
above, when the upper and lower bounds of the confidence interval both fall below (or both fall above) the zero line. As confidence interval around the marginal effects for this variable remains above zero for both substantive values of this dichotomous variable, the graph demonstrates that feelings toward Christian conservatives significantly predicts Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward the GOP, regardless of whether they perceive this group as being too influential on the party.\textsuperscript{35}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure4.1.png}
\caption{Marginal Effect of Evangelical Republicans’ Affect toward Christian Conservatives on Affect toward the GOP, by Perceptions of Influence}
\end{figure}

\textbf{NOTE:} The dotted lines demonstrate a 95\% confidence interval.

Of course, the initial results in the “Evangelical Republicans” column in Table 4.4 also indicate that the perception that Christian conservatives have too much influence on the GOP has a positive – although apparently insignificant – impact on feelings toward the Republican Party. Again, because this is one of the constitutive variables included in the multiplicative interaction term, marginal effects were calculated and graphed to

\textsuperscript{35} When perceptions of influence equals zero, the marginal effect is .646 ($t = 6.16$); when perceptions of influence equals one, the marginal effect is .699 ($t = 3.19$).
interpret the multiple effects of perceptions of this group’s influence across the range of values in the feeling thermometer toward Christian conservatives.

The solid sloping line in Figure 4.2 indicates how the marginal effect of perceptions of this group’s influence changes whether respondents have positive or negative feelings toward Christian conservatives. As both the upper and lower bounds of the confidence interval are neither both above nor both below zero, the graph demonstrates that the perception that Christian conservatives are too influential on the GOP does not have a statistically significant impact on Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward their own party. In other words, while affect toward Christian conservatives impacts feelings toward the Republican Party for Evangelical Republicans, the perception that this subgroup may be too influential on the GOP does not condition this impact.

**FIGURE 4.2:**
Marginal Effect of Evangelical Republicans’ Perception of Christian Conservatives’ Influence on Affect toward the GOP, by Affect toward Christian Conservatives

NOTE: The dotted lines demonstrate a 95% confidence interval.

Of course, the finding that Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward their own political party is driven primarily by feelings toward Christian conservatives is to be
expected, particularly given the lack of variance among this group on their perceptions of this group’s influence. Keep in mind that a substantial majority (85 percent) of Evangelical Republicans felt that Christian conservatives did not have “too much influence” on the party. Moreover, of the 15 percent of Evangelical Republicans who reported that they do agree that this group has too much influence on the GOP, nearly all reported having favorable feelings toward Christian conservatives as well. It is thus unsurprising that – for those who are the likely constituency of the Christian conservative movement – perceptions of this group’s influence would have an insignificant impact on their feelings toward the party overall.

These results stand in stark contrast to the findings for non-evangelical Republicans; as the “Non-evangelical Republicans” column in Table 4.4 indicates, the perception of how much influence Christian conservatives have on the GOP is an important conditional variable in predicting their feelings toward the Republican Party, particularly in shaping the impact of feelings toward Christian conservatives. Again, the coefficients reported for each of the key explanatory variables only provides the estimated effect of that variable when the value of the other variable included in the interaction term equals zero. Thus, when feelings toward Christian conservatives are very negative (i.e., the value of this variable equals zero), the perception that this group has “too much influence” on the GOP has a significant and negative impact on non-

36 Although 15 percent is a small percentage, one might question why any Evangelical Protestant – particularly those who report favorable feelings toward Christian conservatives – would perceive this group has having “too much influence” on the party. One possible explanation is that these individuals recognize the consequences of the conflict between this group and other GOP partisans and feel that this group should exert less influence to maintain party unity. Another possible explanation is that these Evangelical Republicans feel that partisan politics is not the appropriate forum for influencing American society. As one Evangelical leader recently suggested, the church should maintain “a distinctive identity” from a political party “for the sake of the church” (Gushee 2008).
evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward their own party. Specifically, this perception of “too much influence” results in a nearly two-point decrease in affect toward the Republican Party when feelings toward Christian conservatives is very unfavorable, which is substantial given that the dependent variable is a scale of only 11 points.

As with the previous model, marginal effects were calculated and graphed to determine if this significant impact holds when non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward Christian conservatives are positive as well. The solid sloping line in Figure 4.3 thus represents how this marginal effect changes according to whether respondents feel positively or negatively toward this subgroup (the figure also includes a zero line to help to determine when the marginal effect is significant).

**FIGURE 4.3:**
Marginal Effect of Non-evangelical Republicans’ Perception of Christian Conservatives’ Influence on Affect toward the GOP, by Affect toward Christian Conservatives

NOTE: The dotted lines demonstrate a 95% confidence interval.

The confidence intervals around this solid sloping line indicate the conditions under which the perception that Christian conservatives have too much influence on the GOP has a statistically significant effect on feelings toward the Republican Party – again, when the upper and lower bounds of the confidence interval both fall below (or above)
the zero line. This figure thus indicates that non-evangelical Republicans’ perceptions that this subgroup is too influential on the Republican Party significantly impact their feelings toward the party – but only when their feelings toward Christian conservatives is negative (that is, when affect toward this group is rated at or below five on the 11-point feeling thermometer scale).

While it is interesting that the impact of perceptions of influence is conditioned by feelings toward this subgroup, it is even more important to determine whether these perceptions have a conditional effect on the relationship between feelings toward this subgroup and feelings toward the party. Figure 4.4 thus reflects how the marginal effect of feelings toward Christian conservatives changes when respondents perceive this group as having too much influence on the party.\(^{37}\)

**FIGURE 4.4:**
Marginal Effect of Non-evangelical Republicans’ Affect toward Christian Conservatives on Affect toward the GOP, by Perceptions of Influence

![Graph showing the marginal effect of affect toward Christian Conservatives on affect toward the GOP, by perceptions of influence.]

NOTE: The dotted lines demonstrate a 95% confidence interval.

\(^{37}\) Again, for illustrative purposes, this graph includes values of this variable that do not exist empirically. When perceptions of influence equals zero, the marginal effect is .095 (\(t = 2.22\)); when perceptions of influence equals one, the marginal effect is .341 (\(t = 3.59\)).
The pattern of the upper and lower bounds of the confidence intervals thus indicates that the effect of non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward Christian conservatives on their feelings toward the Republican Party is significant when these individuals perceive this group as having too much influence on the GOP. In other words, the impact that their feelings toward Christian conservatives have on their feelings toward the Republican Party is moderated by (i.e., is contingent upon) the perception that this group is too influential on the party.

To further aid in the interpretation of this interactive effect, predicted values were calculated to determine the effect of non-evangelical Republicans’ perceptions of Christian conservatives’ influence across the range of values of affect toward this group. As depicted in Figure 4.5, these predicted values indicate that, holding all other variables constant, a non-evangelical Republican who does not feel that this group is too influential on the GOP generally maintains steady feelings toward the Republican Party even when affect toward Christian conservatives increases from very unfavorable to very favorable.

**FIGURE 4.5:** Predicted Affect toward the Republican Party for Non-evangelical Republicans

![Graph showing predicted affect toward the Republican Party](image)

**NOTE:** Predicted values are calculated for non-evangelical Republican with moderate ideology who is an unmarried male with median age and education.
In fact, the difference in predicted affect toward the GOP is less than one point (.95) for those who feel most negatively toward Christian conservatives and those who feel most positively toward this group. These predicted values are in stark contrast with those predicted for an individual who perceives this group as being too influential on the GOP. For example, this graph suggests that a non-evangelical Republican who feels very negatively toward this group and does not perceive it as being too influential on the party is predicted to harbor more favorable feelings toward the GOP (6.62).

However, a similar individual who does perceive this group to be too influential on the party is predicted to have increasingly negative feelings toward the party (4.83), resulting in nearly a two-point difference in affect toward the GOP when the perception of influence is present. As expected, those who feel very favorably toward Christian conservatives and who feel that they are very influential in the party are predicted to have the most positive affect toward the GOP.

**The Role of Party Image in Determining Republicans’ Affect toward Republican Presidential Candidates**

The impact of feelings toward and perceptions of Christian conservatives may also translate to attitudes toward leading political figures who represent the Republican Party. As noted in Chapter Two, the proposed process should not only shape partisan attitudes but also determine – at least in part – individuals’ feelings toward the party’s presidential candidates, particularly toward those who are closely associated with the Christian conservative movement. By the 2008 presidential primary election in Ohio, two serious challengers had clearly emerged in the GOP’s nomination contest: John
McCain and Mike Huckabee.\textsuperscript{38} A senator from Arizona, McCain attempted to position himself as a moderate Republican who was independent from the party establishment – a reputation that had previously emerged during his bid for the presidency against George W. Bush in 2000. However, due to his opposition to a U.S. Constitutional amendment banning gay marriage and his criticism of Evangelical Protestant leaders Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson during his 2000 presidential campaign, McCain had alienated Christian conservatives. For example, James Dobson, founder of the religiously based Focus on the Family, reported early in the 2008 campaign that he would not vote for McCain “under any circumstances” (The Washington Post 2007: A2).

In contrast, Huckabee earned the endorsements of several Christian conservative leaders due to his conservative stances on abortion and gay marriage. A former Arkansas governor and ordained Southern Baptist minister, Huckabee was a natural choice for many Evangelicals in the party (Sullivan 2007). In fact, only two months before the Ohio primary election, the candidate not only associated himself with the Christian conservative movement but advocated for a larger role for Evangelical Christians within the GOP, implying that his candidacy would provide them with a better opportunity to lead the party (Bacon and Eilperin 2008).

The difference in the association of Christian conservatives with these two candidates offers an opportunity to further examine the conditions under which feelings toward this group and perceptions of its influence on the party impact partisans’ attitudes.

\textsuperscript{38} Although McCain was ahead in public opinion polls at this time, it was not until following the Ohio primary election on March 4, 2008, that he clinched the presumptive nomination.
Theoretical expectations outlined in Chapter Two suggest that these factors should shape partisans’ attitudes only when this group is associated with the candidate. The 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey also asked respondents to indicate whether they associated Christian conservatives with both of these candidates. A sizeable majority of non-evangelical Republicans (84 percent) and an overwhelming 91 percent of Evangelical Republicans associated this group with Mike Huckabee. In contrast, only 21 percent of non-evangelical Republicans associated this group with McCain, while a slightly higher percentage (33 percent) of Evangelical Republicans did so.

Because only one of these two challengers was clearly associated with Christian conservatives, it is thus expected that Republican partisans who feel negatively toward this group and perceive its influence as being too great on the GOP should feel negatively toward Huckabee but not toward McCain. Moreover, previous research has demonstrated that the traditional core of the GOP was less likely to vote for Republican candidates if they were closely connected with the Religious Right (Smith 2002). Therefore, this impact should be particularly evident for non-evangelical Republicans, who – of the two groups investigated here – represent the traditional core of the party.

To analyze this expectation, a series of OLS regressions was conducted on Republican partisans’ feelings toward Huckabee and McCain. As with social and political groups, the survey asked respondents to rate their affect toward these two candidates on an 11-point scale, ranging from very unfavorable (0) to very favorable

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39 The analyses are limited to examining feelings toward Huckabee and McCain because, although other Republican candidates were on the ballot in the Ohio primary (despite having dropped from the race before the election), they were the two most viable candidates.
(10). Table 4.5 reports Republicans’ affect toward Mike Huckabee and John McCain, noting the differences between Evangelical and non-evangelical Republicans. As indicated by the “All Republicans” column, a substantial majority (68 percent) of Republican partisans feel favorably toward McCain, with a mean feeling thermometer rating of 7.08. In fact, only four percent feel negatively toward him. In contrast, a lower majority of Republicans (43 percent) feel favorably toward Huckabee – while nearly one-fourth (23 percent) feel negatively toward him. That McCain is viewed more favorably by Ohioan Republicans following the Ohio primary in March is not surprising, particularly given that he clinched the party’s presumptive nomination after the Super Tuesday elections, which included the Ohio primary.

**TABLE 4.5:**
**Republicans’ Affect toward Two Republican Presidential Candidates, by Evangelical Religious Affiliation (2008)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affect toward John McCain</th>
<th>All Republicans</th>
<th>Evangelical Republicans</th>
<th>Non-Evangelical Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>7.08</td>
<td>6.93</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>100% (322)</td>
<td>100% (92)</td>
<td>100% (224)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Affect toward Mike Huckabee | Positive | 43% | 64% | 35% |
|                            | Neutral  | 34% | 28% | 36% |
|                            | Negative | 23% | 8%  | 29% |
| Mean                      | 5.64     | 7.14** | 5.06** |
| Total (N)                 | 100% (302) | 100% (92) | 100% (224) |

SOURCE: 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey

** An independent samples t-test confirms that the means on this scale is significantly different between these groups (p = .000, two-tailed)

It is important to note, though, the differences between Evangelical and non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward these two candidates. While non-evangelical
Republicans do feel slightly more positively toward John McCain, the differences in their affect and that of Evangelical Republicans are not substantial (nor are the means between these two subgroups significantly different). In fact, a large majority of both groups (62 percent and 70 percent, respectively) report favorable feelings toward the eventual winner of the Republican nomination.

However, distinct differences in feelings toward Huckabee emerge between the likely constituents of the Christian conservative movement and those who are not. As expected, Evangelical Republicans tend to feel more positively toward the former Baptist minister, with 64 percent reporting favorable feelings toward him. In fact, only eight percent report negative feelings toward him. In contrast, non-evangelical Republicans are split more evenly toward Huckabee with 35 percent and 29 percent feeling favorably and unfavorably toward him, respectively. A comparison of the differences in means confirms that, on average, Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward Huckabee are significantly more positive that those reported by non-evangelical Republicans ($t(292) = 6.424, p = .000, r = .35$).  

As noted above, these feeling thermometer scores serve as the dependent variables in these analyses. The key independent variables are comprised of the items utilized above: affect toward Christian conservatives; respondents’ perceptions of whether this group has too much influence on the Republican Party; and a multiplicative interaction term to gauge the conditional impact of these two variables. The analyses also control for ideology, marital status, gender, age and education. Two additional

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40 The effect size estimate, however, indicates that the difference in feelings toward Huckabee represents only a medium-sized effect, accounting for approximately 12 percent of the variance.
variables are included to control for the salience of two key issues. The questionnaire asked respondents to select one issue that was their “top consideration” between the candidates in the primary election. The “Moral Values as Top Electoral Consideration” variable reflects whether a respondent selected “moral values” or “abortion” (coded as a “1”) or another issue (coded as “0”), while the “Economy as Top Electoral Consideration” variable reflects whether a respondent selected the economy (coded as a “1”) or any of the other twelve issues listed (coded as “0”). Again, the models separate Evangelical and non-Evangelical Republicans. The results are presented in Table 4.6.

As the “Mike Huckabee” columns indicate, Evangelical Republicans’ affect toward Christian conservatives is the only key explanatory variable that emerges as a significant predictor of their feelings toward Huckabee. For members of this subgroup, feelings toward Christian conservatives have a positive and statistically significant impact on their feelings toward this candidate. Moreover, perceptions that this group has “too much influence” on the Republican Party do not condition this impact.\(^{41}\) Neither these perceptions nor the interaction term are significant. As with the analysis of feelings toward the GOP, it is unsurprising that Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward a Christian conservative candidate would be driven by their feelings toward this group, particularly given the lack of variance among this group regarding the amount of influence that Christian conservatives have on the GOP.

\(^{41}\) Marginal effects calculated (not shown) confirm that feelings toward Christian conservatives maintains statistical significance across the range of values for perceptions of this group’s influence on the GOP. They also confirm that affect toward this subgroup is the only key explanatory variable to significantly impact Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward Huckabee.
### TABLE 4.6:
Predicting Republicans’ Favorable Affect toward Huckabee and McCain (2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MIKE HUCKABEE EVANGELICAL REPUBLICANS</th>
<th>NON-EVANGELICAL REPUBLICANS</th>
<th>JOHN McCAIN EVANGELICAL REPUBLICANS</th>
<th>NON-EVANGELICAL REPUBLICANS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regression Coefficients (Standard Errors)</td>
<td>Regression Coefficients (Standard Errors)</td>
<td>Regression Coefficients (Standard Errors)</td>
<td>Regression Coefficients (Standard Errors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect toward Christian Conservatives</td>
<td>.260** (.100)</td>
<td>.430** (.112)</td>
<td>.111 (.107)</td>
<td>-.011 (.072)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception that Christian Conservatives have “Too Much Influence” on the Republican Party</td>
<td>.105 (.744)</td>
<td>-.4187** (.1645)</td>
<td>-.4091** (.1600)</td>
<td>-1.127** (.530)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction Term: Affect Toward Christian Conservatives x Perceptions of Christian Conservative Influence on the GOP</td>
<td>-.023 (.161)</td>
<td>.519** (.245)</td>
<td>.590** (.239)</td>
<td>.201* (.114)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Moral Values” as Top Electoral Consideration</td>
<td>2.423** (.801)</td>
<td>.780 (.528)</td>
<td>.022 (.510)</td>
<td>-.591 (.580)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Economy” as Top Electoral Consideration</td>
<td>1.229** (.495)</td>
<td>.071 (.645)</td>
<td>-.084 (.579)</td>
<td>-.202 (.347)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>.153 (.315)</td>
<td>.463 (.354)</td>
<td>-.317 (.331)</td>
<td>-.455** (.220)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>-.760* (.410)</td>
<td>-.752 (.486)</td>
<td>-.229 (.463)</td>
<td>-.442 (.285)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.198 (.371)</td>
<td>-.1162** (.449)</td>
<td>.133 (.432)</td>
<td>.041 (.263)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.006 (.012)</td>
<td>-.016 (.012)</td>
<td>.033** (.011)</td>
<td>.033** (.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.328** (.131)</td>
<td>.023 (.164)</td>
<td>.088 (.157)</td>
<td>.092 (.093)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.830** (1.688)</td>
<td>1.579 (1.459)</td>
<td>5.439** (1.636)</td>
<td>7.275** (1.036)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Standard error of the estimate</th>
<th>Degrees of freedom</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.497</td>
<td>.429</td>
<td>7.311</td>
<td>1.847</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.188</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>4.203</td>
<td>2.517</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>.112</td>
<td>2.096</td>
<td>1.797</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>2.564</td>
<td>1.837</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.10, two-tailed; ** p<.05, two-tailed
NOTE: The analysis is limited to those who self-identify as strong Republicans, weak Republicans and Independents who lean towards the Republican Party.
Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward Huckabee are also significantly determined by the salience of the economy and “moral values.” Specifically, reporting that “moral values” was the top electoral consideration in the primary elections yields nearly a 2.5-point increase in Evangelicals’ feelings toward this candidate. Given that this issue was selected by Evangelical Republicans as their most important consideration between the candidates (as reported in Chapter Three), it is not surprising that the importance of this issue would increase their feelings toward a candidate who – as an Evangelical Protestant – likely holds similar priorities.

Interestingly, reporting that the economy was the top electoral consideration in the primary elections also significantly yields more than a one-point increase in Evangelicals’ feelings toward Huckabee. This result is likely a function of the omission of two issues that serve as baseline categories – and are more likely to produce favorable attitudes toward McCain: the War in Iraq and national security. Moreover, Evangelical Republicans tended to report “the economy” as a top consideration; in fact, this issue was the third most reported issue by this subgroup, whereas only three percent of Evangelical Republicans cited the “War in Iraq” and only six percent cited “national security.” For this subgroup, those who selected “the economy” were likely more favorable to Huckabee as a result.42

Although Evangelical Protestants’ perceptions of Christian conservatives’ influence do not directly impact their feelings toward Huckabee, these perceptions do

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42 The results also indicate that both marital status and education significantly impact Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward Huckabee as well. For these partisans, those who are married tend to feel less favorably toward Huckabee, while those who are more educated tend to feel more favorably toward him.
serve as an important moderating variable on how non-evangelical Republicans feel toward this candidate.\textsuperscript{43} When feelings toward Christian conservatives are very negative (i.e., the value of this variable equals zero), the perception that this group has too much influence on the GOP results in more than a four-point decrease in non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward Huckabee, which is substantial given the range of the dependent variable.

Marginal effects were also calculated and graphed to determine if this significant impact holds across the range of non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward Christian conservatives as well. The solid sloping line in Figure 4.6 represents how this marginal effect changes with respondents’ feelings toward this subgroup, and the confidence intervals around this solid sloping line indicate the conditions under which the perception that Christian conservatives have too much influence on the GOP has a statistically significant impact on non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward Mike Huckabee. The confidence intervals indicate that the perception that Christian conservatives are too influential on the Republican Party significantly determine non-evangelical partisans’ affect toward Huckabee only when their feelings toward Christian conservatives is negative (less than five on the 11-point feeling thermometer scale).

\textsuperscript{43} Only one of the control variables – gender – emerges as a significant predictor of non-Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward Huckabee. Specifically, women who are non-Evangelical Republicans hold significantly more negative feelings toward this candidate in comparison with their male counterparts.
FIGURE 4.6:  
Marginal Effect of Non-evangelical Republicans’ Perception of Christian Conservatives’  
Influence on Affect toward Mike Huckabee, by Affect toward Christian Conservatives

![Graph showing marginal effect](image)

NOTE: The dotted lines demonstrate a 95% confidence interval.

A calculation of the marginal effect of affect toward Christian conservatives on non-evangelical partisans’ feelings toward Huckabee (not shown) also demonstrates that the effect of non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward Christian conservatives on their feelings toward this candidate remain significant when these individuals perceive this group as having too much influence on the GOP. In other words, the impact that their feelings toward Christian conservatives have on their feelings toward the Republican Party is conditioned by the perception that this group is too influential on the party.

Predicted values were also calculated to provide a more intuitive interpretation of this interactive effect. Figure 4.7 indicates that, holding all other variables constant, a non-evangelical Republican who feels very positively toward Christian conservatives and does not perceive this group as having too much influence on the GOP feels favorably toward Huckabee (8.51).
FIGURE 4.7:
Predicted Affect toward Huckabee for Non-evangelical Republicans

NOTE: Predicted values are calculated for non-evangelical Republican with moderate ideology who is an unmarried male with median age and education who did not select “the economy” or “moral values” as a top consideration between the candidates.

These feelings toward the candidate decrease to a neutral rating (4.21) for a similar individual who feels very negatively toward this group. In contrast, a similar non-evangelical Republican who feels very negatively toward this group and does perceive Christian conservatives to have too much influence on the party is predicted to have much more negative feelings toward Huckabee (0.02), which is a significant difference in affect toward this candidate when this perception of influence is present.

The determinants for Republicans’ feelings toward John McCain stand in stark contrast with those for their feelings toward Huckabee – and in a way that differs from the patterns established by the previous analyses on partisan attitudes as well. Previous analyses demonstrate that Evangelical Republicans’ partisan attitudes and feelings toward Huckabee were driven primarily by affect toward Christian conservatives. However, the results presented in the “John McCain” columns in Table 4.6 indicate that their feelings toward McCain are determined by the interaction of their feelings toward Christian
conservatives and their perceptions of this group’s influence on the party. When Evangelical Republicans do not perceive this group as having too much influence on the GOP (i.e., the value of that variable is zero), more positive feelings toward Christian conservatives result in more positive feelings toward McCain, although the magnitude of this impact is small. Specifically, a one-point increase in feelings toward this group yields approximately one-tenth of a point increase in Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward McCain when they do not perceive this group as having too much influence on the GOP.

The marginal effects calculated for the impact of these feelings on Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward this candidate (not shown), however, demonstrates that this impact is only significant when this group’s influence is perceived to be too great.

In contrast, the perception that this group has too much influence on the party has a negative impact on Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward McCain when their feelings toward Christian conservatives is very negative (i.e., when the value of that variable is zero). Specifically, when Evangelical Republicans dislike Christian conservatives, perceiving that their influence on the party is too great results in a four-point decrease in their feelings toward McCain – although it should be noted that very few Evangelical Republicans in the sample actually dislike this group and perceive it to have too much influence on the party.

To determine whether this interaction is significant across the range of values for affect toward this group, Figure 4.8 displays the marginal effects of these perceptions of influence. The confidence intervals around the marginal effects indicates that the perception that Christian conservatives have too much influence on the GOP has a
statistically significant impact on Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward McCain only when their feelings toward this group are also negative (less than four on the 11-point feeling thermometer scale). Thus, this interactive impact is only significant on Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward McCain only when these two conditions are met: when they feel negatively toward Christian conservatives and perceive their influence on the party to be too great. In contrast with previous analyses, then, Evangelical Republicans’ attitudes toward this candidate are predicted by both feelings toward this group and perceptions of its influence on the party – rather than by affect toward this group alone.

FIGURE 4.8:
Marginal Effect of Evangelical Republicans’ Perception of Christian Conservatives’ Influence on Affect toward John McCain, by Affect toward Christian Conservatives

NOTE: The dotted lines demonstrate a 95% confidence interval.

The predicted values (as presented in Figure 4.9) also demonstrate this interactive effect. Holding all other variables constant, an Evangelical Republican who does not perceive this group as being too influential on the GOP maintains steady (and generally neutral) feelings toward John McCain regardless of whether their feelings toward Christian conservatives is very positive (for a predicted value of 7.07) or very negative.
(for a predicted value of 5.96). Conversely, the perception that this group has too much influence on the party results in substantially different feelings toward McCain for Evangelical Republicans. Holding all other variables constant, an Evangelical Republican who does perceive this group as being too influential on the GOP and feels very negatively toward it is predicted to hold much more negative feelings toward McCain as well (1.87). In other words, both feelings toward this group and cognitive considerations of its influence on the party impact Evangelical Republicans’ affect toward this candidate, particularly when their feelings toward Christian conservatives are negative (although, again, only five percent of Evangelical Republicans feel negatively toward this group).

The model reported in Table 4.6 also indicates that age significantly predicts Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward John McCain. As expected, older Evangelical Republicans tend to feel more positively toward the 72-year-old candidate.

NOTE: Predicted values are calculated for an Evangelical Republican with moderate ideology who is an unmarried male with median age and education who did not select “the economy” or “moral values” as a top consideration between the candidates.

\[44\]
As with Evangelical Republicans, the interaction of feelings toward Christian conservatives and perceptions of their influence on the GOP has a significant impact on non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward the eventual presidential nominee as well – although this interactive impact is smaller for these partisans in comparison with their Evangelical counterparts. Interestingly, the negative coefficient for affect toward Christian conservatives indicates that, when non-evangelical Republicans do not perceive this group as having too much influence on the party, more favorable feelings toward this group actually results in more negative feelings toward McCain as well, although this impact is quite small (-.011). The unexpected direction of this coefficient is likely due to the fact that McCain had alienated Christian conservative leaders; even though they are not themselves members of this subgroup, non-evangelical partisans who feel favorably toward this group may dislike a candidate who had previously positioned himself as opposed to this movement. Non-evangelical Republicans’ perceptions of this group’s influence also negatively impact their feelings toward John McCain. Specifically – when the value for affect toward Christian conservatives is zero – the perception that Christian conservatives have too much influence on the GOP results in a 1.127 decrease in the feeling thermometer ratings for this candidate.

As with the findings for Evangelical Republicans, the marginal effects for non-evangelical Republicans indicate that these impacts are not significant across the range of values of both of these variables. Figure 4.10 demonstrates that non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward Christian conservatives significantly predict their feelings toward this candidate only when they perceive Christian conservatives as having too
much influence on the party (as the confidence intervals are both above or below the zero line only under this condition).\textsuperscript{45}

FIGURE 4.10:  
Marginal Effect of Non-evangelical Republicans’ Affect toward Christian Conservatives on Affect toward John McCain, by Perceptions of Influence

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure4.10}
\caption{Marginal Effect of Non-evangelical Republicans’ Affect toward Christian Conservatives on Affect toward John McCain, by Perceptions of Influence}
\end{figure}

NOTE: The dotted lines demonstrate a 95% confidence interval.

Similarly, Figure 4.11 demonstrates that their perceptions of this group’s influence only have a significant impact on their feelings toward John McCain when their feelings toward Christian conservatives are very negative (less than two points on the feeling thermometer scale). In other words, for non-evangelical Republicans, this interactive effect is significant on their feelings toward McCain \textit{only when both of these conditions are met}.

\textsuperscript{45} This graph includes some values for this dichotomous variable that are not present empirically (e.g., those between zero and one) for illustrative purposes. When perceptions of influence equals zero, the marginal effect is -.011 ($t = .16$); when perceptions of influence equals one, the marginal effect is .19 ($t = 2.12$).
FIGURE 4.11:
Marginal Effect of Non-evangelical Republicans’ Perception of Christian Conservatives’ Influence on Affect toward John McCain, by Affect toward Christian Conservatives

NOTE: The dotted lines demonstrate a 95% confidence interval.

Moreover, this interaction has a less substantial impact on non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward McCain than it does on their feelings toward the candidate who is more closely associated with Christian conservatives (as demonstrated by the results presented above). For example, the predicted value of feelings toward McCain (presented in Figure 4.12) for a non-evangelical Republican who feels negatively toward Christian conservatives and does not perceive this group as having too much influence on the GOP is predicted to report an 8.12 rating toward McCain on the feeling thermometer scale; for a similar individual who does perceive this group as having too much influence, the predicted value is 6.99 – just over a one-point difference that still produces a rather positive rating for McCain. Thus, although this impact is statistically significant, it is not substantial for non-evangelical Republicans’ feeling toward this candidate. In fact, a comparison of the predicted values for Evangelical and non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward McCain (in Figures 4.9 and 4.12, respectively) demonstrate that this interactive impact is much greater for Evangelical Republicans.
The model reported in Table 4.6 indicates two other factors that significantly predict non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward McCain: age and ideology. As expected, older non-evangelical Republicans tend to hold more positive feelings toward McCain. The negative coefficient for ideology is initially surprising; the results suggest that non-evangelical partisans who are more conservative feel less favorably toward McCain, while those who are more liberal hold more positive feelings toward the eventual winner of the Republican nomination. However, given that McCain had positioned himself as the less conservative candidate – not only in this contest but against the more conservative George W. Bush in the 2000 nominating contest as well – it is reasonable that more conservative Republicans would support this candidate less.

**Conclusion**

Social groups clearly serve as meaningful references for partisans and shape their feelings toward their own political parties and their party’s presidential candidates, but
the way in which they do so is conditional upon individuals’ membership in these groups as well as their perceptions of the amount of influence that those groups have on the party. In the current case study, feelings toward and perceptions about Christian conservatives play an important role in determining Republican partisans’ feelings toward the GOP and two of the candidates competing in the party’s 2008 primary election, particularly for non-evangelical Republicans. Of course, these results are based upon one county-wide survey in Ohio, but – as detailed in the previous chapter – the representativeness of this Franklin County survey suggest that these findings may accurately reflect processes occurring for Republican voters throughout the nation.

Thus, it appears that the tension within the GOP as a result of the rise of Christian conservatives into the party’s base has generated increased hostility toward this group amongst the other members of the party; non-evangelical Republicans tend to feel more negatively toward Christian conservatives and tend to perceive this subgroup as having too much influence on the party, particularly in comparison with those who serve as the core constituency of the Christian conservative movement. However, these feelings and perceptions of influence operate in divergent ways for those who are likely members of this subgroup and those who are not. Evangelical Republicans’ partisan attitudes are primarily driven by their feelings toward this group; in contrast, non-subgroup members’ partisan feelings are determined by both affect toward this group as well as cognitive considerations regarding this group’s domination on the party. In other words, for non-evangelical Republicans, negative affect toward Christian conservatives translates to unfavorable feelings toward the Republican Party when this group is perceived as being
too influential. Indeed, this process is contingent upon their perceptions of this group’s influence.

As expected, these patterns emerge in determining partisans’ feelings toward the Republican presidential candidate who is perceived as being closely associated with Christian conservatives in the primary season as well. While Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward Mike Huckabee are again predicted predominantly by their feelings toward this group, non-evangelical Republicans’ perceptions of how influential this group is on the GOP conditions the impact of their feelings toward this group on their feelings toward this candidate – particularly when their feelings toward Christian conservatives are negative. Non-evangelical Republicans not only tend to harbor more negative feelings toward Christian conservatives, but these feelings translate to substantially lower feelings toward a candidate who is associated with this group when they feel that it has too much influence on the GOP.

As noted in Chapter Two, this interactive effect was expected to hold only for candidates who are associated with the Christian conservative movement. Given the opposition to McCain from Christian conservative leaders and his own positioning away from this subgroup in the party – particularly in comparison with the level of support that Huckabee received from the Christian conservative movement – factors related to this group were not anticipated to be determinants of non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward this candidate. And yet, feelings toward this group and perceptions of its influence on the party do have a significant – albeit small – impact on these partisans’ feelings toward McCain, despite the lack of association between him and this group.
However, their feelings toward McCain are only significantly impacted when two conditions regarding Christian conservatives are met: when feelings toward them are very negative and when they perceive this group as having too much influence on the party. It appears, then, that the perception that this group threatens the party’s identity may cause non-evangelical Republicans’ attitudes toward Christian conservatives to transfer to any Republican candidate – although this impact is considerably smaller for candidates not associated with this group (such as McCain) in comparison with those who are (such as Huckabee).46

Surprisingly, Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward McCain are also determined by the interaction between feelings toward Christian conservatives and perceptions of its influence on the party, particularly when feelings toward this group are negative. In fact, in comparison with the impact of this interaction for their non-evangelical counterparts, the differences produced by this interaction appear to be much greater for Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward McCain. However, this impact only significantly determines Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward this candidate when both of the following conditions are met: when they dislike Christian conservatives and perceive its influence on the party as being too great. Despite the finding that this interaction is statistically significant, this conclusion is generally misleading, particularly because such a small number of Evangelical Republicans in the current sample actually meet these conditions. As noted above, only five percent of Evangelical Republicans in the sample feel negatively toward Christian conservatives; of those, only two individuals

46 The goodness-of-fit statistics reported for both models also suggest that these key explanatory variables perform better at predicting non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward Huckabee rather than McCain.
also perceive this group as having too much influence on the party. Thus, while significant in a statistical sense, the finding does not provide substantial explanatory power on these partisans’ feelings toward this candidate.

In contrast, not only are non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward these two candidates impacted by both affect toward Christian conservatives and cognitive considerations regarding this group’s influence – so are their partisan attitudes. The evidence presented here suggests that the potential for non-evangelical Republicans’ party affiliation to weaken may be real, particularly for those who feel negatively toward Christian conservatives and perceive their influence on the party to be too great. The next chapter investigates this potential in greater detail, examining the consequences of the interactive impact between feelings toward Christian conservatives and perceptions of its influence on Republicans’ partisan identity as well as short-term changes in the strength of their partisanship.
CHAPTER 5

THE CONSEQUENCES FOR REPUBLICANS’ STRENGTH OF PARTISANSHIP

As with other forms of group identification, partisanship involves a psychological attachment to a political party – an attachment that results in a great deal of stability. Party affiliations are generally long-lasting (Campbell et al. 1960); in fact, some research has indicated that partisanship persists across decades (Alwin, Cohen and Newcomb 1991) and that this persistence is maintained even among cohorts who are politically socialized during eras of political instability and unrest (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). Indeed, party affiliations are resistant to short-term contextual effects, particularly campaign-specific forces (Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002). Moreover, due to the balance of these short-term partisan forces in recent elections – as well as the growing polarization between the two major political parties – changes to individual-level party identification are even less likely in the contemporary party system than they were in the 1950s (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008: 127).

However, party identification “is generally one of firm but not immovable attachment” (Campbell et al. 1960: 148). While those whose party attachments are weakest are most likely to alter their affiliation due to the influence of campaign-specific issues and events, “[e]ven strong identifiers are not impervious to such influences” (Ibid.: 149). Parties can experience systematic defections, especially when their social group compositions change. For example, the weakening of Southern Democrats’ party
affiliation in the 1960s and 1970s was the result of the increasing presence of African Americans in the party’s coalition and subsequent changes to individuals’ party images (Petrocik 1987). What is important to note with this case, however, is how slowly these changes occurred. Indeed, although “party images can and do change, …the accompanying change in party identification unfolds gradually” (Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002: 13).

Thus, while changes to individual-level party identification do occur, they are rare and gradual. Particularly because the current study investigates the dynamics of group relations in only one presidential contest, the finding of any partisan defection over the course of this short time span amongst Republicans would be highly unusual. And yet, the evidence presented in Chapter Three demonstrates that – due to the interactive impact of feelings toward this subgroup and perceptions of its influence on the political party – some partisans feel less favorably toward their own party, suggesting that the potential for these individuals to weaken their attachment with the party exists. Indeed, the weakening of one’s partisanship serves as an important precursor to change in party identification, particularly as those with weak partisanship are the most likely to defect (Campbell et al. 1960; Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002; Stonecash 2006; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). Thus, although true partisan defection – defined as altering one’s party identification to an Independent not leaning toward either party or to the opposing party – may not be detected here, determining the consequences of the changes to partisan attitudes found as a result of affective and cognitive reactions to a particular subgroup in
the political party remains a valuable exercise to further understand the conditions under which changes to individual-level party identification occur.

**The Consequences for Republicans’ Partisan Identity**

Although highly correlated with feelings toward a political party, party identification – both in terms of its direction and strength – is not equivalent to those feelings (Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002: 27). Rather, the strength of partisan identity is defined as the intensity of the psychological attachment that an individual has toward a party. Although individual-specific factors, such as age (Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1969), have been found to impact this strength, other scholars have noted the importance of group-based considerations in the weakening of partisan identity (Petrocik 1987; Green Palmquist and Schickler 2002). As partisans’ perceptions of group influence within the party are altered due to changes in the party’s composition and the balance of power between subgroups in the party, their party images are re-evaluated. As noted in Chapter Two, partisans who perceive that the party’s identity has been threatened by the growing influence of a negatively evaluated subgroup are expected to weaken their partisan attachments as well. Therefore, in addition to an indirect impact on the strength of partisanship by impacting affect toward the party, the interaction between affect toward a subgroup and party image may have a *direct* impact on individuals’ partisan identity, particularly for those who realize discrepancies between their own goals and the goals of the subgroup perceived to be dominant in the party.

In the current case study, the perception that Christian conservatives are too influential on the GOP is expected to interact with Republicans’ affect toward this group
to shape the strength of their partisan identities—especially for those who are not members of this specific subgroup. Particularly because non-evangelical and Evangelical Republicans support divergent values regarding the proper role of government in defining and protecting morality, the ideological conflict between these two groups likely causes non-evangelical Republicans who feel negatively toward this subgroup and who perceive it having too much influence on the party to devalue the party’s identity, thus causing them to question their loyalties to the party. In other words, these partisans are expected to become disaffected and weaken their partisan identities as a result of this intra-party conflict. As outlined in Chapter Two, the specific hypothesis to be tested is:

\[ H3: \text{Feeling negatively toward Christian conservatives and perceiving their influence on the party as too great is expected to directly reduce partisans’ identity with the Republican Party.} \]

Previous research has determined that, although highly correlated with the traditional seven-point self-labeling measure of party identification, a multi-item scale of partisan identity is a more appropriate measure of party identification from a social identity perspective because it captures the group-based element of belonging to the political party (Weisberg and Hasecke 1999; Greene 2002). The 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey asked respondents whether they agreed with, were neutral regarding, or disagreed with each of the following statements:

- “When someone criticizes this party, it feels like a personal insult.”
- “When I talk about this party, I say “we” rather than “they.””
- “I almost always support candidates of this party.”
- “I am enthusiastic about the direction this party is headed.”

A partisan identity index was created by adding survey participants’ responses to each of these statements to create a scale that ranged from four (i.e., disagreeing with
each of these four statements) to 12 (i.e., agreeing with each of these four statements).\(^47\)

Table 5.1 reports the percentage of Republicans whose scores on this eight-point scale were low (between four and six), medium (between seven and nine), or strong (between 10 and 12), noting the differences between Evangelical and non-evangelical Republicans to compare those who are members of this subgroup with those who are not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 5.1: Republicans’ Strength of Partisan Identity, by Evangelical Religious Affiliation (2008)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong Partisan Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Partisan Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Partisan Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey

* An independent samples t-test confirms that the means on this scale is significantly different between these groups (\(p = .10\), two-tailed).

The strength of partisan identity of those who self-identify as Republican tends to fall in the “medium” and “strong” categories. In fact, only 22 percent of the Republicans surveyed have a weak identity with their own political party, with a mean partisan index score of 8.20 (on a scale that, again, ranges from four to 12). However, a slightly greater proportion of Evangelical Republicans have a strong identity with the Republican Party than do non-evangelical Republicans. More than one-third (34 percent) of Evangelical Republicans’ partisan identity is strong, while only 26 percent on non-evangelical Republicans hold a strong identification with the party. A slightly higher proportion of

\(^{47}\) A reliability analysis of this scale reports a Cronbach’s alpha of .606. A value of .70 is the standard indicator of a scale’s internal consistency (Garson 2008). However, the removal of any of the items included in the scale decreases the alpha value, indicating that no constituent variable in the scale reduces the scale’s reliability.
non-evangelical Republicans (22 percent) maintain a weak partisan identity in comparison with Evangelical Republicans (19 percent). The differences in mean scores on this partisan index are significant between these two groups as well. On average, the Evangelical Republicans’ partisan identities are significantly stronger in comparison with those of their non-evangelical counterparts ($t(291) = -1.645, p = .100, r = .10$), although the effect size estimate indicates that this difference is small.

Differences also emerge between these two groups related to the relationship of this partisan identity with their feelings toward Christian conservatives and their perceptions of whether this group has too much influence on the party. Table 5.2 presents the bivariate correlations between Republicans’ scores on the partisan identity index and their feelings toward this group and perceptions of their influence, respectively. For both Evangelical and non-evangelical Republicans, more positive feelings toward Christian conservatives are significantly correlated with a stronger partisan identity, although this relationship is strongest for Evangelical Republicans.

TABLE 5.2:
Correlates with Republicans’ Strength of Partisan Identity, by Evangelical Religious Affiliation (2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Republicans</th>
<th>Evangelical Republicans</th>
<th>Non-Evangelical Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affect toward Christian Conservatives</td>
<td>.233**</td>
<td>.433**</td>
<td>.140*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception that Christian Conservatives are “too influential” on the GOP</td>
<td>-.187**</td>
<td>-.194</td>
<td>-.145*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey
**Pearson correlation is significant at the .01 level, two-tailed; *Pearson correlation is significant at the .05 level, two-tailed
In contrast, non-evangelical Republicans’ partisan identity is also significantly correlated with their perceptions of influence; the negative direction of this correlation indicates that non-evangelical Republicans who perceive this group as having too much influence on the GOP tend to have a weaker partisan identity. This relationship, however, is not significant for Evangelical Republicans, which is expected given that the analyses in Chapter Four demonstrate that the partisan attitudes of this subgroup are driven by feelings toward Christian conservatives alone. Indeed, because non-evangelical Republicans (as non-members of the Christian conservative group) are more likely to perceive this group’s influence on the party as threatening, it is unsurprising that this relationship would hold for them and not for Evangelical Republicans.

To determine whether the interaction of feelings toward Christian conservatives and the perceived influence of this group on the party also directly impact non-evangelical Republicans’ strength of partisan identity, a series of ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions was conducted on this multi-item scale of partisan identity. As with previous analyses, the first model is limited to those who likely identify as Christian conservatives (Republicans who are Evangelical Protestants), while the second is limited to non-evangelical Republicans. As with the analyses in Chapter Four, the key explanatory variables – the 11-point feeling thermometer score toward Christian conservatives, the dichotomous variable indicating that the respondent perceives this group as having “too much influence” on the GOP, and the multiplicative interaction term between these two variables – are included in the analyses. In addition, these models also include affect toward the Republican Party as a control with the expectation
that partisans who feel more favorably toward the party are also likely to identify more strongly with it. Indeed, affect toward a political party is an important element to partisan identity (Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002).

The analyses also include ideology, marital status, gender, education and age to control for the independent effects that these characteristics might have on Republicans’ strength of partisan identity. Previous research would suggest that those who are ideologically more conservative, married, male and more educated should have a stronger association with the GOP (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). In addition, the strength of party identification generally increases with age (Converse 1969), so older Republicans are predicted to have a stronger partisan identity as well. The results of these analyses are reported in Table 5.3.

As with much of the analyses presented in Chapter Four, affective considerations appear to be the primary predictor for Evangelical Republicans’ identity, while cognitive concerns regarding the perception of Christian conservatives’ influence (and their interactions with feelings toward this group) continue to have a direct impact on the partisan identity of non-Evangelical Republicans. Interestingly, for Evangelical partisans, feelings toward the subgroup to which they belong (Christian conservatives) do not play a direct role on this identity scale. Rather, their feelings toward the Republican Party are the sole determinant of the strength of their identity with the Republican Party. Specifically, an increase of one-point on the feeling thermometer scale toward the GOP results in more than a one-half point increase on the scale of partisan identity for Evangelical Republicans. Of course, given the significant impact that feelings toward
Christian conservatives had on their feelings toward the political party overall, affect toward this group does play an *indirect* role on predicting Evangelicals’ partisan identity.

**TABLE 5.3: Predicting Republicans’ Strength of Partisan Identity (2008)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EVANGELICAL REPUBLICANS Regression Coefficients (Standard Errors)</th>
<th>NON-EVANGELICAL REPUBLICANS Regression Coefficients (Standard Errors)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affect toward Christian Conservatives</strong> (0=Very unfavorable → 10=Very favorable)</td>
<td>.054 (.119)</td>
<td>.050 (.064)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perception that Christian Conservatives have “Too Much Influence” on the Republican Party</strong> (1 = Agrees that “Christian conservatives have too much control over the Republican Party”; 0 = Does not agree)</td>
<td>-1.400 (1.406)</td>
<td>-1.134** (.503)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction Term: Affect Toward Christian Conservatives x Perceptions of Influence of Christian Conservatives on the GOP</strong></td>
<td>.149 (.207)</td>
<td>.228** (.104)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affect toward the Republican Party</strong> (0=Very unfavorable → 10=Very favorable)</td>
<td>.534** (.100)</td>
<td>.536** (.060)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideology</strong> (1=Very liberal → 5=Very conservative)</td>
<td>-.504 (.307)</td>
<td>.399** (.193)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong> (1=Married; 0=Not married)</td>
<td>-.136 (.429)</td>
<td>-.178 (.260)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong> (1=Female; 0=Male)</td>
<td>.528 (.382)</td>
<td>-.190 (.235)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>.000 (.010)</td>
<td>.015** (.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>-.023 (.139)</td>
<td>.032 (.083)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>6.599** (1.460)</td>
<td>3.398** (.898)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R²</th>
<th>.457</th>
<th>.346</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.389</td>
<td>.315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>6.727</td>
<td>10.958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard error of the estimate</td>
<td>1.569</td>
<td>1.602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of freedom</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.10, two-tailed; ** p< .05, two-tailed

**NOTE:** The analysis is limited to those who self-identify as strong Republicans, weak Republicans and Independents who lean towards the Republican Party.

**NOTE:** The dependent variable is an additive scale created from the combination of four three-point survey items related to partisan identity.

For non-evangelical Republicans, feelings toward the Republican Party also have a significant and positive impact on their partisan identities, yielding a similar impact to
that found for Evangelical Republicans – specifically, a one-point increase in the feeling thermometer scale toward the GOP results in more than a one-half point increase (.536) in the eight-point partisan identity scale. Contrary to the results for their Evangelical counterparts, ideology also plays an important role in determining non-evangelical Republicans’ partisan identity. As expected, the positive coefficient on this variable indicates that more conservative non-evangelical partisans maintain a closer identity with the party. Consistent with previous research (Converse 1969), age also emerges as a significant predictor of non-evangelical Republicans’ partisan identity. Specifically, older non-evangelical Republicans identify with the GOP more closely than younger non-evangelical Republicans. While the coefficient itself appears to be small, the effects of age accumulate; a 60-year gap, for example, produces a difference of nearly one point on the partisan identity scale.

Unlike their Evangelical partisan counterparts, non-evangelical Republicans’ partisan identity is also directly determined by the interaction of their feelings toward Christian conservatives and their perceptions of this group’s influence on the party. The positive coefficient for affect toward this group indicates that – when partisans perceive this group’s influence on the party to not be too great (i.e., the value of the other variable in this interaction term is zero) – more positive feelings toward Christian conservatives results in stronger identity with the Republican Party, although this impact is quite small. Moreover, when feelings toward Christian conservatives are very negative (i.e., the value of this variable equals zero), the perception that this group has too much influence on the GOP results in more than a one-point decrease in the strength of one’s partisan identity.
As with earlier analyses, marginal effects were calculated and graphed to determine if these impacts are significant across the range of values for these variables. The solid sloping line in Figure 5.1 represents how the marginal effect of feelings toward this group when non-evangelical Republicans perceive this group as having too much influence compared with when they do not. The confidence intervals around this line indicate the conditions under which their feelings toward Christian conservatives has a statistically significant effect on partisan identity (i.e., when both are above or below the zero line). As both the upper and lower bounds are above the zero line only when partisans perceive that this group’s influence on the party is too great, the marginal effects indicate that affect toward Christian conservatives significantly impacts non-evangelical Republicans’ strength of partisanship only under this condition.48

FIGURE 5.1:
Marginal Effect of Non-evangelical Republicans’ Affect toward Christian Conservatives on Their Strength of Partisan Identity, by Perceptions of Influence

NOTE: The dotted lines demonstrate a 95% confidence interval.

48 As with previous analyses, this figure includes values for this dichotomous variable that are not present empirically for ease in interpreting the graph. When perceptions of influence equals zero, the marginal effect is .05 (t = .79); when perceptions of influence equals one, the marginal effect is .278 (t = 3.32).
Figure 5.2 graphs the marginal effect of these perceptions of influence across the range of values for affect toward this group. The confidence intervals indicate that the perception that Christian conservatives are too influential on the Republican Party only significantly determines non-evangelical partisans’ identity when their feelings toward Christian conservatives are negative (less than four on the 11-point feeling thermometer scale). These marginal effects thus confirm that the interactive impact of these two variables is statistically significant only when both of these conditions are met.

**FIGURE 5.2:**
Marginal Effect of Non-evangelical Republicans’ Perception of Christian Conservatives’ Influence on Their Strength of Partisan Identity, by Affect toward Christian Conservatives

![Graph showing marginal effect of perception of Christian conservatives' influence on Republican Party strength of identity](image)

**NOTE:** The dotted lines demonstrate a 95% confidence interval.

In other words, feeling unfavorably toward Christian conservatives and perceiving this group’s influence on the party to be too great results in a decrease in the strength of non-evangelical Republicans’ partisan identity, but feeling favorably toward this group and perceiving this group’s influence on the party to be of an appropriate (or too little) amount does not significantly increase these individuals’ scores on the partisan identity scale. Because this interaction significantly determines non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward their own party (as determined by the evidence presented in...
Chapter Four), it indirectly shapes their strength of partisan identity. However, affect toward Christian conservatives and perceptions of this group’s influence on the party also directly impact the strength of non-evangelical Republicans’ partisan identity as well— but only when these two conditions are met.

To further aid in the interpretation of these conditional effects, predicted values were calculated to determine the effect of non-evangelical Republicans’ perceptions of Christian conservatives’ influence on their partisan identity across the range of values of affect toward this group. Depicted in Figure 5.3, these predicted values indicate that a non-evangelical Republican who does not feel that this group is too influential on the GOP has approximately the same identity with the Republican Party regardless of their feelings toward this group, holding all other variables constant.

**FIGURE 5.3:** Predicted Partisan Identity for Non-evangelical Republicans

![Graph showing predicted values for non-evangelical Republicans](image)

**NOTE:** Predicted values are calculated for non-evangelical Republican with moderate ideology who is an unmarried male with median age and education.

Most importantly, though, is the comparison of those with negative feelings toward Christian conservatives—as this is a necessary condition under which this interaction has a significant impact on partisan identity for non-evangelical Republicans.
A non-evangelical Republican who feels unfavorably about Christian conservatives and does not perceive this groups’ influence to be too great is predicted to score an 8.22 on the partisan identity scale, while a similar individual who does perceive this negatively evaluated group to be too influential on the party is predicted to score a 7.08 – a difference of more than 1.14 points on this eight-point scale. Thus, not only does the interaction of these key factors indirectly impact non-evangelical Republicans’ partisan identity by determining their feelings toward their own party, but it also has a direct impact on their partisan identity when these partisans harbor negative feelings toward this group and perceive them as being too influential on their party.

**The Consequences for Weakening Party Identification**

The analyses conducted thus far have been limited to these partisans’ attitudes and strength of identity at one particular time point: the period immediately following the Republican presidential primary election in Ohio. Although these results are informative, a better determination of whether the causal mechanism proposed here directly determines whether a partisan has weakened her partisanship should involve an extended period of time. As noted previously, the finding of any change in individual-level party identification over the course of one election cycle or presidential campaign would be unusual given the stability of partisanship. Thus, should even a small portion of the partisans identified as disaffected as a result of negative attitudes toward Christian conservatives and perceptions of their influence on the party alter their partisan affiliations, this would demonstrate the potential of these group-based elements to induce partisan defection.
As discussed in Chapter Three, following the original wave of the 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey, each of the 817 respondents was re-contacted after the General Election in mid-November to allow for the analysis of the attitudes and party affiliations of this panel throughout the 2008 presidential campaign. Although the post-election survey did not include the central items related to partisan identity utilized above, the survey did ask respondents to self-place themselves on a standard seven-point party identification scale – just as they had done in the post-primary survey conducted eight months earlier. Ranging from strong Democrat (one) to strong Republican (seven), the question specifically asked respondents: “Generally speaking, which of these party labels best describes you?” A comparison of these responses to those obtained in the post-primary election confirms the stability of individual-level party identification, particularly given that the question wording (i.e., the use of “generally speaking” rather than “as of today”) captures long-term aspects of partisanship (Weisberg 1999). In fact, of the Republicans in the sample, only 3.5 percent altered their party affiliations completely, identifying themselves following the election as either a pure Independent (who leans toward neither party) or a Democrat. Moreover, defections in terms of vote choice were also rare; only ten percent of the Republicans in the current sample voted for a candidate other than the Republican candidate, John McCain.

And yet, as Table 5.4 demonstrates, greater movement was apparent between adjacent categories in the seven-point party identification scale. While the majority of strong, weak and Independent-but-leaning Republicans in the panel study did maintain the same strength of partisanship, nearly 21 percent of the Republicans who participated
in the panel study (or 42 of the 196 Republicans who remained in the sample) actually weakened their party affiliations – identifying, for example, as a weak Republican following the November election even though they had identified as a strong Republican just eight months earlier following the primary election. This movement is especially pronounced for weak Republicans; approximately 31 percent of these partisans weakened their partisanship away from the Republican Party.49

**TABLE 5.4:**
Change in Republicans’ Partisanship from March to November 2008*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>November 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong Republican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Republican</td>
<td>78% (63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Republican</td>
<td>20% (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent, but leaning Republican</td>
<td>10% (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election and Post-General Election Surveys
* Cells report percentages in each category; number of respondents is in parantheses.

Moreover, of those who did weaken their party affiliations, a large majority (67 percent) were non-evangelical Republicans;50 60 percent of the non-evangelical Republicans who weakened their party affiliations also reported negative feelings toward Christian conservatives and perceived this group as having too much influence – which suggests that reactions to this group may have played an important role in these shifts.

49 This pattern mirrors that obtained by a study of the American National Election Survey’s 2008 Internet panel over a similar time period (January to November 2008). Weisberg and Devine (2009) demonstrate that, over the course of this period, movement in partisanship occurred in a largely Democratic direction, although the greatest movement was amongst Republican leaners.

50 Because of the wave non-response of this panel study, these percentages reflect fewer individuals than in previous analyses. Of the 196 Republicans who remained in the study following the 2008 election, for example, only 42 (or 21 percent) weakened their party affiliations, 28 of whom were non-evangelical and 14 of whom were Evangelical Republicans.
While not a test of true partisan defection, these changes in gradation are important indicators of the potential for these partisans to eventually defect. Disaffected partisans often defect by first weakening their party affiliations, then becoming political Independents and finally identifying with the opposing party (Stonecash 2006). Indeed, changing from a strong partisan to a weak partisan “is a subtle alteration of one’s social identity” (Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002: 58).

To determine whether the interaction of feelings toward Christian conservatives and perceptions of their influence on the party had a direct impact on whether Republicans altered their partisan identities in this way, an additional series of logistic regression analyses was conducted to predict the dichotomous dependent variable of whether an individual weakened his party identification (coded as a “1”) or did not (coded as a “0”). Any partisan who self-placed lower on the seven-point scale in November is considered to have weakened his or her partisanship. Those who are coded as a zero on this dependent variable either reported the same strength of partisanship in November or strengthened it (as indicated by self-placing higher on the seven-point scale in November as compared to what they reported in March). Approximately 66 percent of the Republican partisans in the current sample reported the same strength of partisanship, while 13 percent strengthened their partisanship. Although the operationalization of this dependent variable as a dichotomous measure does not completely eliminate the “ceiling effects” that result from the inability of strong identifiers to indicate an even stronger identification with the Republican Party, coding stable and increased partisan strength together attempts to minimize these effects.
As with previous analyses, the key explanatory variables included are the 11-point feeling thermometer scale toward Christian conservatives, the dichotomous variable indicating whether an individual perceives this group as having “too much influence” on the Republican Party and the multiplicative interaction term of these two variables. In addition, the models include two variables to gauge respondents’ affect toward their own party as well as the opposing party. Previous research has demonstrated that changes in partisanship are possible only in the presence of an attractive alternative (Nesmith 1994). For example, disaffected Republicans may remain loyal to the party unless the Democratic Party is viewed as an acceptable new social identity. Hostility toward the opposing party has also been found to directly impact partisan defection. This “hostility hypothesis” suggests that partisan defection is inversely related to greater negative feelings toward the opposing party (Maggiotto and Pierson 1977). Moreover, negative attitudes toward one’s own political party are not necessarily reflective of his or her attitudes toward the opposing party. Individuals’ partisanship is multi-dimensional such that their attitudes toward one party do not necessarily predict their attitudes toward the other party (Weisberg 1980). Therefore, the analyses also include respondents’ affect toward the Republican Party as well as their affect toward the Democratic Party, measured as an 11-point feeling thermometer scale that ranges from zero (very unfavorable) to 10 (very favorable). The values for affect toward the Republican and Democratic parties that are utilized in these models were captured in the post-primary election phase of the panel study (which took place in March 2008) to ensure that the causal mechanism is temporally prior to any change in party identification.
The models also include controls for ideology, marital status, gender, age and education. As with the previous models, those who are more conservative, married, male, older and more educated tend to have stronger associations with the Republican Party, and are thus expected to not have weakened their party identifications. (In other words, these variables are expected to have negative coefficients in these models.) The results, reported separately for Evangelical and non-evangelical Republicans, are reported in Table 5.5.

As with much of the analyses presented thus far, affective reactions primarily drive Evangelical Republicans’ partisan attitudes and affiliation. Interestingly, it is not feelings toward the group with which they identify that impact whether they altered their party attachments in this time period. Rather, the sole predictor of whether an Evangelical Republican weakens her party identification is affect toward the Democratic Party. The positive coefficient on this variable indicates that the more Evangelical partisans like the Democratic Party, the more likely they are to weaken their identification with the GOP. A calculation of the odds ratio for this variable (2.070) indicates that an evangelical Republican who feels more favorably toward the Democratic Party by only one point is twice as likely to weaken his partisanship with the Republican Party in comparison with a similar individual who feels slightly less favorably toward the opposing party. However, no other variable emerges as a significant predictor for this group’s change in partisanship.
TABLE 5.5:  
Predicting Republican Identifiers’ Weakening of Partisanship from the 2008 Primary Election to the 2008 General Election  
(Binary Logistic Estimation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EVANGELICAL REPUBLICANS Logistic Coefficients (Standard Errors)</th>
<th>NON-EVANGELICAL REPUBLICANS Logistic Coefficients (Standard Errors)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affect toward Christian Conservatives (0=Very unfavorable → 10=Very favorable)</td>
<td>-.461 (.297)</td>
<td>.248 (.162)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of Christian Conservatives’ Influence on the Republican Party (1 = Agrees that “Christian conservatives have too much influence on the Republican Party”; 0 = Does not agree with this statement)</td>
<td>-2.492 (3.053)</td>
<td>2.181* (1.257)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction Term: Affect Toward Christian Conservatives x Perceptions of Influence of Christian Conservatives on the GOP</td>
<td>.227 (.441)</td>
<td>-3.32 (.252)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect toward the Republican Party (0=Very unfavorable → 10=Very favorable)</td>
<td>.307 (.277)</td>
<td>-.290** (.148)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect toward the Democratic Party (0=Very unfavorable → 10=Very favorable)</td>
<td>.728** (.289)</td>
<td>.216* (.123)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (1=Very liberal → 5=Very conservative)</td>
<td>-1.961 (1.271)</td>
<td>.614 (.464)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status (1=Married; 0=Not married)</td>
<td>-.290 (1.384)</td>
<td>-1.047** (.533)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (1=Female; 0=Male)</td>
<td>-0.563 (1.303)</td>
<td>.355 (.511)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.020 (.029)</td>
<td>.001 (.016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.194 (.478)</td>
<td>-.047 (.183)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>8.404 (5.986)</td>
<td>-3.713 (2.458)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square 28.174 16.666  
Log likelihood 31.980 109.319  
Cox and Snell R² .401 .123  
Percentage correctly predicted 83.9% 81.9%  
Degrees of freedom 10 10  
N 55 127

* p<.10, two-tailed; ** p< .05, two-tailed

NOTE: The analysis is limited to those who self-identified as strong Republicans, weak Republicans and Independents who lean towards the Republican Party following the primary election (March 2008).

Affect toward the opposing party also significantly predicts whether non-evangelical Republicans weaken their partisanship as well. As with Evangelicals, the more these partisans like the Democratic Party, the more likely they are to weaken their identification with the Republican Party. Specifically, the odds ratio for this variable
(1.241) indicates that a one-unit increase on the feeling thermometer scale toward the Democratic Party increases the odds of weakening a non-evangelical Republican’s partisanship by nearly 27 percent, controlling for the other variables in the model. Affect toward their own party also significantly determines whether their partisanship has weakened. The negative coefficient indicates that more positive feelings toward their own party reduce the likelihood that non-evangelical Republicans will weaken their partisanship, even controlling for feelings toward the opposing party. An increase of only one point on this 11-point feeling thermometer scale reduces the odds of weakening one’s partisanship by nearly 22 percent.\textsuperscript{51}

Regarding the key explanatory variables, only perceptions of Christian conservatives’ influence on the party emerge as a significant predictor of the likelihood that non-evangelical Republicans will weaken their party identification. A calculation of the marginal effects of these key variables (not shown) confirms that the interaction of affect toward this group and perceptions of its influence is not significant. However, this interaction does \textit{indirectly} determine whether non-evangelicals weaken their partisanship because it significantly predicts their feelings toward the GOP (as evidenced in Chapter Four).

And yet, non-evangelical Republicans’ perceptions of how much influence Christian conservatives have on the GOP do have a significant and direct impact on the likelihood of weakening their party identification. The positive coefficient indicates that non-evangelical Republicans who do perceive this group as having too much influence on

\textsuperscript{51} The only other control variable that emerges as significant is marital status. Married non-evangelical Republicans are significantly less likely to weaken their identification with the Republican Party.
the party are significantly more likely to weaken their party affiliations. Specifically, the
odds ratio for this variable (8.856) indicates that those who perceive this group as having
too much influence on the party are nearly nine times more likely to weaken their
identification with the Republican Party than are those who do not. Thus, perceiving that
this group is too influential on the party also directly weakens the partisan attachments of
non-evangelical Republicans.

Conclusion

The evidence presented here would appear to support many of the news headlines
that appeared following the 2008 election, which suggested that the Republican Party’s
strategy of shoring up its Christian conservative base induced a great deal of partisan
defection. And yet, these results demonstrate that the GOP did not experience a large
amount of partisan defection – at least amongst Ohioans – over the course of the 2008
presidential election. Indeed, few engaged in true defection in either vote choice or in
partisanship – as would be expected in an eight-month time period. However, nearly one
in five Republicans demonstrated some weakening of their party identification during this
time period – the majority of which were non-evangelicals. Although individual-level
party identification is generally long-lasting and stable, these results indicate that these
partisans have weakened their partisan identity as a result of negative affect toward
Christian conservatives and perceptions of their influence on the party. Again, social
groups do serve as meaningful reference points for individuals’ partisanship, but the way
in which they do so are conditioned by their feelings toward subgroups within one’s party
coalition and the perception of influence those groups have within the party.
Of course, these impacts of these variables are considerably different for those who are likely members of the subgroup in question in comparison with other GOP partisans. Consistent with previous analyses, affective reactions primarily determine the strength of partisan identity for sub-group members (i.e., Evangelical Republicans). Their feelings toward the group to which they belong only indirectly impact the strength of their partisan identity via their feelings toward the GOP, which do have a significant and direct effect on their partisanship. And, while a small amount of Evangelical Republicans actually weakened their party identification over the course of the 2008 presidential campaign, doing so was only significantly predicted by – not their affective reactions to Christian conservatives – but their feelings toward the opposing party. Again, affect emerges as a key predictor of Evangelical Republicans’ partisanship.

The more interesting findings are for those who are not members of the subgroup in question. Non-evangelical Republicans tend to reflect the traditional constituency of the GOP who may feel threatened by the growing influence that Christian conservatives have had on the party. Indeed, not only does affect toward Christian conservatives and perceptions of their influence indirectly impact non-evangelical Republicans’ partisan identity by determining their feelings toward the party, but this interaction also directly impacts the strength of their partisan identity. However, this direct impact only holds under two conditions: when they feel negatively toward this group and when they perceive this group’s influence on the party to be too great.

As noted above, the majority of Republicans who weakened their party identification during the 2008 presidential election were non-evangelical partisans. Not
only does the interaction of these two key factors indirectly impact whether this weakening of party affiliation occurs, but perceptions of this group’s influence also play a direct role on this process as well. In short, perceiving that this group has “too much influence” on the party substantially increases the odds that a non-evangelical Republican will weaken his party ties. Again, while true defection would be unexpected – particularly over the course of only one presidential campaign season – the perception that a negatively evaluated group has become too dominant in the party provides the potential for disaffected partisans to become alienated with the party enough to alter their party affiliations. Indeed, some non-evangelical Republicans have already demonstrated a weakening of their party affiliation as a direct result of this perception of influence.

As expected, the ideological conflict between Christian conservatives and the traditional (non-evangelical) core of the party over political predispositions regarding issues of morality has exacerbated subgroup distinctions, causing more negative feelings toward this subgroup. Moreover, the perception that this subgroup is “taking over” the superordinate (partisan) identity appears to condition the impact of these feelings on their partisan attitudes, attitudes toward the party’s presidential candidates, and even their partisan identities. This perception that Christian conservatives’ incorporation into the party’s coalition is threatening this superordinate identity has even caused some of these partisans to weaken their identification with the Republican Party. Thus, changes to individuals’ party images – or the perception of influence of various subgroups within the political party – does play an important role in individuals’ strength of partisanship and may serve as an important precursor to changes in party identification.
CHAPTER 6

DEMOCRATS’ ATTITUDES TOWARD THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

The theoretical expectations and analyses presented thus far have focused exclusively on the interactive impact of feelings toward Christian conservatives and perceptions of their influence on Republican identifiers’ attitudes and strength of partisanship. However, Republicans are not the only members of the electorate whose partisan attitudes may be influenced by the incorporation and growing influence of Christian conservatives in the GOP’s fold. Democratic identifiers, for example, maintain particular images of the Republican Party based upon their perceptions of which group or groups the GOP represents, and their feelings toward those groups may impact their feelings and evaluations of the opposing party in important ways. In this sense, group-based considerations are expected to be a significant determinant of the attitudes that individuals have toward their own political party as well as its opposition (Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002). This chapter thus examines the role that feelings toward Christian conservatives and perceptions of their influence on the GOP have on Democrats’ attitudes toward the Republican Party.

The Multidimensionality of Partisan Attitudes

Conventional wisdom suggests that partisans’ attitudes toward the opposing party are merely a function of their attitudes toward the party with which they belong, which assumes that partisan attitudes are unidimensional. In other words, Republicans should
feel negatively toward the Democratic Party, and Democrats should likewise feel negatively toward the GOP. In this view, feeling favorably toward one party should necessarily translate to disliking the other, particularly in a party system characterized by polarization. Moreover, this basic premise appears to be supported by the fundamental processes of group categorization and differentiation. Because of individuals’ desire to maintain a positive self-image, they are motivated to both identify with positively evaluated groups and maintain distinctions between their group and other out-groups (Tajfel 1982; Tajfel and Turner 1986). These group distinctions then generate inter-group comparisons that largely result in favoritism toward the in-group (Kramer and Brewer 1984). Although multiple identities are possible (and, often, inevitable), identification with one of two polarized groups seems to necessarily indicate a negativity bias toward the other group. Indeed, the implicit assumption in contemporary research on inter-group relations is that “ingroup favoritism and outgroup negativity are reciprocally related.” (Brewer 1999: 430). In terms of political parties, this suggests that merely categorizing oneself as a Republican or Democrat should be associated with having more favorable attitudes and evaluations of that political party as well as more negative attitudes toward the opposing party as well.

However, some research has demonstrated attitudes toward in-groups and out-groups are relatively independent of each other. Early work in inter-group relations recognized that, while out-group hostility may bolster in-group identity, positive attitudes toward an in-group are not necessarily accompanied by negative attitudes toward an out-group. In fact “the reciprocal attitudes toward out-groups may range widely” (Allport
1954: 42), such that – regardless of how positive attitudes are toward an in-group – attitudes toward an out-group may be positive, negative or indifferent. Brewer (1999) challenges the implicit assumption in the literature that out-group hostility is an inevitable byproduct of in-group favoritism, arguing that only in certain conditions (such as when threat from the out-group is perceived) does prejudice toward the out-group emerge. In other words, while inter-group distinctions do lead to increased favoritism toward the in-group, this bias is largely independent from hostilities toward out-groups.

Similarly, attitudes toward the political parties may be largely independent of each other as well. For example, Weisberg (1980) demonstrates that individuals’ feeling thermometer ratings toward the Republican and Democratic parties are not correlated with each other, which challenges the notion that attitudes toward one’s own party directly predict their attitudes toward the opposing party. This multidimensional view of partisanship is not limited to the American political system either. Research on the dimensions of partisanship in Britain, for example, indicates that – while some individuals do strongly favor one party over another – others do not (Crewe 1976). In other words, “people with positive feelings toward the party with which they identify may or may not also have a negative attitude toward the other party” (Weisberg and Greene 2003: 92).

In the current case study, respondents’ feeling thermometer ratings toward the two major political parties appear to be significantly correlated (see Table 6.1). For example, the “All Respondents” column reports a significant and strong negative relationship between feelings toward both political parties – indicating a unidimensional view of
partisanship as the conventional wisdom would anticipate. However, this relationship differs across partisan categories. Feelings toward both political parties are independent of each other for Republican identifiers, and the significant correlation between these partisan attitudes for Democrats is relatively weak (with a Pearson’s $r$ correlation of -.171). Although this relationship indicates that Democrats with more favorable feelings toward their own party tend to hold negative feelings toward the GOP, the weakness of this relationship suggests that other forces also help to shape their feelings toward the opposing party as well.  

TABLE 6.1: Correlation of Affect toward the Two Major Political Parties, by Party Identification (2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Respondents</th>
<th>Democrats (includes leaners)</th>
<th>Independents</th>
<th>Republicans (includes leaners)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correlation of Feeling Thermometer Ratings of the Republican and Democratic Parties</td>
<td>-.531**</td>
<td>-.171**</td>
<td>.354**</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey

**Pearson correlation is significant at the .01 level, two-tailed.

The Importance of Group-based Considerations

Because individuals’ perceptions of who and what the party represents is framed in terms of social groups, individuals’ party images are expected to be key – not only in influencing the attitudes of those who belong to the party – but also in influencing the attitudes of those who do not. Due to this group-based nature of partisanship, the perception that a negatively evaluated group is part of the party’s coalition likely

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52 Interestingly, the strongest relationship between feelings toward the two political parties holds for political Independents – rather than partisans. However, this positive relationship indicates that more favorable feelings toward one party is associated with more favorable feelings toward the other, which supports a multidimensional view of partisanship and political independence (Weisberg 1980).
depreciates the value of that party for the individual; in contrast, this party image is expected to improve when a positively evaluated group is perceived as a part of the party’s coalition (Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth 1991). Moreover, negatively evaluated groups within a political party’s coalition are not expected to yield attitudes as negative from members of the opposing party unless they are seen as dominant within the party’s coalition. Thus, perceiving that a negatively evaluated subgroup has a great deal of influence on the party likely magnifies the impact of these subgroup attitudes. In the current case study, then, Democrats’ attitudes toward the Republican Party are expected to be determined by their attitudes toward Christian conservatives as well as their perception of the amount of influence this group has in the GOP’s coalition.

Of course, before a subgroup can serve as a meaningful reference point for individuals, it must first be associated with the political party. As with Republicans, Democrats have increasingly recognized this group as a part of the GOP’s coalitional base (Miller, Hildreth and Wlezien 1991; Miller and Schofield 2008), and the 2008 election cycle was no exception. The 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey also asked Democratic identifiers to report which of the following groups they associated with the Republican Party, circling as many groups as they thought applied: Christian conservatives; environmentalists; feminists; big business; labor unions; military personnel; and other. Table 6.2 reports the percentage of Democratic identifiers who associate each of these respective groups with the GOP, comparing their responses with those of Republican identifiers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Democrats (includes leaners)</th>
<th>Republicans (includes leaners)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian conservatives</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big business</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Personnel</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmentalists</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Unions</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminists</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td><strong>380</strong></td>
<td><strong>322</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey  
* Cells indicate the percentage of respondents who associate each group with the Republican Party.

As with Republicans, Democratic respondents unsurprisingly associate the three groups that have been traditionally accepted as part of the GOP’s coalitional base: Christian conservatives; big business; and military personnel. However, important differences emerge across partisan lines. Democrats tend to associate big business and Christian conservatives with the GOP most, while Republicans tend to associate Christian conservatives and military personnel most. Although approximately the same percentage of Democrats and Republicans associate Christian conservatives with the Republican Party (82 percent and 83 percent, respectively), more Democrats (89 percent) associate big business with the Republican Party – more than any other group listed. While a large portion of Republicans – nearly three-fourths of those surveyed – also associate big business with the GOP, it is somewhat surprising that this group, which has historically had the closest ties with the Republican Party and remains an important part of the party’s coalition, is associated less by Republican identifiers and more by Democratic identifiers. As noted in Chapter Three, this may be the result of any negative connotation
that the term “big business” may have; in an attempt to maintain their own positive self-images, Republicans may tend to discount any association with this group. On the other hand, Democrats may tend to associate this group with the Republican Party as a way of maintaining their own distinct image from the out-group.

Differences also emerge in terms of military personnel – Democrats tend to associate this group much less than Republicans (58 and 81 percent, respectively). Because this group is viewed rather favorably by both Republicans and Democrats in the sample, Democrats may be less willing to report an association of it with the opposing party, while Republicans may be more likely to “claim” this positively evaluated group as their own.

Democratic Feelings toward and Perceptions of Christian Conservatives and the GOP

These differences suggest that Democratic and Republican partisans tend to hold slightly different images of which groups comprise the GOP coalition – although the same three groups, including Christian conservatives, do emerge as being associated with the Republican Party. Because Democratic partisans do associate Christian conservatives with the GOP, this group might serve as a meaningful reference point for them in shaping their attitudes toward this opposing party. As with Republicans surveyed, the Democrats in the sample also reported their affect – or feelings toward – both of these key groups.

As noted previously, these questions gauged respondents’ affect toward Christian conservatives and the Republican Party on an 11-point scale, ranging from very unfavorable (0) to very favorable (10). Table 6.3 compares Democrats’ and Republicans’ affect toward these two groups.
Unsurprisingly, Republicans feel more favorably toward their own party than Democratic identifiers do. While a majority of Republicans hold positive feelings toward the GOP, a very small percentage (only four percent) of Democrats do. Although one-fourth of Democrats maintain neutral feelings toward the GOP, a substantial majority (71 percent) feel negatively toward the opposing party. In contrast, only eight percent of Republicans feel negatively toward their own party. The differences in mean feelings toward the GOP are also statistically significant. On average, the reported feelings toward the Republican Party by Republicans are significantly more positive in comparison with those reported by Democratic identifiers ($t(695) = -26.877, p = .000, r = .71$). The effect size estimate also indicates that the difference in affect toward the GOP represents a large, and therefore substantive, effect (accounting for more than 50 percent of the variance).

**TABLE 6.3:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Democrat (includes leaners)</th>
<th>Republican (includes leaners)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affect toward the Republican Party</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.25**</td>
<td>6.76**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>100% (377)</td>
<td>100% (320)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affect toward Christian Conservatives</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.76**</td>
<td>5.29**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>100% (377)</td>
<td>100% (317)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey
Republican identifiers also tend to feel more favorably toward Christian conservatives in comparison with their Democratic counterparts, although they are split nearly evenly between reporting positive (35 percent), neutral (35 percent) and negative (30 percent) feelings. In contrast, Democrats tend to feel less favorably toward this group in the GOP’s coalition: a substantial majority (65 percent) of Democrats report negative feelings toward Christian conservatives, and only a small minority (10 percent) feel positively toward this group. Again, the differences in Democrats’ and Republicans’ mean feelings toward this subgroup are statistically significant. On average, Democratic identifiers’ feelings toward Christian conservatives are significantly more negative in comparison with those reported by Republicans ($t(692) = -11.850, p = .000, r = .50$). As with the previous comparison, the effect size estimate indicates a large effect that accounts for 25 percent of the variance.

Thus, both Republicans and Democrats associate Christian conservatives with the Republican Party, but both hold divergent feelings toward the GOP and this particular subgroup. As Table 6.4 demonstrates, members of these two partisan groups perceive the influence of this subgroup differently as well. As with their feelings toward Christian conservatives, Republican partisans are nearly evenly split in their perceptions that this group has too much influence on the party. In contrast, a substantial majority of Democrats (79 percent) agree that Christian conservatives’ influence on the GOP is too great. Only seven percent of Democrats disagree with this statement.
TABLE 6.4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Democrat (includes leaners)</th>
<th>Republicans (includes leaners)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree that Christian conservatives have “too much influence” on the Republican Party</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree (i.e., they do not have too much influence on the Republican Party)</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>100% (386)</td>
<td>100% (322)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey

Moreover, as with Republican identifiers, both affect toward Christian conservatives and perceptions of their influence on the GOP are significantly correlated with Democrats’ feelings toward the Republican Party. Table 6.5 demonstrates that more positive feelings toward Christian conservatives are significantly correlated with more positive feelings toward the GOP for Democratic partisans, although this relationship is weaker in comparison with that for Republican identifiers.

TABLE 6.5:
Correlates with Affect toward the Republican Party, by Party Identification (2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Democrat (includes leaners)</th>
<th>Republicans (includes leaners)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affect toward Christian Conservatives</td>
<td>.289**</td>
<td>.354**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception that Christian Conservatives have “too much influence” on the GOP</td>
<td>-.204**</td>
<td>-.267**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey
**Pearson correlation is significant at the .01 level, two-tailed

Similarly, the negative correlation between feelings toward the Republican Party and Democrats’ perceptions of the influence of Christian conservatives on the GOP indicates that Democrats who agree that this subgroup is too influential on the party tend
to have more negative feelings toward the GOP as well. Again, though, this relationship is weaker for Democrats than for Republicans.

**Determining Democrats’ Affect toward the GOP**

This initial evidence suggests that affect toward Christian conservatives and perceptions of their influence on the GOP impacts – not only Republicans’ feelings toward their own political party – but Democrats’ affect toward the Republican Party as well. As noted above, negative feelings toward this subgroup that are held by Democrats should decrease their feelings toward the Republican Party; moreover, this impact should be further magnified when this subgroup is perceived as having too great of influence on the party. Similar to the analyses presented in Chapter Four, an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis was conducted on Democratic partisans’ feelings toward the Republican Party (measured as an 11-point scale that ranges from very unfavorable (0) to very favorable (10). The key independent variables are comprised of the items discussed above: affect toward Christian conservatives; and respondents’ perceptions of whether this group has too much influence on the Republican Party. Again, because the key proposition is the conditional role of this perception of influence, a multiplicative interaction term was created to gauge the conditional impact of affect toward this group and perceptions of its influence.

In addition, the analysis includes standard political and demographic variables – such as ideology, marital status, gender, age and education – to control for the independent effects that these characteristics might have on feelings toward the Republican Party. Despite their party identification, Democrats who report having a
more conservative ideology should feel more favorably toward the GOP, as this party tends to be more conservative. As with previous analyses, it is expected that those who are married, men, older and more educated tend to have stronger associations with the GOP (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008) and, therefore, should feel more favorably toward the Republican Party as well. In addition, the analysis controls for the independent effects of race and religious affiliation. Due to their strong identification with the Democratic Party, African Americans are expected to feel less favorably toward the GOP. In contrast, because Christian conservatives are a core part of the Republican Party coalition, Democratic partisans who are Evangelical Protestants are expected to feel more favorably toward the GOP. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 6.6.53

Only three of these control variables have a significant impact on Democrats’ feelings toward the Republican Party. As expected, Democrats who are more conservative and more educated feel significantly more favorably toward the opposing party in comparison with their liberal and less-educated counterparts. Likewise, as the negative coefficient for the race variable demonstrates, African American Democrats feel significantly less favorably toward the Republican Party. The size of this coefficient also indicates that this impact is substantial: being an African American Democrat yields nearly a 1.3 point decrease in feelings toward the GOP, which is substantial given that the dependent variable is a scale of only 11 points. Interestingly, no other control variable has a statistically significant impact on Democrat’s feelings toward the Republican Party.

53 The goodness-of-fit measures for this model are rather low, particularly in comparison with the models previously presented for Republican partisans. This indicates that the explanatory power of these particular variables is somewhat lacking in predicting how Democrats feel about the opposing party.
TABLE 6.6:
Predicting Democrats’ Favorable Affect toward the Republican Party (2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALL DEMOCRATS Regression Coefficients (Standard Errors)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affect toward Christian Conservatives</strong></td>
<td>.129 (.092)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0=Very unfavorable → 10=Very favorable)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceptions of Christian Conservatives’ Influence on the Republican Party</strong></td>
<td>-.985* (.570)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1 = Agrees that “Christian conservatives have too much influence on the Republican Party”; 0 = Does not agree with this statement)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction Term: Affect Toward Christian Conservatives x Perceptions of Christian Conservatives’ Influence on the GOP</strong></td>
<td>.215** (.104)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideology</strong> (1=Very liberal → 5=Very conservative)</td>
<td>.447** (.142)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong> (1=Married; 0=Not married)</td>
<td>-.179 (.221)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong> (1=Female; 0=Male)</td>
<td>.146 (.226)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>-.009 (.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>.121* (.071)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong> (1=Black; 0=Non-black)</td>
<td>-1.264** (.307)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evangelical Protestant</strong> (1=Evangelical Protestant; 0=Not an Evangelical Protestant)</td>
<td>-.665 (.411)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>1.458* (.836)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R²</strong></td>
<td>.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjusted R²</strong></td>
<td>.161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F</strong></td>
<td>7.745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard error of the estimate</strong></td>
<td>2.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degrees of freedom</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.10, two-tailed; ** p< .01, two-tailed

NOTE: The analysis is limited to those who self-identify as strong Democrats, weak Democrats and Independents who lean towards the Democratic Party.

The interaction of the key explanatory variables also has an important impact on Democratic identifiers’ affect toward the GOP. As expected, the positive coefficient for affect toward Christian conservatives indicates that more favorable feelings toward this group result in more favorable feelings toward the Republican Party, while the negative coefficient for perceptions of Christian conservatives’ influence demonstrates that those
who perceive this group as being too influential on the party tend to feel more negatively toward the GOP. However, as discussed in Chapter Four, the effects of these key variables are conditional such that a coefficient provides the estimated effect of that variable on the dependent variable when the value of the other key variable is zero. For example, the coefficient for perceptions of Christian conservatives’ influence indicates that, when feelings toward this group are very negative (i.e., the value of this variable is zero), perceiving that this group is too influential on the party results in nearly a one-point decrease in Democrats’ affect toward the Republican Party.

Moreover, not only do the effects of the variables included in an interactive term vary according to the values of the other variables in the interaction, but their associated standard errors and significance levels do as well (Kam and Franzese 2007: 28). The marginal effects for this interaction (not shown) confirm that perceptions of Christian conservatives’ influence on the party remain significant across the range of values for feelings toward Christian conservatives. However, feelings toward this group do not significantly impact Democrats’ feelings toward the GOP across the range of values for these perceptions of influence. The solid sloping line in Figure 6.1 represents how the marginal effect of Democrats’ feelings toward Christian conservatives changes when according to whether they perceive this group as having too much influence on the party.54

54 Figure 6.1 also includes a zero line to help to determine when the marginal effect is significant. The confidence intervals indicate statistical significance bounds both fall above (or below) the zero line. For greater ease in graphing, this figure also includes values on this dichotomous variable that are not present empirically. When perceptions of influence equals zero, the marginal effect is .129 ($t = 1.36$); when perceptions of influence equals one, the marginal effect is .344 ($t = 5.44$).
The confidence intervals here thus demonstrate the conditions under which feelings toward Christian conservatives has a statistically significant effect on Democrats’ feelings toward the Republican Party – when they perceive that Christian conservatives have “too much influence” on the GOP. In other words, Democrats’ feelings toward this group only impact their feelings toward the Republican Party when they are conditioned by their perceptions of how much influence this group has.

To further aid in the interpretation of this interactive effect, predicted values were calculated to determine the effect of Democrats’ perceptions of Christian conservatives’ influence on the GOP across the range of values of feelings toward this group. As depicted in Figure 6.2, these predicted values indicate that, holding all other variables constant, a Democrat who does not feel that this group is too influential on the GOP feels more favorably toward the Republican Party when he feels favorably toward Christian conservatives and vice versa – although the discussion of the marginal effects above serve as a reminder that this impact is not statistically significant.
FIGURE 6.2:
Predicted Affect toward the Republican Party for Democrats

![Graph showing predicted affect toward the Republican Party for Democrats]

NOTE: Predicted values are calculated for a Democrat with moderate ideology who is an unmarried, white, non-Evangelical male with median age and education.

However, when this group is perceived as having too much influence on the GOP, feelings toward this group have a statistically significant impact on feelings toward the party. Specifically, under this condition, a Democrat is predicted to rate the Republican Party at nearly a 5.5 on this zero- to 10-point feeling thermometer scale when he feels very positively toward Christian conservatives, but barely a two on this scale when he feels very negatively toward this group. When this group is perceived as having too great an influence on the GOP, then, moving from very positive to very negative feelings toward this group yields a nearly 3.5-point difference in Democrats’ reported feelings toward the opposing party.

Conclusion

The findings here indicate that feelings toward and perceptions of social groups within a political party play an important role in shaping partisans’ attitudes toward the opposing party. In the current case study, Democrats perceive Christian conservatives as being a central part of the GOP’s coalition. Moreover, how Democrats feel toward this
group within the GOP shapes their feelings toward the opposing party in important ways – particularly when this group is perceived as having too much influence on the party. Under this condition, Democrats who feel negatively toward Christian conservatives tend to feel negatively toward the Republican Party as well. This suggests that social groups not only serve as meaningful reference points for partisans within a particular political party – but for those who belong to the opposing party as well.

This may have important consequences for the political party system more generally, particularly if the groups associated with one party are increasingly less popular. For example, of the six social groups that respondents in the current study rated, the group with the lowest mean scores on the feeling thermometer scale – Christian conservatives – is associated the most with the Republican Party. Moreover, the survey analyzed here asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement regarding the nature of their partisanship: “For me, liking this party is more a matter of strongly disliking the opposite party.” More than one-third (35 percent) of Democrats agreed with this statement and – of those who did agree – 69 percent hold negative feelings toward Christian conservatives and 86 percent agree that this group has too much influence over the Republican Party. This suggests that greater hostility toward the GOP amongst Democrats due to the influence of the Christian conservative movement may not only shape Democrats’ attitudes toward the opposing party but also strengthen their identity with the Democratic Party as well, leading to greater party polarization. The concluding chapter turns to the meaning of these – and other – consequences of the rise of Christian conservatives within the Republican Party.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

Several of the news headlines following the 2008 presidential election indicated that the Republican Party is facing an “identity crisis” occurring between the traditional core of the party and Christian conservatives, suggesting that this conflict may cause some partisans to become alienated and defect from the party. Although little true defection was found in the current study, this project does confirm that this conflict exists and may have important long-term consequences for the party. Indeed, both affective and cognitive considerations about Christian conservatives impact Republicans’ partisanship, particularly for those who are not themselves Christian conservatives.

Again, these results are based upon one county-wide panel study in Ohio over the course of the 2008 campaign. And yet, the results may provide an accurate appraisal of the changes occurring for Republicans nationally. With the exception of over-representing those who are highly educated, the sample obtained in this study is remarkably similar in both demographic and political characteristics with U.S. voters, and the Republican identifiers in the sample mirror the composition of Republicans nationally, both in terms of demographics and policy preferences. This suggests that these findings may provide a
more representative interpretation of the extent and the nature of the consequences of this intra-party conflict than county-wide surveys typically are.\textsuperscript{55}

Summary of Key Findings

This study thus confirms previous research that conflict within the party exists between Christian conservatives and the traditional core of the Republican Party. Not only do Evangelical and non-evangelical Republicans tend to support opposing presidential primary candidates, but they also base those electoral decisions on divergent considerations. In the 2008 presidential primary election, non-evangelical Republicans provided considerable electoral support for John McCain – a candidate who not only is less associated with the Christian conservative movement but who had previously criticized leaders of the movement as “evil” and whose “intolerance” harmed America (Savage 2006). In contrast, although more evenly divided in their support toward the two challengers, Evangelical Republicans tended to support former Evangelical minister Mike Huckabee in much greater numbers in comparison with their non-evangelical counterparts. The most important issues to these two groups’ voting decisions also demonstrate the differences in issue priorities, with Evangelical Republicans most likely to select “moral values” and non-evangelical Republicans most likely to select “the economy” as their (respective) top electoral considerations.

Moreover, the findings demonstrate that the differences between these two subgroups are rooted in conflict regarding their ideological predispositions related to

\textsuperscript{55} The current study’s sample may deviate from the political characteristics of Republicans in certain states. For example, Evangelical Protestants are concentrated in the South, so the proportion of Evangelical Republicans in Southern states is likely greater in comparison with states in the Northeast. However, this Franklin County sample is largely representative of U.S. Republicans at the aggregate level. Moreover, the psychological processes underlying the causal mechanism proposed here should not be different.
morality, which provides even greater potential to divide the party. Of course, if two factions within a political party support different primary candidates or have different issue priorities, this might indicate a small – but politically inconsequential – amount of intra-party conflict. However, the differences between Christian conservatives and other traditional factions within the GOP are not merely based on issue priorities and candidate support. Indeed, this research confirms the project’s first hypothesis (outlined in Chapter Two) that these factions are engaged in an ideological disagreement regarding the appropriate role of government in American society. Although both groups generally agree that the government should not interfere with the economy, on average, Evangelical Republicans are significantly more likely to support governmental intervention regarding societal norms, such as the definition and protection of “moral values,” in comparison with non-evangelical Republicans.

Thus, Christian conservatives and the traditional core of the party do appear to be engaged in a conflict over the direction of the party. And, as expected, this conflict over the party’s identity is accompanied by patterns of in-group favoritism and out-group hostility, such that this particular subgroup is not viewed as favorably by other GOP partisans. In fact, non-evangelical Republicans not only tend to feel more negatively toward Christian conservatives, but also tend to perceive its influence to be too threatening in comparison with partisans who are constituents of the Christian conservative movement. This ideological conflict thus provides a ripe context for these Republicans to become disaffected with the party and weaken their attachments, particularly if they feel that the party is succumbing to the dominance of this subgroup.
The Impact on Partisan and Candidate Attitudes

This research also demonstrates that the perception of Christian conservatives’ influence on the GOP plays an important role on non-evangelical Republicans’ partisan attitudes as well. Specifically, for these partisans, this factor conditions the impact that affect toward this group has on their affect toward the party – thus confirming the second set of hypotheses outlined in Chapter Two. Non-evangelical partisans who feel positively toward Christian conservatives – and who perceive this group as having too much influence on the party – tend to feel more favorably toward the GOP; in contrast, non-evangelical partisans who feel negatively toward this group – and who perceive it as having too much influence on the party – tend to have more negative feelings toward the GOP. In other words, for partisans who are not members of the subgroup in question, those who dislike this group and feel that its influence threatens the party’s identity are most likely to harbor negative feelings toward the party as a result.

In contrast, the perception of this group’s influence does not significantly impact this relationship for those who are likely members of the Christian conservative movement. For Evangelical Republicans, only their feelings toward this group impact their feelings toward the GOP; specifically, more positive feelings toward Christian conservatives significantly predict more positive feelings toward the party. However, perceptions of this group’s influence do not account for their partisan attitudes, which is not surprising given that so few Evangelical Republicans actually agreed that Christian conservatives’ influence on the party was “too great.” That this group’s partisan attitudes are not determined by these perceptions of Christian conservatives’ influence on the
party, though, does suggest that the theoretical expectations regarding this measure of threat should be dependent upon subgroup membership (a point addressed in greater detail below).

The project also confirms previous research conclusions that feelings toward groups within a party’s coalition have an independent impact on the evaluations of presidential candidates as well – particularly for candidates who are associated with those groups. The findings here, however, slightly diverge from the expectations that the interaction of group affect and perceptions of group influence would only impact attitudes toward candidates who are associated with the group and that this impact would occur similarly for all partisans. In other words, the perception that Christian conservatives have too much influence on the party was expected to shape the impact that feelings toward this group have on feelings toward Mike Huckabee (and not for John McCain) – regardless of whether one was an Evangelical or non-evangelical Republican.

However, differences do emerge in the impact of these variables depending on membership in this subgroup. As expected, this interactive effect significantly determines non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward Huckabee. In fact, holding all other variables constant, a non-evangelical Republican who dislikes Christian conservatives and perceives them as having too much influence on the party is predicted to harbor the most negative feelings toward Huckabee (nearly zero on an 11-point feeling thermometer scale). Interestingly (and unexpectedly), this interaction also significantly determines non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward McCain – though this holds only when they feel very negatively toward Christian conservatives and perceive their
influence on the party to be too great. Although the impact on feelings toward McCain is much smaller than that for feelings toward Huckabee, it does suggest that these negative group-based considerations have a residual effect on both Republican candidates – not merely the one associated with this group.

In contrast, Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward Huckabee are primarily determined by their feelings toward Christian conservatives; as expected, those who feel more favorably toward this group feel more favorably toward this candidate who is closely associated with this group. As with the analysis of partisan attitudes, though, perceptions of this group’s influence on the party do not impact Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward this candidate in any way.

Unexpectedly, these perceptions of influence do significantly predict Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward John McCain. However, this interactive impact is only significant when two conditions are met: when feelings toward Christian conservatives are negative and when their influence on the party is perceived to be too great. As noted in Chapter Four, although significant in a statistical sense, this finding is generally misleading because only two Evangelical Republicans in the current sample actually meet these two conditions. Generally, then, the partisan and candidate attitudes of Evangelical Republicans tend to be driven by affect, while non-Evangelical Republicans’ attitudes are determined by both affective and cognitive considerations about this subgroup.
The Impact on Strength of Partisanship

These findings also indicate what a powerful impact that threats to one’s partisan identity can have. Indeed, the research here demonstrates that these group-based reactions not only impact partisans’ feelings toward the party and its candidates – but its strength of partisanship as well. Because the conflict between these partisan subgroups is rooted in a division over ideological values, partisans who feel negatively about a subgroup and perceive its influence on the party to be too great should have a weaker partisan attachment as a result. The evidence presented confirms this third hypothesis as defined in Chapter Two; however, as with the previous analyses, important differences emerge in the predictors of Evangelical and non-evangelical Republicans’ strength of partisan identity.

Once again, affective considerations emerge as the only significant predictor of Evangelical Republicans’ strength of partisan identity as well as whether they weakened their party affiliation over the course of the 2008 presidential campaign. In terms of their partisan identity, only their feelings toward the Republican Party – not toward Christian conservatives – directly impact Evangelical Republicans’ partisan identity. As expected, Evangelicals who feel more favorably toward the party have a stronger attachment with it. Because feelings toward Christian conservatives, however, do serve as the most important determinant of their feelings toward the GOP, these affective considerations regarding this particular subgroup do indirectly impact their strength of partisanship. Similarly, affective considerations also emerge as the only significant predictor of whether Evangelical Republicans weakened their partisan attachments from the primary
election to the general election in November, although – again – only feelings toward the Democratic Party impacted the likelihood of this occurring.

Unlike their Evangelical counterparts, non-evangelical Republicans’ partisan identity is both directly and indirectly determined by the interaction of their feelings toward Christian conservatives and their perceptions of this group’s influence on the party. Because this interaction shapes their feelings toward their own party – and these feelings in turn significantly predict the strength of their partisan identity – these group-based considerations indirectly impact the strength of non-evangelical Republicans’ partisan identity. As with Evangelical Republicans, more positive feelings toward the GOP correspond to a stronger sense of identity with the Republican Party. However, this interaction of affective and cognitive reactions to Christian conservatives also has a direct (and statistically significant) impact on their strength of partisan identity when two conditions are met: when they feel negatively toward this group and they perceive its influence on the party to be too great. These Republicans are the most disaffected and, thus, face the greatest risk of defecting from the party.

Although few Republicans actually defected in this panel study (nor should they be expected to, given that changes to individual-level party identification generally occur over several years), a sizable minority (21 percent) did weaken their affiliations with the party over the course of the 2008 presidential campaign by self-placing themselves in “weaker” categories on a traditional seven-point party identification scale – the majority of whom were non-evangelical Republicans. Although the interaction of feelings toward Christian conservatives and perceptions of their influence on the party only indirectly
impacted the likelihood that this weakening would occur (namely, by shaping their feelings toward the GOP), the perception that Christian conservatives have too much influence on the party directly increased the chances that a non-evangelical Republican would weaken her identification with the GOP during this time period. In fact, those who perceive this group as being too influential on the party are nearly nine times more likely to weaken their partisan affiliations than are those who do not. This confirms the theoretical expectations outlined in Chapter Two that the growing influence of Christian conservatives in the GOP is not only perceived as a threat to these partisans but is moving them away from their current partisan identity.

**The Prevention of True Defection**

Although a sizable minority of Republican partisans in the Franklin County sample did weaken their partisan affiliations as a result of these components, a similar amount of true defection – either in terms of vote choice or partisanship – was not found in the current study. Only ten percent of the Republicans in the sample voted for a candidate other than John McCain in the 2008 General Election, and only 3.5 percent altered their party identifications completely over the course of the 2008 presidential campaign, identifying either as a Democrat or a pure Independent following the election. Although these types of defections are expected to be rare – particularly given the stability of individual-level party identification and the short time period that the current study investigates – additional constraints may be preventing disaffected partisans from defecting from the Republican Party.
For example, true defection in either vote choice or partisanship is prevented by institutional constraints, such as the two-party system. Although several third party and Independent candidates also ran for the presidency in this election, only the Republican and Democratic candidates were likely to win. Given the decision between Obama and McCain, then, many Republican voters – despite being dissatisfied with the direction of the party and the dominance of Christian conservatives – would have been unlikely to vote for a more liberal candidate, especially given that McCain was not associated with this group to a great extent. Similarly, if the Democratic Party is perceived to be too ideologically extreme, then no acceptable alternative partisan identity is likely to be available to these Republicans, and they are less likely to defect (Lawrence 1994; Nesmith 1994).\(^5^6\)

In terms of vote choice, the Republican candidate’s lack of association with Christian conservatives may have benefitted his campaign – as even those who evaluated this group negatively and felt their influence on the party was too great still largely voted for him in the 2008 presidential election. Although non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward McCain were significantly predicted by these two conditions during the primary election season, this did not translate to vote choice in November. This may be partially due to the fact that few Republicans associated this group specifically with this candidate. For example, following the Republican National Convention and the announcement that Christian conservative Sarah Palin would be McCain’s running mate,\(^5^6\)

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\(^{56}\) The internal rules of the Republican Party’s nomination system may also provide an institutional constraint on voting defection. Its largely winner-take-all system in terms of delegate selection in the nominating contest often exaggerates the winner’s margin of victory, which may have allowed McCain to create the perception that the party was a more unified coalition than it really was.
respondents of the Franklin County panel study were asked to report their perceptions of Christian conservatives’ influence specifically on his campaign – not the party. Only 10 percent of non-evangelical Republicans in the sample agreed that Christian conservatives have too much influence on McCain’s campaign, which suggests that the choice of Palin may not have been as consequential as many journalists and political pundits have claimed.

In contrast, had Huckabee been the Republican Party’s nominee, a greater amount of vote defection would have been expected amongst non-evangelical Republicans who dislike Christian conservatives and perceive their influence on the party to be too great. Because Huckabee is so closely associated with this group, his service as the sole representative or leader of the party may have caused a greater number of these partisans to experience a threat to their identities and thus vote for another candidate. An even greater amount of defection would have been expected if the Republican candidate was not only associated with the Christian conservative movement, but a leader of it as well (such as Pat Robertson or James Dobson). Particularly if the Republican Party were to repeatedly nominate candidates who are consistently associated with this group, the perception of threat to non-evangelical Republicans’ partisan identity should accumulate to create even greater incentives to defect, even despite the institutional and political constraints to do so.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{57} An alternative explanation of the lack of true defection in the current study is that an examination of the 2008 campaign was too late to detect changes in party identification as a response to Christian conservatives’ influence on the party. According to the American National Election Studies, the distribution of partisanship in 2008 amongst actual voters demonstrates a six-percentage point advantage for the Democratic Party, in comparison to a five-point Republican advantage in 2004 (Weisberg and Devine 2009). In other words, defections away from the GOP may have occurred prior to the 2008 election.
The Impact on Democrats’ Attitudes toward the Republican Party

Although the primary focus of this project has been to investigate the importance of group-based reactions and their consequences for conflict within a political party, the results also provide useful insights into the determinants of the partisan attitudes of “outsiders” as well. These findings demonstrate that subgroups within the GOP also serve as meaningful reference points for Democrats. As with Republican partisans, Democrats tend to associate Christian conservatives with the GOP. On average, Democrats also feel significantly more negatively toward Christian conservatives than do Republicans, and they are considerably more likely to agree that this group has too much influence on the party. These affective and cognitive reactions toward this group also interact to shape their feelings toward the Republican Party. Specifically, the perception that this group is too influential conditions the impact that feelings toward this subgroup have on their feelings toward the opposing party. Democrats who feel negatively toward this group and who perceive its influence on the GOP as too great harbor significantly more negative feelings toward the Republican Party.

As noted in Chapter Six, this may have important consequences for Democrats’ partisan attachments and the nature of the party system as well. Democrats who met these two conditions, for example, are more likely to agree that their partisan attitudes are primarily based on “strongly disliking the opposite party.” This greater hostility amongst Democrats toward the GOP as a result of the perceived dominance of this group within its coalition may therefore strengthen their identity with the Democratic Party. Should Democrats become even stronger in their partisan attachments, a greater amount of
polarization at the mass level may occur – particularly if the Republican Party is continued to be associated with this negatively evaluated group.

**Theoretical Implications**

In a broader sense, the evidence presented throughout this project demonstrates that the conflict occurring within the Republican Party is based on the awareness of the different groups within its coalition. Republican partisans accurately associate groups with the party that are central to the GOP’s coalitional base. The subsequent impact of these group-based considerations on their partisan attitudes and strength of partisanship provide further confirmation of the social-psychological conception of party identification. Not only is partisanship a form of social identification, but the subgroups within this hierarchical identity serve as meaningful reference points for partisans – at least, as demonstrated here, for Republicans. Interestingly, previous research has noted that Democratic partisanship has typically been more group-based than Republican partisanship – as greater proportions of Democrats have tended to make group references in their evaluations of their party more so than Republicans have of theirs (Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth 1991). This outcome was generally attributed to the fact that, because the Democratic Party was comprised of a greater number of diverse groups, subgroup distinctions were more salient for its partisans than for Republicans. However, the impact of these group-based considerations on Republican identifiers seems to suggest that – unlike the patterns found in earlier decades – the inclusion of Christian conservatives in the GOP may have caused subgroup distinctions and identities to
become more salient for Republican partisans as well. In short, Republican partisanship has become increasingly more group-oriented at the mass level.

However, as noted throughout the analyses presented here, distinct differences emerge in the impact of these group-based factors on the attitudes and strength of partisanship between those who are members of this particular subgroup and those who are not. Evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward the Republican Party, their feelings toward its presidential candidates and their strength of partisan identity are primarily driven by affective reactions to the group to which they belong. Only in one analysis—determining feelings toward McCain—did perceptions of Christian conservatives’ influence appear to have an important effect (although, as noted above, this impact is not substantively important because so few Evangelical Protestants meet the conditions necessary for this impact to be significant). This does not suggest that members of this particular religious tradition do not take cognitive considerations into account when evaluating their partisanship—merely that those who are members of the subgroup in question are less likely to take cognitive considerations about its own group’s influence into account. Clearly, members of a subgroup that gains influence within a hierarchical group should not view such influence as threatening to the larger identity. When a subgroup’s influence within a political party increases (or even is perceived to increase), this influence should be welcomed by those who belong to the subgroup. Such cognitive reflections about how much influence a subgroup has obtained on the larger identity should only emerge as a significant variable when one does not belong to the subgroup in question.
Indeed, particularly when the subgroup in question holds opposing ideological values that directly relate to the party’s image regarding for whom and what it stands, cognitive considerations regarding subgroup influence should serve an important moderating (i.e., conditional) role in determining the attitudes and strength of the superordinate identification of those who do not belong to that subgroup. In the current study, the partisan attitudes and identity of non-evangelical Republicans were significantly impacted by both feelings toward Christian conservatives as well as their perceptions of how much influence this group has on the GOP. As noted above, negative affect toward this group and the perception that its influence is too great significantly decrease non-evangelical Republicans’ feelings toward their own party as well as toward its primary candidates – although this relationship is strongest for the candidate who is more closely associated with this group. Moreover, these perceptions of influence also have a direct impact on non-evangelical Republicans’ strength of partisan identity such that only when Christian conservatives are viewed negatively and are considered to have too much influence on the party does non-evangelical Republicans’ strength of partisan identity weaken. This sensitivity to threat also emerges as a direct determinant of these partisans’ likelihood of weakening their partisan attachments over the course of the 2008 campaign.

Thus, not only does this research provide additional support of the group-based nature of partisanship, but it also demonstrates the psychological underpinnings of this relationship as well. Unlike recent scholarship that emphasizes how groups impact individual-level partisanship and defection (i.e., Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002),
this project applies recent advancements in social identity theory to determine the conditions under which partisanship is weakened as a result of group-oriented reactions. The basic feature of social identity theory – that group identification is motivated by individuals’ need to create and maintain a positive self-image – provides a useful way of understanding why individuals weaken their partisan attachments as a result of their perceptions of other groups in the party. In the present case study, non-evangelical Republicans’ perceptions that a negatively evaluated group was “taking over” the party led them to weaken their attachments. Particularly because this group holds divergent ideological predispositions with these partisans, the perception of this group’s dominance within the party threatened to undermine the value of being a Republican for these individuals. The need to maintain a positive self-image, then, caused these partisans to re-evaluate their attitudes and attachment with the party. Thus, contrary to the expectation that examining the psychological processes that underlie these group-based dynamics “lead[s] down a blind alley” (Ibid.: 11), the application of social identity theory and its descendants is valuable to a more comprehensive understanding of how group-oriented considerations impact partisan attitudes and attachments.

The application of these political psychological approaches also provides additional evidence of the ways in which affective and cognitive considerations interact to produce rational political behavior. Once considered to be mutually exclusive, affect and cognition often work in concert with one another (Marcus 2003). In the current case study, both are necessary components of the group-based considerations that partisans make with regard to their attitudes toward the party and the strength of their identification.
with it. However, the direction of these components – whether positive or negative – does not appear to be equally important. Both in terms of non-evangelical Republicans’ partisan attitudes and identity, negative feelings toward Christian conservatives and negative reactions to the amount of influence that they have on the party have greater effects than do favorable feelings or perceptions of this group. This finding is not surprising. Individuals tend to give greater weight to negative information than to positive information, which causes it to have an asymmetrical influence on the formation of political impressions (McGraw 2003). This negativity bias suggests, then, that positive feelings toward subgroups within a party do not strengthen partisan identity as much as negative feelings toward them weaken it. Indeed, only when non-evangelical partisans felt negatively toward Christian conservatives and perceived their influence on the party to be too great did they weaken their partisan attachments.

**Practical Prescriptions for the Republican and Democratic Parties**

This research also offers important insights as to what the preferred course of action for the Republican Party may be, given its likely desire to lower conflict within its party and create a more unified coalition. As with other hierarchical identities, previous research has demonstrated that tensions between subgroups are reduced when common goals are introduced (Sherif et al. 1954; Gaertner and Dovidio 2000; Transue 2007; Gonzalez et al. 2008). As the Republican Party no longer retains control of the presidency, the common goal of achieving victory in the 2012 election, for example, may decrease the salience of subgroup identities and eliminate the conflict within the party. Indeed, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Republican Party did maintain an (albeit,
fragile) alliance between Christian conservatives and other GOP partisans by advancing one common enemy: “big government” as espoused by the Democratic Party that served to threaten both religious and economic values (Kazin 1995). This would suggest that a similar goal may force these competing subgroups to once again foster a mutually beneficial relationship.

And yet, the possibility of maintaining this type of relationship is especially unlikely in current politics. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, this relationship did not benefit these two groups equally. Although several aspects of their agenda have been included in the GOP platform and this group has earned a greater amount of favorable rhetoric from recent Republican presidents, Christian conservatives have not reaped the promises of their alliance with the party in terms of actual policy outcomes, particularly at the national level and certainly not to the same extent that the traditional core of the party benefitted from the financial support and votes of Evangelical Republicans during this time period (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007). Because Christian conservatives have now gained greater influence on the party’s apparatus, they should be less likely to accept such a superficial relationship – demanding increasingly greater success on their agenda. 58

Without the possibility of reconciling the interests of this subgroup with other partisans, the GOP is truly engaged in an “identity crisis,” determining whether the image of the party will reflect its Christian conservative base or whether the party will “reclaim”

58 Of course, the party may be able to reconcile its intra-party conflict due to – not its actions – but those of the Christian conservative movement. Should this subgroup soften its image and policy positions to reduce negative affect toward it, for example, then the interactive impact on non-evangelical Republicans’ partisanship should be reduced as well.
its traditional constituencies with an image that focuses more on economic and foreign policies rather than the social-cultural issues most salient to Evangelical Protestants. Because the perception that this particular subgroup has too great an influence on the GOP already exists amongst many non-evangelical Republicans – as well as the negative impact that this and unfavorable feelings toward this subgroup has on these partisans’ attitudes toward and attachment to the party – the GOP would likely benefit from reducing the influence of this subgroup on the party. Indeed, to soften the perception amongst both partisans and Democratic identifiers that this group is too influential on the party, the results here suggest that Republican elites should make a conscious effort to focus less on the needs and interests of the Christian conservative movement. In other words, the Republican Party should be cautious in allowing the “new face” of the Republican Party to be Sarah Palin, Mike Huckabee or another Christian conservative, lest it risk facing even greater difficulties in retaining the loyalties of non-evangelical partisans and potentially attracting the votes of Democrats and Independents. Distancing itself from this group to appeal to a majority of its constituents should enable the party to thwart the weakening of partisan ties detected in the current study.

This prescription is also informed in part by the balance within the party between Evangelical and non-evangelical constituents. While a central part of the GOP’s coalition, Evangelical Protestants comprise only one-third of the party’s base (Pew Research Center 2006). Moreover, Christian conservatives have become a less cohesive group in recent elections – particularly as national organizations such as the Christian Coalition have decreased in membership and face mounting debts (Cooperman and
Edsell 2007), conservative Evangelical leaders have differed widely in their endorsements of Republican candidates in the 2008 primary elections, and a growing number of younger Evangelical Protestants are placing a higher priority on issues such as global warming and social justice rather than abortion and gay marriage (Lee 2008). The long-term consequences of potentially alienating a considerable portion of the other two-thirds of the party’s coalition – to merely satisfy one-third of the party whose cohesion is waning – would thus suggest that the GOP should attempt to decrease the influence of this subgroup on the party.

Of course, a natural counter-argument to this prescription is that the reduction of Christian conservatives’ influence on the party may alienate Evangelical Republicans, who may weaken their affiliations with the party as a result. Particularly if their influence on the party is being diminished to the benefit of another subgroup within the party, Evangelicals should likely feel that their image of the party’s identity is being threatened, causing them to weaken their party identifications and defect. However, despite any potential dissatisfaction, Evangelical Republicans should be less likely to defect from the GOP than other (non-evangelical) Republicans are. As noted in Chapter Three, this group shares similar predispositions regarding economic concerns with the rest of the party’s coalition, so a focus on a conservative economic agenda by the party would appeal to this group, rather than alienate them. True defection also requires the presence of an attractive alternative (Nesmith 1994); given its progressive positions on

59 For example, prominent televangelist Pat Robertson endorsed Rudy Guiliani, while Paul Weyrich (founder of the Moral Majority) endorsed Mitt Romney. In contrast, Don Wildmon (founder of the grassroots American Family Association) and James Dobson (founder of Focus on the Family) both endorsed Mike Huckabee (Sherwell 2007).
the issues most salient to Evangelical Republicans, the Democratic Party simply should not be viewed as an acceptable social identity for this group. Thus, the potential dissatisfaction of Christian conservatives should be less consequential to the GOP than the potential alienation of non-evangelical Republicans, and the loyalty of the majority of the party’s constituency should be the primary concern of the party.

The findings presented here also provide some insight as to the course of action that the Democratic Party might take in its attempt to attract disaffected non-evangelical Republicans who are on the verge of defecting. Due to the central role that perceptions of Christian conservatives’ influence on the party plays in impacting non-evangelical Republicans’ partisan attitudes and strength of their partisan attachments, the Democratic Party should accentuate the conflict within the GOP by emphasizing negative aspects of the Christian conservative movement as well as its association with the party to further exacerbate the consequences of these perceptions. Moreover, as noted above, defection is most likely in the presence of an acceptable alternative identity. In terms of policy positions, then, the Democratic Party would likely appeal to disaffected Republicans if it were to maintain its progressive stance on social-cultural issues such as abortion, gay marriage and stem-cell research but adopt a more centrist approach to economic issues. Recent research also suggests that this response will not only attract these Republicans but may be the only one that also ensures the continued support of its current coalitional base (Miller and Schofield 2008), thus yielding an advantage in the party system.60

60 Recent attempts by the Democratic Party to appear more friendly to religious interests may also attract disaffected Republicans. As Chapter Three details, a large majority (83 percent) of non-evangelical Republicans in the current study reported that religion is “somewhat” or “very” important in guiding their lives.
Directions for a Future Research Agenda

The current study has limited its application of the proposed causal mechanism to partisans’ reactions to one visible group within one political party during the course of the 2008 presidential campaign. And yet, the impact of the group-based considerations central to this mechanism – namely, affect toward and perceptions of influence of subgroups within a political party – should apply to other situations of partisan alienation and defection in both a contemporary and historical setting. These applications will not only provide greater confirmation of the conditions under which these group-based elements influence partisan attitudes and strength of partisanship, but also can offer insights as to the dynamics of how these elements are shaped as well.

The Constellation of Groups and Partisanship in the Contemporary Era

The current study has been limited thus far to examining the way in which one particular group within a political party’s coalition can alienate other partisans and weaken their partisan attachments. But political parties are comprised of a variety of diverse groups, each competing to influence the party’s direction. For example, although the findings here demonstrate the impact that Christian conservatives have had on Republicans’ partisanship, other groups were clearly associated with the GOP by the Franklin County sample – namely, big business and military personnel. Because partisanship is group-based, individuals’ feelings toward and perceptions of the influence of these other groups associated with the party should also interact to shape their partisan attitudes and strength of partisanship. If, for example, these other groups are evaluated favorably, then the negative impact of their feelings toward and perceptions of Christian
conservatives may not be as great. In other words, despite the conflict present in the party as a result of the growing prominence of Christian conservatives, partisans may not become as alienated with the GOP and defect if the other subgroups within the party serve as positive reference points for them.

This suggests, then, that understanding the group-based nature of partisanship requires an investigation of the constellation of subgroups within a political party as well as individuals’ membership in and evaluations of those varied groups. Moreover, the subgroups within the opposing political party should also be examined. As the evidence in Chapter Six demonstrates, for example, the perception that Christian conservatives have too much influence on the GOP significantly conditions the impact that feelings toward this group has for Democratic identifiers, consequently shaping their attitudes toward the opposing party. Thus, individuals’ reactions to the subgroups in the opposing party should also be considered to provide an indication of whether it would potentially serve as an acceptable alternative should they defect from their current party.

Future research will thus expand the current study to examine the interactive impact of affect and perceptions of influence of additional subgroups within both the Republican and Democratic parties in contemporary politics. The 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey asked respondents to identify which groups they associated with both parties – not merely the GOP. As Table 7.1 demonstrates, large majorities of respondents associate Christian conservatives, big business and – to a slightly lesser extent – military personnel with the Republican Party, although Republican identifiers are less likely to associate big business with their party in comparison with Democratic
identifiers. Similarly, a greater proportion of Republicans associate military personnel with their party than do Democrats.

**TABLE 7.1:**
**Groups Associated with the Republican and Democratic Parties, by Party Affiliation (2008)***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Groups Associated with the Republican Party</th>
<th>Groups Associated with the Democratic Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Respondents</td>
<td>Republican Identifiers (includes leaners)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian conservatives</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big business</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Personnel</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmentalists</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Unions</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminists</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (VOLUNTEERED)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey

* Cells indicate the percentage of respondents who associate each group with each party.

The three groups most associated with the GOP were also the *least* associated with the Democratic Party, although more than one-fourth (26 percent) of Democrats do associate military personnel with their own party. In contrast, the three groups least associated with the GOP are those *most* associated with the Democratic Party: feminists, labor unions and environmentalists. This pattern generally holds regardless of party affiliation, although a lower proportion of Democratic identifiers are willing to associate feminists with their own party than are Republicans. Despite these small differences,
individuals make clear distinction regarding which particular groups are associated with the GOP and which are associated with the Democratic Party.\textsuperscript{61}

Previous research also suggests that greater association of more popular groups with a political party should improve its success at resolving internal conflict, retaining its identifiers and attracting disaffected partisans from the opposing party; of course, the association of negatively evaluated groups should yield the reverse effects (Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth 1991). Should the combination of groups that are associated with the Republican Party, for example, be viewed more positively than those that are associated with the Democratic Party, the GOP should have fewer challenges in retaining its identifiers – particularly if big business and military personnel are viewed more favorably than are Christian conservatives.

Table 7.2 reports respondents’ mean feeling thermometer scores toward each of these six groups, comparing the differences amongst Republican and Democratic identifiers. Generally, partisans tend to feel more favorably toward the groups associated with their own party and less favorably toward the groups associated with the opposing party, though the notable exception to this is Democratic identifiers’ positive evaluation of military personnel.\textsuperscript{62} Amongst all respondents, the most popular group is military personnel – one that is generally associated with the GOP (though more so by

\textsuperscript{61} A principal component factor analysis of the feeling thermometer ratings of these six subgroups and the two major political parties confirms that the Republican Party, Christian conservatives, big business and military personnel load on one factor, while the Democratic Party, feminists, labor unions and environmentalists clearly load on another, distinct factor.

\textsuperscript{62} This favorable evaluation across party lines is likely the result of the wording of this response option. “Military personnel” refers to the men and women who serve in the military, rather than those making military decisions. Even if they feel unfavorably toward the military as a whole, Americans generally report support for those who actually serve in the military, which may have resulted in more favorable responses toward this group in the survey.
Republicans than Democrats. However, the two most negatively evaluated groups – big business and Christian conservatives – are also associated with the Republican Party (though it should be noted that Republicans tend to associate big business less with their own party than Democrats do). Although the three groups associated with the Democratic Party are not viewed quite as favorably as military personnel, as a coalition, they obtain a more favorable reaction from all respondents than do the combined coalition of the groups associated with the Republican Party, suggesting that movement toward the Democratic Party may be more likely than it is toward the GOP due to these group reactions.

**TABLE 7.2: Affect toward Groups Associated with the Republican and Democratic Parties, by Party Affiliation (2008)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Respondents</th>
<th>Democrats (includes leaners)</th>
<th>Republicans (includes leaners)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian conservatives</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>5.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big business</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>4.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Personnel</td>
<td>7.74</td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>8.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmentalists</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>7.12</td>
<td>4.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Unions</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>6.24</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminists</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Cells indicate the mean feeling thermometer score for each of the groups associated with the parties.

Not only are two of the three groups associated with the Republican Party viewed more negatively, but a greater proportion of individuals perceive these groups as having too much influence on the party. In fact, 75 percent of all respondents in the Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey agree that big business has too much influence on the GOP, while a majority (59 percent) also agree that Christian conservatives have too much influence on the party. In contrast, substantially fewer perceive the two least popular groups in the Democratic Party to have too much control over it: only 49 percent
of respondents agreed that labor unions have too much influence on the Democratic Party, and less than one-third (30 percent) of respondents agreed to a similar statement about feminists.\(^{63}\)

Because partisanship should be based – not only on reactions to one group within a political party – but on considerations related to the constellation of subgroups within both political parties, additional analysis of the Franklin County panel study will help to determine whether the impact of feelings toward these groups on partisans’ attitudes and strength of partisanship are contingent upon perceptions of these groups’ influence as well. Similar analyses will also be conducted via national surveys, such as the American National Election Studies (ANES), to provide further confirmation of the causal mechanism proposed here – which would also offer a more expansive list of the subgroups within both political parties that might be considered as well as provide an opportunity to examine more than one presidential campaign period.

**The Defection of Men from the Democratic Party**

To provide additional support of the proposed theoretical mechanism, future research will also apply a similar analysis of the conditional role of perceptions of group influence in a historical setting: the emergence of the gender gap in the 1970s and 1980s. Defined as the difference in political party identification between women and men, the gender gap first was apparent in the 1980 presidential election, in which a greater proportion of men were more likely to support Reagan’s candidacy than were women (Bendyna and Lake 1994). Although early research on the sources of this gap in

\(^{63}\) The questionnaire did not gauge respondents’ perceptions of the influence of military personnel or environmentalists on these parties.
partisanship and voting behavior initially focused on the policy positions and experiences of women to explain their propensity to identify with the Democratic Party, more recent research has demonstrated that this gap was caused by the growing Republican identification of men over time (Kauffman and Petrocik 1999; Box-Steffensmeier, De Boef and Lin 2004). Although women’s identification with the Democratic Party has remained relatively stable, men’s support for the party has continued to decline over time.

Some research explaining this shift has demonstrated that white men increasingly perceived that the Democratic Party was no longer representing their interests in the 1980s and 1990s (Greenberg 2000). Given the group-based nature of partisanship – and particularly, the historical prevalence of group references to Democratic partisans’ discussions of party evaluations (Campbell et al. 1960) – this shift has likely been the result of men’s increasing dissatisfaction with the groups that are associated with the Democratic Party. For example, Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth (1991) demonstrate that the women’s liberation movement was not associated with the Democratic Party in 1972, but had become a core part of the party’s coalitional base by 1984. Not only was this group evaluated more negatively by men, but its growing influence on the party’s platform, internal rules and priorities may have caused male Democrats to perceive that this group was “taking over” the party’s identity and weakened their partisan attachments as a result. A study of the conditions under which these group-based considerations caused the defection of men from the Democratic Party would help to confirm the theoretical foundations of the current study as well as provide a greater understanding of the sources of the gender gap in party identification.
The Role of News Media in Shaping Group Affect and Perceptions of Party Image

The consequences of affect toward parties’ subgroups and perceptions of their influence for individuals’ partisanship also indicate that understanding the sources of these factors is equally as important. Indeed, a great deal of variation exists amongst partisans in how favorably they evaluate groups within their own parties as well as whether they perceive those groups’ influence as threatening. Although these factors might be shaped by partisans’ direct interaction with others in the party, it is most likely that news media are central to providing information to partisans regarding which subgroups the party represents, whether those groups embody positive or negative characteristics, and how dominant those subgroups are on the party. Indeed, as elections have become more candidate-centered, mass media outlets have become the dominant source of political information to most Americans rather than the political parties (Patterson 1993; Barnhurst and Mutz 1997). Thus, individuals are most likely to be exposed to information on political matters such as intra-party conflict via news media.

Moreover, news media often mediate political realities for the mass public. Although news media outlets do provide objective information to the mass public, they often do so using a particular frame, defined as “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them” (Gamson and Modigliani 1987: 143; for a discussion of the psychological processes underlying the impact of framing, see Nelson, Clawson and Oxley 1997). Individuals who are exposed to news frames that portray partisan subgroups in a negative light, for example, should consequently feel more negatively toward that group as a
result. Similarly, exposure to news frames that accentuate the pressure that a particular subgroup successfully exerts on the political party should cause individuals to perceive that the group has too much influence on the party.

In the case study investigated in the current project, for example, recent media accounts have not only linked Christian conservatives with the Republican Party, but they have largely portrayed this group negatively as well. In a content analysis of political news stories from 1990 to 2000, Bolce and de Maio (2002) found that one-fourth of the news stories about religion and partisan politics contained themes that implied that Christian conservatives are intolerant, mean-spirited, and a threat to basic liberties and democracy. Moreover, most of the news stories emphasized conflicts between this group and other GOP partisans over social and cultural issues (such as abortion, gay rights and education) as well as the growing influence of religious conservatives on the Republican Party (Ibid.). It is likely, then, that exposure to these news frames has caused some Republicans to feel more negatively toward this group and perceive its influence on the party to be growing.

However, not all media accounts portray Christian conservatives in a negative light. Particularly in states in which the majority of the population are themselves Christian conservatives, local or state-wide news media may portray this group as moral, compassionate and trustworthy or, depending on the context of particular regions, as a group “under attack” from an increasingly secular American society. Individuals also commonly select the news media to which they are exposed based on their

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64 While some have indicated that this negative coverage demonstrates a bias against this group, this negative coverage may also be the result of extremist comments by some Christian conservative leaders.
predispositions (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet 1944). Thus, some individuals may choose to be exposed to news media with messages that they perceive will portray Christian conservatives favorably. Those who are exposed to such news frames may feel favorably – or at least be sympathetic – to this group and not perceive it as having too much influence on the party.

Future research will thus examine the conditions under which exposure to news stories regarding Christian conservatives shape Republicans’ feelings toward and perceptions of the influence of this group. For example, not all individuals exposed to either negative or positive messages regarding this group will react to these messages in similar ways. Those who trust that the news is reporting fairly and accurately, for example, may be more susceptible to the impact of the news messages. Also, as noted above, negative information often has an asymmetrical impact on the formation of political impressions (McGraw 2003). Given this negativity bias, exposure to news frames that portray Christian conservatives negatively and emphasize their influence on the party should have a greater impact on individuals’ evaluations of this group than news frames that portray it positively. By determining the conditions under which news stories shape these evaluations of subgroups within political parties, this additional research will not only provide a greater explanation for how some partisans feel negatively toward this particular group and perceive its influence as too great, but can also provide evidence for how partisan cues are defined and communicated to the mass public more generally.
Conclusion

Although this theoretical approach might be applied to various situations of intra-party conflict and offers an extensive avenue for future research, the current study does remain timely, particularly given the nature of the 2008 presidential election. As the news headlines immediately following the election suggest, the Republican Party continues to struggle with an “identity crisis,” attempting to reconcile conflict within the party and to discern which of the party’s competing factions will emerge as dominant to lead the party in the next several years. And, although the Republican strategy of shoring up the Christian conservative base during this election did not cause as many partisans to vote for the Democratic candidate as news media may have predicted, the short-term gains enjoyed by the GOP as a result of this strategy may not outweigh its long-term costs. Indeed, the speculations that the accumulated effect of this group’s influence on the party over time may drive some partisans away from the GOP appear to have greater support. Particularly if the “new face” of the Republican Party is Sarah Palin and Christian conservatives like her, the evidence here suggests that the potential for some partisans to weaken their attachments and eventually defect may be real – particularly for those who feel negatively toward this group and perceive its influence on the party to already be too great.
APPENDIX A

SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

The research conducted for this dissertation project received Ohio State Institutional Review board approval under protocol number 2008B0035.

THE 2008 FRANKLIN COUNTY POST-PRIMARY ELECTION SURVEY

INSTRUCTIONS: For each item, please circle the answer/option that best captures your views. Then please mail back the questionnaire in the pre-paid envelope provided. Thank you very much!

1. How interested have you been in the 2008 presidential primary elections?  
   (1) Not very interested  
   (2) Somewhat interested  
   (3) Very interested

2. Some people are not able to vote for various reasons – they were busy, forgot, or chose not to vote. Did you happen to vote in the presidential primary election on March 4, 2008?  
   (1) Yes  
   (2) Yes, but I voted early  
   (3) No  
   (4) No, but I normally vote

3. In that election, which party’s ballot did you select? (If you did not happen to vote, which party’s ballot would you have chosen?)  
   (1) Democratic  
   (2) Republican  
   (3) I requested an independent ballot

4. Which presidential candidate did you vote for in the election?  
   (Or if you did not vote, for which candidate would you have voted?)  
   Democrats:  
   (1) Hillary Clinton  
   (2) Barack Obama  
   (3) John Edwards  
   (4) Other __________

   Republicans:  
   (1) Mike Huckabee  
   (2) John McCain  
   (3) Ron Paul  
   (4) Other __________

5. When did you decide who you were voting for? If it was before election day, please try to remember about when you decided, and write your answer in the space below. (If you did not vote, about when did you decide who you would have voted for?)  
   (1) I decided on Election Day  
   (2) I decided before Election Day: ______________________

6. Did you prefer any candidate who dropped out of the presidential race before the Ohio primary? If yes, please circle the candidate below: (If no, please skip to Question 7.)  
   Democrats:  
   (1) John Edwards  
   (2) Dennis Kucinich  
   (3) Chris Dodd  
   (4) Other __________

   Republicans:  
   (1) Rudy Giuliani  
   (2) Mitt Romney  
   (3) Fred Thompson  
   (4) Other __________

7. In your decision between the candidates, what was your top consideration? (Please circle one.)  
   (1) Abortion  
   (2) Health care  
   (3) Immigration  
   (4) Iraq War  
   (5) National Security  
   (6) The economy  
   (7) Experience  
   (8) Candidate Character  
   (9) Government corruption  
   (10) Ability to bring about change  
   (11) Ability to win in November  
   (12) Moral values  
   (13) Other: __________________________________
8. How close do you think the November election for president will be?
   (1) Not at all close  (2) Somewhat close  (3) Very close

9. Which candidate do you think will win the presidential election in November?
   (1) John McCain, the Republican nominee  (2) the Democratic nominee, whoever it is

10. On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means that the candidate has no chance of winning the presidential election in November, and 10 means he/she will definitely win, please tell us what you think each of the Democratic candidates’ chances are against John McCain, the Republican nominee:

   Hillary Clinton  [ ] 0-10  Barack Obama  [ ] 0-10

11. If the presidential election were held today, who would you vote for in the following match-ups?

   Match-up 1:  (1) John McCain  (2) Hillary Clinton  (3) Other  (4) Undecided
   Match-up 2:  (1) John McCain  (2) Barack Obama  (3) Other  (4) Undecided

12. Who did you vote for in the 2004 presidential election?
   (1) George W. Bush  (2) John Kerry  (3) Other  (4) I didn’t vote in that election

13. Now, thinking of your general political views, which of these labels best describes you?
   (1) Very conservative  (2) Somewhat conservative  (3) Moderate  (4) Somewhat liberal  (5) Very liberal

SECTION 2: POLITICAL PARTIES AND PARTISANSHIP

14. Generally speaking, which of these party labels best describes you?

   Strong Democrat  Weak Democrat  Independent, but Leaning Democrat  Independent  Weak Republican  Strong Republican

15. For the following questions, please think of the party label that you selected above, and indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about that political party. (If you answered that you are an Independent, please skip to Question 16.)

   A. When someone criticizes this party, it feels like a personal insult.  (1) Agree  (2) Neutral  (3) Disagree
   B. When I talk about this party, I say “we” rather than “they.”  (1) Agree  (2) Neutral  (3) Disagree
   C. I don’t have much in common with most people who identify with this party.  (1) Agree  (2) Neutral  (3) Disagree
   D. I almost always support candidates of this party.  (1) Agree  (2) Neutral  (3) Disagree
   E. I am enthusiastic about the direction this party is headed.  (1) Agree  (2) Neutral  (3) Disagree
   F. For me, liking this party is more a matter of strongly disliking the opposite party.  (1) Agree  (2) Neutral  (3) Disagree

16. Have you ever described yourself using another party label?  (1) Yes  (2) No
   If yes, what did you describe yourself as: _______________________

SECTION 3: OPINIONS ABOUT INDIVIDUALS & GROUPS

17. Now, we would like to get your feelings towards the candidates and some other figures. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is very unfavorable and 10 is very favorable, how do you feel about each person?

   (1) Hillary Clinton  (2) John McCain  (3) Barack Obama  (4) George W. Bush  
   (5) Mitt Romney  (6) Mike Huckabee  (7) Ted Strickland  (8) Ron Paul
18. We would also like to get your feelings toward some groups in the news. Again on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is very unfavorable and 10 is very favorable, how do you feel about each of these groups?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Feeling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Party</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminists</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmentalists</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian conservatives</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Party</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big business</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor unions</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military personnel</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. Now, we would like to ask you a bit more about these groups. Which of these groups do you associate with the Democratic Party? (Circle all that apply.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian conservatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmentalists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big business</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor unions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: ______________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. Which of these groups do you associate with the Republican Party? (Circle all that apply.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian conservatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmentalists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big business</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor unions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: ______________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. Thinking about the candidates and these groups, which of the following groups do you associate with Mike Huckabee? (Circle all that apply.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian conservatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmentalists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big business</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor unions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: ______________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. Which of the following do you associate with John McCain? (Circle all that apply.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian conservatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmentalists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big business</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor unions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: ______________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23. Which of the following groups do you associate with Hillary Clinton? (Circle all that apply.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian conservatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmentalists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big business</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor unions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: ______________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24. Finally, which of the following groups do you associate with Barack Obama? (Circle all that apply.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian conservatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmentalists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big business</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor unions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: ______________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[SECTION 4: POLITICAL DISCUSSION included survey items on political discussion networks not analyzed by this author; these items are a part of the co-principal investigator’s research.]

SECTION 5: POLITICAL & SOCIAL ISSUES

45. Do you happen to know John McCain’s current position on President Bush’s tax cuts?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McCain supports Bush’s tax cuts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain opposes Bush’s tax cuts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m not sure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

46. How about Hillary Clinton’s current position on the NAFTA? (The North American Free Trade Agreement)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinton supports NAFTA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton opposes NAFTA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m not sure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

47. Do you know Barack Obama’s position on mandating that people carry health insurance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obama supports mandates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama opposes mandates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m not sure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

48. Last year, both the Democratic and Republican parties voted to punish Florida and Michigan for changing the dates of their presidential primaries. This resulted in these states’ primary elections not counting toward the determination of the Democratic nominee. Do you think these states should hold new primary elections to help determine a winner?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, they should hold new elections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, they should not hold new elections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m not sure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
49. Now, we'd like to know your opinions on some important political issues. For each statement, please tell us how strongly you agree/disagree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Big business has too much influence on the Republican Party.</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Labor unions have too much influence on the Democratic Party.</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Christian conservatives have too much influence on the Republican Party.</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Feminists have too much influence on the Democratic Party.</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Over the past year, the nation’s economy as a whole has stayed about the same.</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. My family and I are better off financially than we were a year ago.</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. It's important for the political parties to take turns running the government.</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SECTION 6: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION & MEDIA USE

Please circle answers to the following questions, for each category:

50. Did you do any of the following in the past 6 months, and if so, for whom?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>For a presidential candidate?</th>
<th>For a political party or organization?</th>
<th>For a candidate for another office?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Display a button, bumper sticker or yard sign?</td>
<td>(yes)</td>
<td>(yes)</td>
<td>(yes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Work for a campaign/volunteer your time?</td>
<td>(yes)</td>
<td>(yes)</td>
<td>(yes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Attend a rally?</td>
<td>(yes)</td>
<td>(yes)</td>
<td>(yes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Contribute money?</td>
<td>(yes)</td>
<td>(yes)</td>
<td>(yes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

51. In an average week, how often do you use each of the following? (0-7 days)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>TV News</th>
<th>Internet News</th>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>Talk Radio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Show 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

52. Again, thinking of an average week, what 3 television programs do you watch most regularly?

53. How much attention have you paid to election polls?

(1) A great deal     (2) Some     (3) Little     (4) None

54. Which party is expected to control Congress after the 2008 elections?

(1) The Republicans (2) The Democrats (3) I'm not sure

SECTION 7: OTHER POLITICAL & SOCIAL ISSUES

55. As before, please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest.</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Minorities would be better off in society if they would work harder.</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. The government should do more to help needy Americans, even if it means going deeper into debt.
D. This country would have fewer problems if there were more emphasis on traditional family ties.
E. Too much power is concentrated in the hands of a few large companies.
F. The government should do more to protect morality in American society.
G. Minorities may need special government help to achieve an equal place in America.
H. The health care system should be replaced with a government-run, universal health care system.
I. The war in Iraq was worth the cost.

DEMOGRAPHICS: We have just a few final questions, and these are important as they will help us group your answers for analysis. Again, please remember that all answers are strictly confidential.

56. What is your gender?   (1) Male   (2) Female
57. In what year were you born?  19____
58. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   (1) 8th grade or less   (2) Some high school   (3) High school graduate   (4) Some college
   (5) College graduate   (6) Graduate school   (7) Graduate degree   (8) Technical/trade school
59. What is your religious preference?
   (1) Protestant   (2) Catholic   (3) Jewish   (4) Orthodox
   (5) Muslim   (6) Other   (7) None
60. Do you consider yourself a “born-again” or evangelical Christian?   (1) Yes   (2) No
61. How important is religion in guiding your life?
   (1) Not at all important   (2) Not very important   (3) Somewhat important   (4) Very important
62. Aside from weddings, baptisms and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?
   (1) More than once a week   (2) Once a week   (3) A few times a month   (4) A few times a year   (5) Never
63. What is your current marital status?
   (1) Married   (2) Single   (3) Divorced   (4) Widowed
64. Do you (or any member of your household) belong to a labor union?   (1) Yes   (2) No
65. What is your racial or ethnic background?
   (1) African American/Black   (2) Asian   (3) Hispanic/Latino   (4) White/Caucasian   (5) Other____
66. In what category does your total family income fall before taxes?   (1) under $25,000
   (2) $25-40,000   (3) $40-60,000   (4) $60-80,000   (5) $80-100,000   (6) over $100,000

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR SHARING YOUR OPINIONS!   ID #
THE 2008 FRANKLIN COUNTY POST-CONVENTION SURVEY

Because this portion of the panel study was primarily conducted by the co-principal investigator for this project, below are only listed the survey items that are relevant to the current project.

INSTRUCTIONS: For each item, please circle the answer/option that best captures your views. Then please mail back the questionnaire in the pre-paid envelope provided.

Thank you very much!

4. Who do you plan to vote for in the 2008 presidential election?
   (1) Barack Obama   (2) John McCain   (3) Other_____   (4) I’m Not Sure   (5) I do not plan to vote

7. Generally speaking, which of these party labels best describes you?
   Strong Democrat   Weak Democrat   Independent, but leaning Democrat   Independent   Weak Republican   Strong Republican

32. Now, we would like to get your feelings toward some politicians. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is very unfavorable and 10 is very favorable, how do you feel about each person?
   John McCain ➔ Barack Obama ➔ Ted Strickland ➔ George W. Bush ➔
   Hillary Clinton ➔ Joe Biden ➔ Sarah Palin ➔ Ron Paul ➔

33. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:
   F. Christian conservatives have too much influence on McCain’s campaign.
   G. Labor unions have too much influence on Obama’s campaign.
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F.</td>
<td>(SA)</td>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>(D)</td>
<td>(SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.</td>
<td>(SA)</td>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>(D)</td>
<td>(SD)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DEMOGRAPHICS: Just a few final questions – these will help us group your answers for analysis.

42. What is your gender?  (Male)  (Female)

43. In what year were you born?
THE 2008 FRANKLIN COUNTY POST-GENERAL ELECTION SURVEY

Because this portion of the panel study was primarily conducted by the co-principal investigator for this project, below are only listed the survey items that are relevant to the current project.

INSTRUCTIONS: For each item, please circle the answer/option that best captures your views. Then please mail back the questionnaire in the pre-paid envelope provided. Thank you very much!

1. How interested were you in the 2008 presidential election?
   (1) Not very interested  (2) Somewhat interested  (3) Very interested

2. Who did you vote for in the 2008 presidential election?
   (1) Barack Obama  (2) John McCain  (3) Other_____  (4) I’m Not Sure  (5) I did not vote

3. If you voted, when did you vote? (If you did not vote, please skip to question 4.)
   (1) Election day  (2) early, by absentee ballot  (3) early, in person (such as at Vets’ Memorial)

8. In your decision for president, what was your top consideration? (please circle one)
   (1) Abortion  (4) Iraq War  (7) Ability to bring change
   (2) Health care  (5) National Security  (8) Candidate Character
   (3) Immigration  (6) The economy  (9) Energy Policy
   (10) Experience  (11) Moral values  (12) Other:

9. Generally speaking, which of these party labels best describes you?
   Strong Democrat  Weak Democrat  Independent
   Independent, but Leaning Democrat  Independent, but Leaning Republican
   Weak Republican  Strong Republican

10. Now, thinking of your general political views, which of these labels best describes you?
    (1) Very conservative  (2) Somewhat conservative  (3) Moderate  (4) Somewhat liberal  (5) Very liberal

11. Have you done any of the following in the past 3 months, and if so, for whom?
    (A) Display a button, bumper sticker or yard sign?
    For a presidential candidate?  (yes)  (no)  For a political party or organization?  (yes)  (no)  For a candidate for another office?  (yes)  (no)
    (B) Work for a campaign/volunteer your time?
    For a presidential candidate?  (yes)  (no)  For a political party or organization?  (yes)  (no)  For a candidate for another office?  (yes)  (no)
    (C) Attend a rally?
    For a presidential candidate?  (yes)  (no)  For a political party or organization?  (yes)  (no)  For a candidate for another office?  (yes)  (no)
    (D) Contribute money?
    For a presidential candidate?  (yes)  (no)  For a political party or organization?  (yes)  (no)  For a candidate for another office?  (yes)  (no)

ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS: We have just one more page of questions.

35. Now, we would like to get your feelings toward some politicians and groups. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is very unfavorable and 10 is very favorable, how do you feel about each person?
   John McCain  Barack Obama  Sarah Palin  George W. Bush
   Hillary Clinton  Joe Biden  Republican Party  Democratic Party

36. Off the top of your head, can you name the offices that these public officials hold?
   Sherrod Brown  John Roberts
   Nancy Pelosi  Nicolas Sarkozy
37. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Minorities may need special government help to achieve an equal place in America.</td>
<td>(SA)</td>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>(D)</td>
<td>(SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. The health care system should be replaced with a government-run, universal system.</td>
<td>(SA)</td>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>(D)</td>
<td>(SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Government should promote drilling for oil in the U.S., even in sensitive natural areas.</td>
<td>(SA)</td>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>(D)</td>
<td>(SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. The war in Iraq was worth the cost.</td>
<td>(SA)</td>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>(D)</td>
<td>(SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. The government should not bail out failing banks no matter what the consequences.</td>
<td>(SA)</td>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>(D)</td>
<td>(SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Christian conservatives have too much influence on the Republican Party.</td>
<td>(SA)</td>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>(D)</td>
<td>(SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Labor unions have too much influence on the Democratic Party.</td>
<td>(SA)</td>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>(D)</td>
<td>(SD)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

38. How many days a week (0 to 7) do you watch the following kinds of programs on TV?

- Game shows (like Jeopardy!)
- Morning news (like Today Show)
- Daytime talk shows (like Oprah)
- Soap operas (like Days)
- Early local news (5 or 6pm)
- Late local news (10 or 11pm)

39. Please circle the local news station you watch most often:

- (ABC)
- (NBC)
- (CBS)
- (FOX)

40. How many of the three presidential debates did you watch? (0 to 3)

41. How much attention did you pay to election polls?

- (1) a great deal
- (2) some
- (3) a little
- (4) none

DEMOGRAPHICS: Just a few final questions – these will help us group your answers for analysis.

42. What is your gender? (Male) (Female)

43. In what year were you born? 19

44. Aside from weddings, baptisms, and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?

- (1) More than once a week
- (2) Once a week
- (3) A few times a month
- (4) A few times a year
- (5) Never

45. Are you attending the same church as you were in spring, 2008?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

46. In the past year, what has been your most common work experience?

- (1) I worked full time
- (2) I worked part time
- (3) I didn’t work
- (4) I’m retired
- (5) I’m a homemaker

47. Did you change jobs or happen to lose your job this summer?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

48. What is your current marital status?

- (1) Married
- (2) Single
- (3) Divorced
- (4) Widowed

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR SHARING YOUR OPINIONS! ID #
APPENDIX B

KEY VARIABLE CODING

Below lists the question wording of the survey items used in the key dependent, independent and control variables throughout this project, as obtained through the 2008 Franklin County Post-primary Election Survey.

**KEY DEPENDENT VARIABLES:**

**Affect toward the Republican Party**
“We would also like to get your feelings toward some groups in the news. Again on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is very unfavorable and 10 is very favorable, how do you feel about each of these groups?”
[Republican Party]

**Affect toward Republican Presidential Primary Candidates**
“Now, we would like to get your feelings toward the candidates and some other figures. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is very unfavorable and 10 is very favorable, how do you feel about each person?”
[Mike Huckabee]
[John McCain]

**Partisan Identity**
“For the following questions, please think of the party label that you selected above, and indicates whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about that political party.”

[When someone criticizes this party, it feels like a personal insult.]
[When I talk about this party, I say “we” rather than “they.”]
[I almost always support candidates of this party.]
[I am enthusiastic about the direction this party is headed.]

*For each statement, a response of “agree” was coded a 3, “neutral” a 2 and “disagree” a 1. The value for each statement was added to create a partisan identity index that ranged from four to 12.*
Weakening of Partisanship
“Generally speaking, which of these party labels best describes you (Circle one.)?”
[Strong Democrat; Weak Democrat; Independent, but Leaning Democrat; Independent; Independent, but Leaning Republican; Weak Republican; Strong Republican]

This dichotomous variable was created from this party identification question, which was asked on both the post-primary (March 2008) and post-election (November 2008) waves of the panel study. Any respondents who displayed movement toward a “weaker” self-identification on this scale over this time period, as indicated by a comparison of these two surveys, is considered to have weakened his or her partisanship and was coded a 1; any respondent who strengthened his or her partisanship – or whose partisanship remained the same in both surveys – was coded a 0.

KEY INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Affect toward Christian Conservatives
“We would also like to get your feelings toward some groups in the news. Again on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is very unfavorable and 10 is very favorable, how do you feel about each of these groups?”
[Christian conservatives]

Perceptions of Christian Conservatives’ Influence on the Republican Party
“Now, we’d like to know your opinions on some important political issues. For each statement, please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree.”

[Christian conservatives have too much influence on the Republican Party.]

A dichotomous variable was created in which responses of “agree” or “strongly agree” were coded a 1 and responses of “neutral,” “disagree” or “strongly disagree were coded a 0.

Interaction Term

This interaction term was created by multiplying affect toward Christian conservatives by the dichotomous variable capturing perceptions of Christian conservatives influence on the Republican Party.
CONTROL VARIABLES (POLITICAL CHARACTERISTICS)

Ideology
“Now thinking of your general political views, which of these labels best describes you?”
[Very liberal; somewhat liberal; moderate; somewhat conservative; very conservative]

This variable captured conservatism on this scale by coding responses of “very liberal” as a 1 and “very conservative” as a 5.

“Economy” as Top Electoral Consideration
“In your decision between the candidates, what was your top consideration?

A dichotomous variable was created in which a selection of “the economy” was coded a 1 and the selection of any other issue listed was coded a 0.

“Moral Values” as Top Electoral Consideration
“In your decision between the candidates, what was your top consideration?

A dichotomous variable was created in which a selection of “moral values” or “abortion” was coded a 1 and the selection of any other issue listed was coded a 0.

Affect toward the Democratic Party
“We would also like to get your feelings toward some groups in the news. Again on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is very unfavorable and 10 is very favorable, how do you feel about each of these groups?”

[Democratic Party]

CONTROL VARIABLES (SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS)

Marital Status
“What is your current marital status?” [Married, single, divorced, widowed]

A dichotomous variable was created in which responses of “married” were coded a 1 and any other valid response was coded a 0.

Gender
“What is your gender?” [Male, Female]

A dichotomous variable was created in which responses of “female” were coded a 1 and responses of “male” were coded a 0.
Age
“In what year were you born? 19____”

This variable was calculated by subtracting the year of birth from 2008.

Education
“What is the highest level of education you have completed?” [8th grade or less; some high school; high school graduate; some college; college graduate; graduate school; graduate degree; technical/trade school]

A categorical variable was created from these responses such that responses of “8th grade or less” and “some high school” were coded a 1; “high school graduate” was coded a 2; “some college” and “technical/trade school” were coded a 3; and “college graduate,” “graduate school” and “graduate degree” were coded a 4.

Evangelical Protestant
This dichotomous variable was created through the use of three questionnaire items:
- “What is your religious preference?” [Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Orthodox, Muslim, Other, None]
- “Do you consider yourself a “born-again” or evangelical Christian?” [Yes, No]
- “What is your racial or ethnic background?” [African American/Black, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, White/Caucasian, Other]

Any respondent who selected “Protestant,” “Yes” and “White/Caucasian” to these questions, respectively, was coded a 1; without these three criteria, a respondent was coded as 0.

Race
“What is your racial or ethnic background?” [African American/Black, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, White/Caucasian, Other]

A dichotomous variable was created in which a response of “African American/Black” was coded a 1 and any other valid response was coded a 0.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


