Ideological Social Identity:
How Psychological Attachment to Ideological Groups Shapes Political Attitudes and Behaviors

Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

Spatial conceptualizations of ideology dominate the political science literature. In this dissertation, I challenge the comprehensiveness of such conceptualizations, and the standard self-placement measure associated with them, by analyzing the social identity components of ideological identification. My theoretical motivation for this analysis is Social Identity Theory (SIT), which posits that individuals often view valued social groups as extensions of self-identity, which in turn motivate group-based thought and action. SIT is highly influential within the social science literature, and it has become increasingly influential in political science. Yet scholars have never examined the potential for ideological social identity and what effects it might have on political attitudes and behavior, by itself and in combination with other politically-relevant social identities.

In this dissertation, I use two original surveys and data from the 1984-2008 American National Election Studies (ANES) to study the credibility and empirical value of a social identity approach to ideological identification. My analysis indicates that ideological social identity (ISI) represents a distinct dimension of ideological identification not adequately captured by the standard ideological self-placement measure. In the mass public, and particularly among party elites, feelings of
psychological attachment to an ideological in-group are common today and they have become increasingly common over the past quarter-century. For approximately one-quarter of the mass public, and one-third of party elites, ideological social identity even exceeds the strength of partisan social identity. What is more, ISI is somewhat stronger among conservatives and it clearly becomes stronger in response to electoral competition.

Most importantly, ideological social identity influences a variety of important political attitudes and behaviors. ISI significantly impacts evaluations of political in-groups and out-groups; as ISI becomes stronger, inter-group bias toward ideological groups, partisan groups, and ideological sub-groups within parties also becomes stronger. ISI also causes ideological constraint to increase, because, I argue, individuals with strong ISI are likely to seek out and follow in-group behavioral cues in order to maintain group norms and a stable sense of social identity.

Finally, I find strong evidence of an interaction effect whereby ideological social identity conditions ideological self-placement’s relevance to vote choice in various elections. Across most experimental and actual elections, and each of the 1984-2008 presidential elections, self-placement’s effect on vote choice is significant only when ISI is at least moderate in strength. As ISI becomes stronger, self-placement’s effect on vote choice becomes greater. These findings support my argument that integrating the ISI and self-placement scales yields an exceptionally comprehensive measure of ideological identification more capable than traditional measures of precisely estimating ideology’s behavioral significance.

Together, these analyses attest to the credibility as well as theoretical and empirical value of accounting for psychological attachment to ideological groups when
evaluating the nature and political significance of ideological identification. I discuss the scholarly contributions of this dissertation, and the many ways in which future research might expand and improve upon my analysis.
DEDICATION

To Trudy, my wife and closest friend
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Completing this dissertation is bittersweet, largely because it represents the culmination of my graduate studies at The Ohio State University. I am deeply indebted to the Political Science Department’s faculty, staff, and students, for helping me to grow academically, professionally, and personally during my five years at Ohio State.

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or more profound than this: “I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

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Finally, this dissertation includes data from two original surveys that would not have been possible without generous financial support. First, I thank Time-Sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (TESS) for providing financial support to conduct the survey experiment that I analyze in Chapter 2, using a nationally representative sample of the mass public. In particular, I thank Penny Visser, Jeremy Freese, the anonymous reviewers, the TESS personnel, and the Knowledge Networks personnel, for approving and administering my survey experiment. I am tremendously grateful for their support, and I commend them for their contributions toward expanding the presence of representative survey experiments within the social science literature.

Second, I thank The Ohio State University’s Department of Political Science for awarding me the 2010 Randall Ripley Graduate Research Grant. Receiving this generous grant enabled me to conduct an original survey of 2008 national party convention delegates that I analyze in Chapter 3. For their hard work in raising money for this award and evaluating my application, I thank the organizers, donors, and administrators of the Ripley Grant. I also thank Randall Ripley for providing the inspiration for this award, and for his interest in my research. Last but not least, I thank the many convention delegates who generously gave of their time to participate in my survey.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Research Problem

Ideology is among the most salient concepts in the American politics literature. In fact, a recent study finds that more than half of all articles appearing in the field’s leading academic journal, *The American Political Science Review*, over the past half-century explicitly or implicitly referenced ideology (Knight 2006). Yet ideology’s political relevance is a matter of considerable controversy, and has been for many years. World events and advancements in empirical research have prompted scholars to declare, at various points and for various reasons, “The End of Ideology” (Bell 1960; see also Fukuyama 1991) as a central organizing principle for political thought and behavior. Rather than settle the debate, these declarations have sparked vigorous rejoinders even a half-century later proclaiming instead “The End of the End of Ideology” (Jost 2006). Ideology’s place within political science has been so prominent and yet so contestable that one scholar has aptly described it as “the most elusive concept in the whole of social science” (McLellan 1986, p. 1).

Nowhere has the controversy over ideology been more vibrant than in the political behavior and public opinion fields. Indeed, Kinder (1998, p. 800) calls “The great debate over ideology” “the consuming preoccupation of public opinion studies for more than a
generation…” At the heart of this “great debate” is a struggle to reconcile ideology’s demonstrated predictive power with the American public’s widespread failure to adequately comprehend and apply ideological abstractions.

On the one hand, identification with an ideological group is commonplace within the American public, although less so than identification with a political party (Knight 1999). More importantly, ideology is one of the most consistent and powerful predictors of myriad political attitudes and behaviors, including vote choice (Carmines and Layman 1997; Levitin and Miller 1979; Luttbeg and Gant 1985), candidate evaluations (Zaller 1992), policy preferences (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Feldman 2003; Jacoby 1991; Sears and Citrin 1985; Sears, Lau, Tyler, and Allen 1980), and such aspects of inter-group attitudes as stereotyping, prejudice, and tolerance (Altemeyer 1998; Duckitt, Wagner, du Plessis, and Birum 2002; Federico and Sidanius 2002; Napier and Jost 2008, Sidanius and Pratto 1999; Sidanius, Pratto, and Bobo 1996). Ideology’s effects are so pervasive that they even extend to more general social behaviors and preferences; the content and cleanliness of bedrooms and offices differ significantly between liberals and conservatives (Carney, Jost, Gosling, and Potter 2008), as do their preferences for everything from big cities and foreign travel to SUVs and television viewing (Jost, Nosek, and Gosling 2008).

1 Typically more than 50% of Americans describe themselves as liberals or conservatives, while approximately two-thirds to nine-tenths describe themselves as Democrats or Republicans, depending upon how one classifies partisan “leaners” (see Erikson and Tedin 2007). However, it is important to note that some of these differences may be attributable to measurement strategies. The standard party identification measure takes great pains to classify as many partisan as possible, by including a branching format and restricting filter options. The ideological self-placement measure, on the other hand, typically features prominent filter options and does not follow a branching format, thereby making it easier for respondents to not identify with an ideological group.
Yet on the other hand, it is also the case that Americans exhibit a limited understanding of ideological concepts. Only half of survey respondents can accurately identify the substantive content of liberalism and conservatism (Converse 1964; Fuchs and Klingemann 1990; Knight and Erikson 1997; Luttbeg and Gant 1985); half of respondents correctly identify liberal and conservative positions on various issues; less than a quarter of respondents actively use ideological abstractions when talking about politics (Jacoby 1991; Hagner and Pierce 1982; Lewis-Beck, Jacoby, Norpoth, and Weisberg 2008); finally, and most controversially, scholars find that one-fifth or fewer of respondents have ideologically constrained attitude structures (Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960; Converse 1964; Converse and Markus 1979; Jennings 1992; but see Achen 1975; Krosnick 1991; Nie, Verba, and Petrocik 1976). Kinder (1983, p. 416) aptly summarizes this pattern of findings when he writes: “the political thinking of much of the public cannot be adequately described as ideological in the sense of deductive reasoning from an overarching set of integrated principles about politics and the social world.”

Such results seem quite paradoxical, in combination with one another. After all, how can ideological identification be a widespread motivator of political behavior, in the aggregate, when the American public generally fails to understand ideological concepts? I argue that much of the seeming inconsistency in these results stems from a narrow conceptualization of ideological identification. Traditionally, scholars have conceptualized ideology as a content-based, internally-elaborated belief system from which individuals must derive optimal policy preferences and political behaviors by consulting and applying abstract political principles (Converse 1964; Downs 1957).
Nowhere is this conceptualization more evident than in the political science literature’s standard measurement of ideological identification, self-placement along the liberal-conservative continuum. The self-placement measure requires survey respondents to locate themselves at one of several points on an ideological continuum ranging from the most liberal position to the most conservative position, with a moderate position in the middle. Presumably, those individuals with the most extreme ideological principles, or perhaps more accurately those who most rigidly apply their ideological principles, will place themselves at the continuum’s most extreme positions. In predictive terms, scholars typically assume that individuals will tend to select policy preferences that best fit their level of ideological extremity, and prefer candidates they judge to be most spatially proximate.

Undoubtedly, the spatial conceptualization of ideology is dominant within the political science literature. Knight (2006, p. 623) writes that “a substantial part of the [political science] discipline has converged on an essentially Downsian conception of ideology – an understanding of politics in terms of spatial location on a left-right (or liberal-conservative) dimension.” In fact, she finds that more than a quarter of all articles published in The American Political Science Review over the preceding decade utilized a spatial conceptualization of ideology. Neuman (1986, p. 18) goes so far as to compare the liberal-conservative continuum to monetary units in economics; “Thus, as the comprehension of economics is seemingly impossible without a concept and metric of price, political life is incomprehensible without some sense of its central continuum.” Even Jost (2006, p. 659), one of the most influential proponents for studying the psychological components of ideological identification, says approvingly: “I find it
difficult to think of another survey question in the entire social and behavioral sciences that is as useful and parsimonious as the liberalism-conservatism self-placement item for predicting any outcome that is as important as voting behavior.”

I do not dispute the theoretical and empirical value of studying ideology in spatial terms. In fact, I agree that ideological extremity, conceptualized in such terms, must explain to a considerable degree the attitudinal and behavioral relevance of ideological identification; individuals who locate themselves at the extreme poles of liberalism or conservatism are likely to think and behave with greater ideological consistency than those who locate themselves toward the middle of the liberal/conservative continuum. However, I seriously question whether a conceptualization based solely on spatial location can capture, with sufficient comprehension, the nature of ideological identification and its relevance to political attitudes and behaviors. Is ideological identification reducible to self-reported extremity on an ideological continuum? Does the extremity of self-location explain the personal significance and motivational power of ideological identification? Are individuals capable of independently deducing their optimal political decisions from reference to their perceived location on the liberal-conservative continuum that Converse (1964, p. 215) aptly calls “a rather elegant high-order abstraction… [that is] not [a] typical conceptual [tool] for the ‘man in the street’?”

To the extent that these questions prompt doubtful, or even negative, responses, it is imperative that scholars more robustly conceptualize and evaluate the nature of ideological identification to determine how and why ideology significantly influences mass political behavior despite the American public’s demonstrated lack of ideological sophistication. In this dissertation, I argue that many individuals, including those who do
not have a sophisticated understanding of ideological abstractions, feel a strong sense of psychological attachment to ideological in-groups that is best interpreted within the framework of Social Identity Theory. Indeed, ideological groups constitute salient and meaningful social groups that many, but certainly not all, individuals might incorporate into their self-concept by defining themselves, to some meaningful degree, as liberals or conservatives.

Drawing upon the robust theoretical and empirical insights of Social Identity Theory, I predict that many individuals so highly value their membership in an ideological in-group that they view the group’s identity as an extension of self-identity, and derive feelings of self-esteem and positive distinctiveness from in-group membership. Tajfel (1978, p. 63) defines social identity as “that part of an individual’s self concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to the membership.” In essence, social identity represents a process of depersonalization “whereby people come to perceive themselves more as the interchangeable exemplars of a social category than as unique personalities” (Roccas and Brewer 2002, p. 50). To the extent that individuals social identify with an ideological in-group, then, they should feel personally invested in the successes and failures of the group and act in ways that promote its interests, including supporting policies and candidates associated with the group. Moreover, social identification with an ideological in-group should lead individuals to seek out and follow cues given by other in-group members, in order for those individuals to maintain their status as normative in-group members and avoid the psychological discomfort of destabilizing their self-concept.
To be clear, I do not argue that ideological identification is best understood *solely* within the context of ideological social identity. Rather, I argue that ideological social identity is a critical component of ideological identification not adequately captured by standard conceptualizations and measures heretofore extant in the political science literature. By studying ideological social identity, I hope to provide a more robust conceptualization of what it means to identify with an ideological group, and to illuminate how it is possible, even practical, for individuals lacking in ideological sophistication to act with apparent ideological consistency based on their psychological motivation to uphold in-group norms and maintain a stable social identity. To the latter end, I integrate ideological social identity with the standard ideological self-placement scale and test whether doing so yields a comprehensive measure of ideological identification capable of more precisely capturing the nature of ideology’s impact on political attitudes and behaviors than self-placement alone.

In this chapter, I detail the theoretical tenets of Social Identity Theory, its growing significance within the political science literature, and its applicability to ideological identification. Then, I outline the methods and hypotheses I use in this dissertation to analyze the distinctiveness, prevalence, and political significance of ideological social identity.

**Social Identity Theory: Its Roots, Tenets, and Variants**

Below, I detail the development and theoretical tenets of Social Identity Theory. I begin by discussing its roots in Realistic Group Conflict Theory, and then describe the
development and central assumptions of Social Identity Theory and related theories of social identity including Self-Categorization Theory. Finally, I describe this dissertation’s theoretical approach for studying ideological social identity.

Realistic Group Conflict Theory

The emergence of Social Identity Theory (SIT) in the 1970s signaled a challenge to the then-dominant Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RCT) explanation of inter-group relations developed by Campbell (1965) and popularized by Sherif (1966). RCT attributes inter-group conflict to an individual’s perception that his or her in-group is engaged in a competition for scarce resources with a salient out-group. Famously, Sherif tested RCT by manipulating the perceived goal interdependence between groups of young summer camp attendees. Negative inter-group attitudes, hostility, and discrimination resulted when campers perceived their in-group to be in competition with an out-group, whereas positive inter-group attitudes and behaviors resulted when campers perceived inter-group cooperation as necessary to achieve in-group goals.

Social Identity Theory

Contrary to the postulates of RCT, Henri Tajfel and colleagues demonstrated in a series of laboratory experiments that group competition was not necessary to produce inter-group discrimination. In accordance with what would become known as the minimal groups paradigm, Tajfel and colleagues managed to induce high levels of in-group identification, inter-group differentiation, and in-group bias by categorizing
participants into distinct experimental groups, based on such arbitrary criteria as eye
color, preference for the paintings of Wasily Kandinsky versus Paul Klee, and
classification as dot overestimators versus dot underestimators (Billig and Tajfel 1973;
Tajfel, Flament, Billig, and Bundy 1971; see also Allen and Wilder 1975; Brewer and
Silver 1978; Doise and Sinclair 1973). To the extent that participants internalized their
assigned identities, as they tended to do once the relevant categories were made salient,
strong categorization effects emerged despite the fact that participants had no contact
with in-group or out-group members, no basis for believing that they and other in-group
members shared common interests, and were told that they were being categorized into
groups as a matter of administrative convenience. These findings were surprising even
to Tajfel and colleagues, who developed the minimal groups paradigm with the intention
of establishing a baseline from which social identity could be progressively induced in
response to the introduction of other factors (see Oakes 2002).

It was in the context of these findings that Tajfel and colleagues developed what
became known as Social Identity Theory. At the core of SIT are two assumptions: first,
individuals define themselves in part by the groups to which they belong; second,
individuals strive for positive self-evaluation, or enhanced self-esteem (see also Sedikides
and Strube 1997). Accordingly, SIT explains inter-group discrimination as a means of
achieving positive distinctiveness for oneself through favorable inter-group comparisons.
To quote Hogg and colleagues (Hogg, Abrams, Otten, and Hinkle 2004, p. 256): “People

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2 Oakes (2002) provides a valuable discussion of common misperceptions about the effects of “mere
categorization.” In particular, she stresses the need for participants to internalize their assigned identities in
order for social identity and its attendant attitudes and behaviors to emerge.
strive to promote or protect the prestige and status of their own group relative to other groups because group evaluation is self-evaluation.”

Self-Categorization Theory

Self-Categorization Theory (SCT) elaborates upon the theoretical foundations of Social Identity Theory to explain group processes more generally, and to provide a cognitive explanation for inter-group discrimination (Turner 1985; Oakes, Haslam, and Turner 1994; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, and Wetherell 1987). Perhaps the most important distinction between SIT and SCT is that the latter proposes a cognitive motivation for inter-group differentiation, in contrast to SIT’s exclusive focus upon the psychological need for positive distinctiveness, or self-esteem. Specifically, SCT proposes that individuals subjectively evaluate in-groups and out-groups in comparison to the perceived prototype of a superordinate category to which both groups belong. Thus, inter-group discrimination occurs when individuals perceive a relevant out-group as deviating from the norms and values of the superordinate group also encompassing the individual’s in-group. If the in-group and out-group are not perceived as belonging to a common superordinate group, or if the out-group is perceived to be more relatively prototypical of the superordinate group than the individual’s in-group, social discrimination is unlikely to occur.
Variations of Social Identity Theory

While SIT and SCT are the most visible theories of social identity, other theoretical approaches have been influential in recent years also. Perhaps the most significant theoretical development since SIT and SCT were introduced is Brewer’s (1991, 1993; Brewer and Pickett 1999) Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT). According to ODT, individuals experience countervailing drives for distinctiveness and inclusiveness. When individuals perceive the social groups with which they identify as being overly distinctive, or in other words too narrow and exclusive, they will seek broader, more inclusive social identities. Conversely, when individuals perceive the social groups with which they identify as being overly inclusive, they will seek more distinctive social identities. Thus, instead of being motivated primarily by a need for positive distinctiveness, individuals are motivated primarily by the desire to balance needs for distinctiveness and inclusiveness.

Mullin and Hogg (1998) argue for an alternative interpretation of social identity, whereby individuals adopt social identities in order to reduce subjective uncertainty about the legitimacy of their views. By identifying with social groups espousing similar views, and discriminating in favor of those in-groups, individuals help to legitimize their views and the status of their in-groups.

Social Identity Theory in this Dissertation

It should be evident from the preceding discussion that there exists no single, unified theory of social identity. Proposed motivations for social identity and inter-group
processes are psychological and cognitive in nature, including the need for self-esteem, similarity to a subjectively represented superordinate group prototype, optimal distinctiveness, and the reduction of subjective uncertainty.

It is not the purpose of my dissertation research to empirically demonstrate the superiority of one theoretical approach over all others; rather, its purpose is to empirically demonstrate that the basic principles and predictions associated with Social Identity Theory are applicable to the study of ideological identification, and to demonstrate the consequences of ideological social identity for political attitudes and behaviors. Thus, I echo the approach taken by Weisberg and Hasecke (1999, p. 3), who state: “The term ‘social identity theory’ will be used in this paper to refer to these related theories together, since all emphasize the development of in-group identification to non-conflictual situations.”

Social Identity Theory in the Political Science Literature

Social Identity Theory (SIT) has been particularly influential in psychology, the field within which it originated. In fact, Greene (2002, p. 182) identifies SIT and its variants as “the dominant paradigm for understanding inter-group relations.” SIT’s influence also extends to other social sciences, and in recent years it has become increasingly prominent within the political science literature. In this section, I discuss the challenges of studying SIT in a political context, and detail areas in which SIT has made

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3 In this dissertation, as well, I use the term “social identity theory” to refer to the related social identity theories, as a whole. When referencing a particular variant of social identity theory, such as Self-Categorization Theory, I use the specific name of that theory (e.g. SCT).
important contributions to the study of political science. My overarching goal in this discussion is to shed light on the practicality and scholarly relevance of studying ideological social identity.

Challenges of Studying Social Identity in a Political Context

In an appraisal of SIT’s impact on the political science literature up to that time, Huddy (2001) identifies four major concerns regarding the theory’s applicability to researching political phenomena. Specifically, Huddy calls for more thorough consideration of Social Identity Theory’s capacity to account for the subjective meaning of group identities, the importance of ascribed versus chosen group identities, gradations of identity strength, and variation in the stability of group identities. Huddy argues that each of these issues are particularly germane to the study of political science, because political identities, such as party identification, tend to be subjectively defined, chosen rather than ascribed, varying in strength, and temporally stable. Therefore, while Huddy encourages the expansion of social identity research to cover a wide range of political identities, she also cautions against applying it without thoughtful consideration of the complexities introduced by the political context.

In the context of this dissertation, Huddy’s cautions are well-worth heeding. First, ideological labels are unusually subjective, because, in contrast to identification with a partisan group, no formal organizational structure exists whereby individuals might become official members of ideological groups. Second, while recent studies suggest that ideological identification is closely related to stable personality factors (see
Jost 2006), there can be no doubt that individuals see their membership in ideological groups as elective and, therefore, susceptible to change. Third, individuals clearly do not perceive membership in ideological groups as an all-or-nothing proposition; individuals vary considerably in the reported strength of their ideological identification, with many liberals and conservatives identifying as strong, weak, or leaning toward one side. Fourth, while studies of ideological constraint indicate that individuals often exhibit considerable instability in their views on important policy matters across time (Converse 1964; but see Ansolabehere, Rodden, and Snyder 2008), ideological self-identification does tend to be quite stable (Levitin and Miller 1979; Lodge and Hamill 1986; Pomerantz, Chaiken, and Tordesillas 1995).

Taken together, the four major concerns that Huddy expresses suggest that Social Identity Theory might apply imperfectly, perhaps even poorly, to the study of political ideology. These considerations are not sufficient to abandon research into the plausibility and value of ideological social identity, only to proceed with a realistic sense of caution.

**Partisan Social Identity in Great Britain and Australia**

Social Identity Theory has been used to study many important areas of political science research, including, but certainly not limited to, judicial behavior (Baum 2006), political intolerance (Gibson and Gouws 2000), political participation (Fowler and Kam 2007), and national identity (Huddy and Khatib 2007; Theiss-Morse 2009). More so than any other topic, though, political scientists have used SIT to study party

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4 For conflicting perspectives on SIT’s influence in the political science literature prior to the past decade, see Huddy (2001, 2002) and Oakes (2002).
identification, in the United States and in other nations. As a result, and because party identification is so closely related to ideological identification, below I devote particular attention to studies of partisan social identity.

The first studies of partisan social identity were undertaken in Great Britain and Australia, followed a decade later by several studies of party identification in the United States. The British and Australian studies differ from the American studies not only in terms of geography and the electoral systems in question, but also in terms of their methodological objectives. Whereas the American studies treat Social Identity Theory as a theoretical tool for improving scholarly understanding of the nature of party identification, the British and Australian studies value party identification primarily for its potential to test and refine the predictions of Social Identity Theory in a new context. Indeed, the latter studies indicate that party identification often provides a meaningful source of social identity, and it has many attitudinal and behavioral consequences consistent with the predictions of Social Identity Theory.

Caroline Kelly first studied party identification as a social identity, using a series of original surveys of British partisans. In her first study, Kelly (1988) finds that perceptions of partisan inter-group differentiation are better predicted by respondents’ level of social identification with a partisan in-group than respondents’ level of perceived inter-group conflict or the extent of their contact with partisan out-group members. From these results, Kelly concludes that SIT is a more appropriate theoretical framework for understanding partisan inter-group relations than RCT or the Inter-group Contact Hypothesis (Allport 1954).
Kelly’s subsequent two studies focus upon the attitudinal and perceptual consequences of partisan social identity. Consistent with the predictions of SIT, Kelly (1990) finds that partisan in-group identification is positively related to perceived inter-group differences, particularly for individuals belonging to relatively distinct, minor parties. Kelly (1989) also finds evidence of a positive relationship between in-group identification and perceived intra-group homogeneity, whereby highly identified partisans tend to perceive their in-group as more homogeneous than the out-group on the dimensions most relevant to inter-group comparison.

Also within the context of British politics, Abrams (1994) conducted a study of partisan social identity focusing particularly upon members of the minor Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP). Drawing upon Brewer’s Optimal Distinctiveness Theory, Abrams predicts that members of the SNP will exhibit higher levels of Scottish identity than Scottish members of Britain’s major parties, because SNP identification provides the appropriate balance of distinctiveness and inclusiveness between partisan and national identities. Indeed, Abrams finds evidence that SNP members are more highly identified as Scots than Scottish Labour or Conservative Party members, and they exhibit higher levels of commitment to their party and willingness to discuss politics with friends.

Duck, Hogg, and Terry (1995, 1998) expanded the study of partisan social identity geographically and substantively, by examining the relationship between social identity and perceptions of media influence among Australian partisans. In their first study, these authors find that highly identified partisans perceive partisan out-group members to be more influenced by campaign media content than partisan in-group members. This finding is consistent with SIT’s prediction that individuals rely upon their
social identities to provide a sense of positive distinctiveness. Duck et al. also find that highly identified partisans are more likely to perceive the media as biased against their in-group, a finding that is further explored in Duck et al. (1998). In this second study, Duck et al. use a two-wave panel survey administered before and after the 1996 Australian elections to examine the effects of relative group status on perceptions of media bias and media influence. Results indicate that individuals highly identified with the party losing power in those elections switch from viewing the media as relatively unbiased before the election to relatively biased after the election, while individuals highly identified with the party gaining power exhibit the reverse pattern. Moreover, highly identified members of the losing party engage in positive inter-group differentiation by claiming that out-group members are more influenced by biased media coverage than in-group members or voters in general.

**Partisan Social Identity in the United States**

Studies of partisan social identity in the American context have stressed the similarities between Social Identity Theory and the Reference Group Theory (RGT) upon which the Michigan School’s influential studies of party identification were based. Distinguishing themselves from previous scholars who regard party identification purely as an attitudinal construct, the Michigan scholars reconceptualize party identification as a psychological group attachment bearing directly upon individuals’ political perceptions, evaluations, and behaviors (see Campbell, Gurin, and Miller 1954). Thus, they argue, in accordance with the predictions of RGT, partisans should often compare the relative
outcomes of partisan in-groups and out-groups, in hopes that the former’s successes will bear positively upon the individual’s self-interest. While RGT long ago faded from the social science literature, the Michigan School’s reconceptualization of party identification as a group attachment endures. Most notably, its conceptualization of parties as social groups is implicit in the American National Election Studies (ANES) party identification measure, which asks: “Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican, an independent, or what?”

Recognizing the outdated theoretical underpinnings of party identification research, scholars over the past dozen years have begun to call for the study of party identification as a social identity. Rather than contradicting the Michigan School’s perspective, these more recent scholars have argued that Social Identity Theory represents an updated theoretical restatement of the Michigan School’s original interpretation of party identification. Indeed, Greene (2004, p. 136) describes the Michigan School’s conception of party identification as “a precursor of social identity theory years ahead of its time,” and Weisberg and Hasecke (1999, p. 4) express their expectation that the Michigan School “would have employed social identity theory had they done their work after that approach became dominant in social psychology.”

Studies of partisan social identity indicate that such identities are widespread in the mass public, and they have significant effects on a range of political attitudes and behaviors. Among respondents to a 1998 telephone survey conducted in the state of Ohio, Weisberg and Hasecke (1999) find that 44% of Democrats, 29% of Republicans,

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5 Note the difference between this measure and the ideological self-placement measure, which asks respondents to place themselves on an ideological continuum rather than state the group with which they identify.
and 45% of Independents socially identify with their respective partisan in-group. Green, Palmquist, and Schickler (2005) find nearly identical percentages in the results of a nationally representative 1999 Roper Starch survey: 46% of Democrats score relatively high in Democratic social identity, compared with 26% of Republicans. More generally, the typical respondent in these studies reports a moderate level of partisan social identity (see Greene 1999; Weisberg and Hasecke 1999).

Analyses also indicate that partisan social identity makes significant independent contributions to predicting numerous political attitudes and behaviors. Controlling for relevant covariates (including partisan self-placement, in most cases), partisan social identity is a statistically significant predictor of reported partisan strength, gubernatorial vote choice, split-ticket voting, and presidential approval (Weisberg and Hasecke 1999); partisan in-group and out-group feeling thermometer ratings, partisan inter-group differentiation, political participation, and likelihood of voting (Greene 1999); reported partisan strength, candidate feeling thermometer ratings, party feeling thermometer ratings, and party activism (Greene 2000). In several cases, in fact, the coefficient for partisan social identity is larger than that of partisan self-placement.

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6 The social identity measures used in these studies differ empirically from measures of partisan strength. While respondents scoring high in partisan social identity in the 1998 Ohio study are more likely to have described themselves as strong partisans, 27% of highly-identified Republicans and 40% of highly-identified Democrats describe themselves as weak partisans, while 35% of less-identified Republicans and 43% of less-identified Democrats describe themselves as strong partisans. A similar study by Greene (2000) yields a .48 correlation between the partisan social identity and partisan strength measures.
The Case for Studying Ideological Social Identity

While partisan social identity is the subject of many political science studies appearing over the past two decades, ideological social identity has not been formally proposed or studied in any direct form, to this point. In fact, Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi, and Ethier (1995) are the only scholars to measure ideological social identity directly for any purpose. In the course of assessing which trait properties characterize a range of social identity clusters, the authors expand their initial list of political identities from Study 1 to include ideological or quasi-ideological groups such as liberals, conservatives, socialists, radicals, pacifists, environmentalists, and feminists in Study 2. Since Deaux and colleagues are interested in the structure of identity clusters, rather than an analysis of constituent identities, they do not discuss in detail the performance of the ideological social identity measures.

Implicit Indications of ISI in the Social Science Literature

Despite political scientists’ lack of expressed interest in examining the potential existence and political significance of ideological social identity, many of their comments and findings hint strongly at the plausibility of such an identity. For example, Weisberg and Greene (2003) note that Converse’s research on French politics suggests residents of France and other nations might identify more strongly with left-right ideological categories than with political parties. Also, several scholars have investigated or discussed the potential for social identities associated with intra-party factions, based on differences in party leadership preferences (Greene 2004, Kelly 1990) or policy
preferences (Abrams 1994, p. 364). While such factions need not be explicitly ideological, they certainly lend themselves to ideological interpretations, and, in fact, they are often described in ideological terms.

Green, Palmquist, and Schickler (2005) come quite close to making the case for ideological social identity, by describing the difference between ideological location and ideological self-categorization in much the same way that they argue for distinguishing between partisanship and partisan social identity. They write,

I ideological self-categorization differs in subtle but important ways from ideology itself. It taps not what the respondent thinks about various issues but rather the ideological label he or she finds most suitable. In that sense, it bears a certain similarity to party identification: One need not be a card-carrying conservative to call oneself a conservative. *It is hard to tell from available data whether survey respondents are primarily describing their intellectual orientation or their opinions of the social groups known as liberals and conservatives* (pp. 28-29). [Emphasis added.]

While Green et al. do not propose studying ideology in social identity terms, their discussion of “ideological self-categorization” and liberals and conservatives as “social groups” clearly map onto a social identity interpretation of ideology.

Furthermore, the justification Green et al. use for studying party identification as a social identity is entirely applicable to studying ideology as such. Despite their frequent use of the term “social identity,” theirs is not a study grounded in Social Identity Theory. Instead, Green et al. rely upon a related but less robust theoretical approach, stressing perceptions of association between partisan groups and other social groups with which individuals might identify. The authors explain,

Based on their understanding of which groups support each party and their own affinity for these groups, many citizens come to see themselves as members of partisan groups in much the same way that certain people incorporate religious, regional, or ethnic groups into their self-conceptions. Partisan identities in adults typically persist because group
stereotypes persist, and the location of the self amid various social groups persists (p. 109).

Indeed, the same argument could be made for ideology, particularly given Conover and Feldman’s (1981) finding that individuals evaluate the social groups “liberals” and “conservatives” largely in relation to the social groups with which those ideologies are associated, such as African-Americans and evangelical Christians (see also Levitin and Miller 1979). If the social groups associated with ideological groups are stable, and membership in those groups also tends to be stable, then ideological social identity is as plausible as Green, Palmquist, and Schickler find partisan social identity to be.

Finally, and most notably, Jacoby (1991) comes strikingly close to making the case for studying ideological as a social identity. In the course of discussing previous research by Conover and Feldman (1981) and Levitin and Miller (1979), he explains:

people develop a positive sense of attachment to either liberals or conservatives as a group. Once this identification exists, an individual would adjust his or her attitudes into conformity with perceived group norms. Thus, self-identified liberals would adopt the more liberal stand on each specific issues simply because that is the appropriate one for their group attachment, while conservatives would do likewise.

This explanation perfectly captures the essence and significance of my argument for studying ideological social identity. Clearly, my argument is not entirely original; the foundations for ideological social identity research are present at many places in the political science literature, albeit often quite scattered and in indicative rather than direct formulations. The value of this dissertation is to make the case for ideological social identity more directly and far more extensively than what appears in previous scholarship, and to explicitly position this conceptualization within a rich theoretical literature exceptionally capable of facilitating a robust and coherent research program.
Potential Objections to the Study of Ideological Social Identity

Why has ideological social identity thus far escaped scholarly attention? One possibility is that scholars have not yet seriously considered the potential for ideological identification to function as a source of meaningful social identity. Another possibility is that scholars have considered the potential for ideological social identity, and rejected the idea as improbable or without value. Indeed, reasonable bases for skepticism about ideological social identity exist and it is imperative that I confront them before going forward with this dissertation. Presently, I address three of what I believe are the most likely and potentially problematic objections that skeptics might raise in opposition to the study of ideological social identity.

First, it could be argued that ideological groups are an improbable source of meaningful social identity because ideological concepts are poorly understood and infrequently invoked by Americans. In response to this important criticism, I would note that studies based on the minimal groups paradigm have proven remarkably successful at eliciting social identification and inter-group bias by categorizing experimental participants into arbitrary groups devoid of substantive meaning, as long as those categories are made salient enough for participants to internalize them (see Oakes 2002). The fact that a majority of survey respondents consistently self-categorize as liberals or conservatives when asked to locate themselves on an ideological scale, even when filter and middle response options are made explicitly available, indicates that most Americans perceive themselves as belonging to some degree to one ideological category or another. This awareness of categorical distinctions based on ideological identification should be sufficient to produce ideological social identities and their attitudinal and behavioral
consequences, regardless of how comprehensively many individuals understand ideological concepts.

Second, skeptics might argue that ideological groups are so unstructured and vaguely defined as to render them incapable of providing coherent behavioral cues to potential group identifiers. Once more, the success of the minimal groups paradigm provides a powerful rebuttal to this likely criticism; groups of dot overestimators and underestimators, to the extent that they may be said to exist, certainly lack organizational structure and clear definition, as do people with blue eyes and admirers of Kandisky versus Klee. Yet self-categorization within these groups, prompted by experimental assignment, has proven sufficient to elicit social identification and to produce related attitudinal and behavioral consequences, over repeated studies. Other unstructured and vaguely defined groups existing outside the laboratory are shown to elicit strong social identities and their related behavioral consequences, including bikers (Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel, and Boettcher 2004) and feminists (Huddy 1997). According to SCT, individuals obtain relevant behavioral cues from their subjective representations of in-group prototypes, not necessarily through formal directives from organizational leaders. Therefore, ideological groups’ lack of organizational structure should not prevent them from functioning as meaningful and consequential sources of social identity.

Indeed, ideological group cues are more readily available than potential skeptics of ideological social identity might think. For example, ideological labels are featured prominently in the commentaries of popular media personalities, such as Rush Limbaugh,
Ann Coulter, and Sean Hannity; the names of many political organizations, as well as one of the largest and most high-profile annual political gatherings, the Conservative Political Action Conference; and the name of the largest non-party caucus in the United States Congress, the Progressive Caucus. In short, ideological distinctions, while surely not as prominent as partisan distinctions, should be sufficiently salient to facilitate the perception of ideological group prototypes and, therefore, the accessibility of relevant in-group behavioral cues.

Third, skeptics might argue that ideology is so closely tied to party identification that accounting for ideological social identity is unlikely to provide any empirical leverage beyond what could be gained simply by accounting for partisan social identity. To quote McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (2006, p. 3): “Conservative and liberal have become almost perfect synonyms for Republican and Democrat.” Indeed, the relationship between party identification and ideological self-identification is quite strong and it has grown steadily in recent years (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Levendusky 2009; Levine, Carmines, and Huckfeldt 1997). However, the relationship between party identification and ideological self-identification is far from perfect; most notably, for many years at least one-fifth of self-identified Democrats have identified also as conservatives (Carmines and Berkman 1994). What is more, numerous studies find ideology to be a significant predictor of vote choice and other important aspects of political behavior, independent of party identification and other relevant controls.

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7 In fact, five of Coulter’s seven published books include “liberal,” or some variant thereof, in their titles, while only one mentions Democrats. Also, Hannity’s cable television program for some time regularly featured a derisive segment called “Lib-er-al Translation.”
Regardless of whether ideology can operate independently of party identification, it is a separate question as to whether party identification and ideology ever actually provide countervailing pressures on matters of political importance. Indeed, there are many instances in which partisan and ideological cues conflict, the most notable being disputes over candidate or policy preferences.

In terms of candidate preferences, partisan and ideological cues frequently conflict during party primaries featuring relatively moderate and extreme candidates. In such instances, partisan cues tend to favor the moderate candidate, because he or she is perceived to be more electable come the general election, while ideological cues tend to favor the more ideologically extreme candidate, because he or she is perceived to be a more reliable advocate for the ideology in question and what it represents. By way of illustration, consider the 2008 Republican Party presidential primaries, in which conservative leaders such as Limbaugh and Coulter resisted supporting John McCain in the primaries and the general election, even after McCain effectively had secured his party’s nomination and won the endorsements of nearly all his former leading rivals.\(^8\) Indeed, conservative elites and rank-and-file group members persisted in their vocal opposition to McCain’s candidacy, and the only high-profile conservative remaining in the race, Mike Huckabee, attracted a large percentage of primary votes until his late\(^8\)

\(^8\) In February 2008, Coulter said in an appearance on Fox News: “If you are looking at substance rather than if there is an R or a D after [John McCain’s] name, manifestly, if he’s our candidate, then Hillary [Clinton] is going to be our girl, because she’s more conservative than he is.” See: http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2008/02/01/coulter-wants-clinton-over-mccain. Retrieved April 4, 2011.
withdrawal. Accounting only for the effects of partisan social identity, it would be impossible to understand conservative Republicans’ resistance to the inevitable McCain nomination; by accounting for partisan and ideological social identities, however, it becomes possible to recognize the conflict between competing in-group cues and their effects on conservative Republicans’ attitudes toward McCain.

Partisan and ideological cues also conflict, at times, on important policy matters. Two excellent examples of such conflict are liberal Democrats’ opposition to welfare reform in the mid-1990s and conservative Republicans’ opposition to immigration reform in the mid-2000s. In both instances, the president and party leaders in Congress provided unequivocal support for the proposed reforms, yet they were opposed by large segments of their own party’s ideological base. In the case of welfare reform, Democratic opposition formed mostly along ideological lines, with liberal groups encouraging their followers to oppose the Democratic leadership’s position. Likewise, in the case of immigration reform, Republican opposition primarily came from conservative groups, who likely influenced conservative Republicans to oppose their party leadership. Once more, it would appear that one must account for ideological social identity, in addition to partisan social identity, in order to make sense of intra-party divisions on these and other important issues.

Preview of Chapters

For the reasons outlined above, I argue that studying ideological social identity is not only plausible, but also potentially quite valuable to political scientists’ understanding
of ideology, political behavior, and public opinion. My objective in this dissertation is to provide a comprehensive first step in the study of ideological social identity that will help to advance scholarship in such important research areas. To that end, this dissertation tests a number of hypotheses essential to measuring the empirical distinctiveness, prevalence, and attitudinal and behavioral significance of ideological social identity. In this section, I detail my key hypotheses, as well as the methods of data collection and analysis used to evaluate them, for each of the three empirical chapters. Additionally, I explain the likely contributions of my analysis to political scientists’ understanding of ideology and political behavior.

Chapter 2

In Chapter 2, I conduct the first empirical analysis of ideological social identity and its behavioral significance. Data for this analysis come from an original survey experiment conducted in April 2010 among a nationally representative sample of 1,089 adult participants. The survey experiment was administered via the Internet by Knowledge Networks and funded with financial support from the Time-Sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (TESS) project.

In addition to measuring participants’ ideological and partisan social identity levels, vote choice in previous elections, and demographic characteristics, the survey experiment includes three experimental manipulations following a 3 (election condition) x 2 (social identity question order) x 2 (candidate presentation order), between-groups factorial design. First, to determine whether ideological social identity levels vary
between general election and party primary contexts, I randomly assign each participant
to read about a hypothetical general election scenario, a hypothetical party primary
scenario, or no election scenario (the control condition). Second, to determine whether
ISI and PSI levels vary depending on the order in which participants encounter the two
sets of social identity measures, I randomly assign participants to answer the ISI before
PSI measures or to answer the PSI before ISI measures. Third, to test for order effects on
vote choice, I randomly vary the order in which participants read about the two
candidates in each treatment condition.

My first and foremost objective in Chapter 2 is to estimate ISI levels in the mass
public. I measure ISI levels using an adapted version of Mael and Tetrick’s (1992)
Identification with a Psychological Group (IDPG) scale. As I discuss further in Chapter
2, the IDPG scale is an empirically robust and valid measure of social identity (Brewer
and Silver 2000) used often in the social science literature and in many studies of partisan
social identity (Green et al. 2005; Greene 1999; Weisberg and Hasecke 1999). The full
IDPG scale consists of ten statements with which participants state their level of
agreement on a seven-point scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly
Agree.” Due to cost constraints, I was able to include only three of the IDPG statements

9 The full IDPG scale consists of the following statements:
1. When someone criticizes (this organization), it feels like a personal insult.
2. I’m very interested in what others think about (this organization).
3. When I talk about (this organization), I usually say ‘we’ rather than ‘they.’
4. (This organization’s) successes are my successes.
5. When someone praises (this organization), it feels like a personal compliment.
6. I act like a (name of organization) person to a great extent.
7. If a story in the media criticized (this organization), I would feel embarrassed.
8. I don’t act like a typical (name of organization) person. (reversed)
9. I have a number of qualities typical of (name of organization) people.
10. The limitations associated with (name of organization) people apply to me also.
in Chapter 2’s original survey experiment. To estimate ideological social identity levels, I calculate each participant’s average level of agreement with the included ISI statements. I also included a series of partisan social identity measures that are identical except for the insertion of partisan rather than ideological labels, for the purpose of comparing participants’ ISI and PSI levels.

I begin my analysis in Chapter 2 by evaluating the empirical distinctiveness of the ISI and ideological self-placement scales. Doing so is essential to determine whether the traditional measure of ideological identification, self-placement, adequately captures psychological attachment to an ideological in-group. To the extent that it fails to do so, as I find in Chapter 2, this analysis shows that ISI represents a unique aspect of ideological identification capable of contributing to a more comprehensive measure of that concept.

Next, I analyze ideological social identities in the representative participant sample, to determine whether psychological attachment to ideological in-groups is common in the American public. Also, I compare ISI and PSI levels to determine whether it is ever, or even often, the case that individuals identify more strongly with their ideological, versus partisan, in-group. In both cases, I hypothesize that a substantial proportion of the representative sample will have high levels of ideological social identity, absolutely and relative to partisan social identity. To the extent that ideological social identity is widespread, and even exceeds partisan social identity in many cases, such evidence signals the credibility and value of studying ISI in this dissertation and in future research.
In addition to examining social identity levels in the mass public, I also explore variation in ISI, PSI, and relative social identity (ISI – PSI) levels across ideological groups (liberals, moderates, conservatives), partisan groups (Democrats, Independents, and Republicans), and the dominant ideological group within each partisan group (liberal Democrats, moderate Independents, and conservative Republicans). For reasons detailed in Chapter 2, I hypothesize that ISI is stronger, absolutely and relative to the strength of PSI, among conservatives and conservative Republicans.

I propose and test two additional causes for variation in social identity levels in Chapter 2, both measured by the experimental manipulations described above. First, since the Social Identity Theory literature indicates that social identities become particularly strong when considerations relevant to the identity group in question are most salient, I hypothesize that participants assigned to read about a hypothetical party primary highlighting intra-party ideological divisions will exhibit higher ISI and relative social identity (ISI – PSI) levels than participants assigned to read about a hypothetical general election or assigned to the control condition. Second, to determine whether question order influences social identity levels, I also compare the reported ISI levels of participants assigned to answer ISI before PSI measures, versus those participants assigned to answer PSI before ISI measures.

Having examined aggregate social identity levels, as well as variation in social identity levels across political groups and experimental conditions, my final, and perhaps most critical, empirical analysis concerns the behavioral significance of ideological social identity. Rather than arguing that ISI represents a superior measure of ideological identification that should replace the standard ideological self-placement scale, I argue
that integrating the ISI and self-placement scales produces a uniquely comprehensive measure capable of more precisely identifying the nature of ideology’s impact on political behavior than the standard self-placement scale alone. Specifically, I hypothesize that ideological self-placement has a significant effect on vote choice only insofar as participants feel at least a moderate sense of psychological attachment to their ideological in-group; to the extent that participants feel detached from, and indifferent toward, their ideological in-group, I expect that they will find it easier to defy the in-group by supporting an ideological out-group member. Moreover, I argue that ISI intensifies the effects of self-placement, so that ideological location becomes a more robust predictor of vote choice as ISI becomes stronger.

To test this hypothesis, I analyze the interaction effect of ISI and self-placement on vote choice in a series of hypothetical and actual elections. In terms of the former, I use the interaction term to predict vote choice in the hypothetical general election and hypothetical party primaries presented to treatment group participants at the outset of the survey experiment. In terms of the latter, I use the interaction term to predict reported vote choice in the 2008 presidential and U.S. House elections. In each model, I control on a number of relevant covariates, including party identification, partisan social identity, demographic factors, and, when appropriate, experimental manipulations.

Together, the hypotheses I test in Chapter 2 provide valuable initial insights into the distinctiveness, prevalence, and behavioral significance of ideological social identity. To the extent that these analyses demonstrate ISI to be widespread throughout the mass public, empirically distinct from the standard ideological self-placement scale, and capable of being integrated with self-placement to more comprehensively estimate
ideology’s effect on a critical aspect of political behavior such as vote choice, Chapter 2 should powerfully attest to the scholarly value of studying ideological social identity in this dissertation and in future research.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 aims to validate and extend my analysis from Chapter 2, by testing a series of hypotheses relevant to evaluating social identity levels among party elites, as well as the relationship between ideological and partisan social identity and ISI’s role in shaping attitudes toward political groups. The data for this analysis come from an original online survey of 231 delegates to the 2008 Democratic and Republican Party national conventions, conducted in Summer 2010. Funding for this survey comes from a Randall Ripley Graduate Research Grant from The Ohio State University’s Department of Political Science. In this survey, I again measure ideological and partisan social identity using an adapted subset of Mael and Tetrick’s (1992) IDPG scale. Also, I include an extensive battery of questions measuring perceptions of ideological and partisan in-group composition, and attitudes toward various ideological and partisan in-groups and out-groups. Unlike the TESS survey from Chapter 2, the delegate survey does not include any experimental manipulations.

Using an elite sample for this analysis is valuable for two reasons. First, elites are exceptionally influential political actors, and political scientists have devoted extensive attention to understanding their political views and behaviors for several decades. By studying ideological social identity among party elites, as well as among a representative
sample of the mass public in Chapter 3, I am able to provide a particularly robust analysis of ISI with broader relevance to the study of political science than one focusing on the mass public only.

Second, party elites are especially likely to have strong ideological and partisan social identities. Therefore, studying party elites provides a unique opportunity to determine how individuals with strong psychological attachments to ideological and partisan in-groups view the relationship between their multiple social identities. For instance, it could be that such individuals tend to view both identities as equally central to their overall self-concept, or that they view one identity group as primary (superordinate) and the other identity group as subordinate to it. The SIT literature suggests that the way in which individuals with strong attachment to both in-groups represent the relationship between their identities is likely to shape the way that they view and act toward members of other political groups. In particular, shared membership in a superordinate partisan in-group might decrease inter-group bias toward ideological out-group members by promoting awareness of their commonalities (see Gaertner and Dovidio 2000).

Alternatively, many SIT studies suggest that shared superordinate group membership is a necessary prerequisite for the occurrence of inter-group bias (Turner et al. 1987). Analyzing the relationship between ideological and partisan in-groups therefore promises to shed valuable light upon the nature of political attitudes, particularly in terms of intra-party dynamics, and the role of social identity in shaping inter-group attitudes.

I begin my analysis in Chapter 3 by again testing the empirical distinctiveness of the ideological social identity and ideological self-placement scales. Doing so provides a valuable opportunity to validate my findings from Chapter 2, and to further establish
whether ISI represents a unique aspect of ideological identification not adequately captured by the standard self-placement scale.

Next, I compare ISI, PSI, and relative social identity (ISI – PSI) levels among delegates, in order to gauge the relevance of these social identities to party elites and the extent to which elites differ from the mass public. For reasons that I elaborate upon in Chapter 3, I hypothesize that party elites have higher levels of ideological and partisan social identity than the mass public. As in Chapter 2, I also hypothesize that conservatives are more likely than liberals to have strong ideological social identities, and to identify more strongly with their ideological, over partisan, in-groups.

To this point in Chapter 3, my analysis is intended to validate findings from Chapter 2 and to make fundamental comparisons between social identity levels among party elites and the mass public. The remainder of this chapter’s analysis is devoted to testing a new series of hypotheses pertaining to ideological and partisan social identities and their impact on political attitudes.

First, I examine the relationship between ideological and partisan social identities to determine whether delegates tend to view the former or the latter as their most central in-group identity. Indeed, the SIT literature finds that individuals’ overall social identity typically encompasses multiple constituent identity groups (Stryker and Statham 1985; Tajfel 1978). Moreover, individuals vary in their subjective representations of the relationship between these identity groups; some individuals tend to view members of any in-group as an overall in-group member, and exempt them from biased attitudes or behaviors, while others accept as overall in-group members only those individuals that
belong to all relevant in-groups, and exhibit bias toward out-group members on any dimension (Roccas and Brewer 2002).

Given that partisan groups are more politically salient and organizationally structured than ideological groups, I hypothesize that most delegates view their partisan in-group as primary, or superordinate, with ideological in-groups and out-groups subordinate to it. To the extent that the evidence supports this hypothesis, it would be most appropriate to view ideological groups as sub-groups within parties that are likely to be evaluated on the basis of their congruity with the superordinate partisan in-group’s image and goals. Such evidence would indicate that ideological social identities are particularly relevant to understanding intra-party dynamics, with ideological sub-groups competing to define the image and goals of the overarching partisan in-group. Given the intensity and electoral significance of recent intra-party struggles, most notably the many bitter primary contests between Tea Party and establishment Republicans in 2010, this analysis could be quite helpful in understanding a number of important and complex issues relevant to the study of political behavior, ideology, and political parties.

The second set of original hypotheses that I test in Chapter 3 concerns the nature of attitudes toward political in-groups and out-groups. Political scientists have devoted extensive attention to understanding political polarization in recent years, with a typically implicit focus on the implications of polarization for civility and cooperation in the American electorate. I hypothesize that strong feelings of psychological attachment to ideological and partisan in-groups – herein represented as ideological and partisan social identity, respectively – shape attitudes toward political in-groups and out-groups. Specifically, higher levels of ideological (partisan) in-group attachment should lead to
greater inter-group bias with respect to evaluations of ideological (partisan) in-groups and out-groups, with individuals exhibiting particularly positive attitudes toward their in-group (in-group favoritism) and particularly negative attitudes toward their relevant out-groups (out-group derogation). I also expect inter-group bias to occur between ideological sub-groups within parties. As noted above, though, some SIT studies indicate that such bias is unlikely to occur within a shared superordinate in-group, while other studies indicate that bias should be most extreme in such contexts. Thus, it is not clear whether and how inter-group bias might be different within a superordinate partisan category, but in either case the results should be quite interesting and relevant to understanding the nature of intra-party dynamics.

To test the hypotheses just described, I analyze an extensive series of feeling thermometer ratings of ideological groups, partisan groups, and ideological sub-groups within parties. First, I analyze inter-group attitudes in order to characterize the level and nature of bias toward in-groups and out-groups, in relative terms and with respect to positive and negative evaluations of each. Then, I regress inter-group attitudes on ideological social identity and a battery of relevant covariates to determine ISI’s role in shaping inter-group attitudes. With this analysis, I aim to provide a comprehensive perspective on the nature of inter-group attitudes toward ideological groups, partisan groups, and ideological sub-groups within parties. Also, I aim to test ISI’s role in shaping political attitudes. In combination with the results from Chapter 2, evidence of ISI’s significance in shaping inter-group attitudes would strongly indicate ISI’s relevance as a widespread and unique element of ideological identification with important behavioral and attitudinal consequences.
In Chapter 4, I provide a unique longitudinal analysis estimating potential variation in the prevalence and political significance of ideological social identity over the past quarter-century, using data from the quadrennial 1984-2008 American National Election Studies (ANES). Although the ANES do not include a direct measure of ideological social identity that is identical or even akin to the IDPG measures used in Chapters 2 and 3, they do provide measures capable of approximating ISI and its attitudinal and behavioral significance over the course of recent American political history. The ANES are particularly advantageous for such analysis because they feature large, representative samples of American adults, and they include numerous policy preference measures not available in the data from previous chapters that can be used as control variables, when appropriate, and also to measure ideological constraint.

As noted above, a major limitation of the ANES datasets for this analysis is that they do not include direct measures of ideological social identity, or any other type of social identity for that matter. To create an approximate measure of ideological, as well as partisan, social identity, I take advantage of the ANES’ many feeling thermometers measuring affective attachment to ideological groups, partisan groups, and many other political targets. Specifically, I measure ideological (partisan) social identity by calculating the difference between each respondent’s rating of his or her ideological (partisan) in-group and his or her average rating of eight political figures and groups included in each of the 1984-2008 ANES.\(^\text{10}\) Higher scores represent more favorable in-

\(^{10}\) It is better to use relative thermometer ratings, rather than raw thermometer ratings, because individuals vary in their use of feeling thermometers. In particular, many studies find that individuals tend to exhibit a
group ratings, or stronger social identity, while lower scores represent less favorable in-group ratings, or weaker social identity.

Using this approximate measure, I estimate ideological social identity levels between 1984 and 2008, as well as partisan social identity levels and levels of relative attachment to both in-groups. Given increasing levels of ideological sophistication in the mass public (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Bennett 1995; Hetherington 2001; Layman 2001; Nie et al. 1976; but see Kinder 1983; Luskin 1987) and the growing salience of ideological labels in political debate over recent years, I hypothesize that ideological social identity levels have increased since 1984. Also, I hypothesize that the strength of ideological social identity, relative to partisan social identity, has increased over the same time period. I test both of these hypotheses in Chapter 4, to measure changes in social identity levels over time and to validate Chapter 2’s findings concerning the prevalence of ISI in the mass public.

As in Chapters 2 and 3, I also test for potential variation in social identity levels across political groups, with the expectation that conservatives will have higher levels of absolute and relative ideological social identity. By analyzing these trends over time, I am able to gauge how patterns of ideological group differences may have changed in recent years and to better determine whether my findings from Chapters 2 and 3 are generally applicable or particular to the time period in which I collected data for those chapters (2010).

“positivity bias,” whereby they are inclined to rate all or most groups above 50 on the feeling thermometer (see Green 1988; Knight 1984; Wilcox, Sigelman, and Cook 1989). Similarly, others could tend toward rating groups negatively or at the scale midpoint. Not accounting for these differences can lead to mistaken impressions of how positively or negatively different respondents rate their ideological or partisan in-group, thus warranting appropriate corrections.
Additionally, in Chapter 4 I examine the empirical distinctiveness of the ideological social identity and ideological self-placement scales, to detect changes in their distinctiveness over time and to ensure that my approximate ISI measure taps a unique aspect of ideological identification not adequately captured by self-placement.

Chapter 4 also provides a valuable opportunity to validate my findings from Chapter 2 concerning the interaction effect of ideological social identity and ideological self-placement on vote choice. As in Chapter 2, I expect self-placement to significantly affect vote choice only insofar as respondents have at least a moderate level of ideological social identity. This analysis is particularly valuable because it enables me to control for several relevant policy preferences not included in the TESS and delegate surveys from Chapters 2 and 3, respectively. The ANES consistently measure a number of key policy preferences that are relevant to vote choice and ideological social identity. By controlling for these variables, I am able to provide a more robust test of ISI’s behavioral effects in Chapter 4, although in other ways these tests are limited because the ANES do not include direct social identity measures.

The inclusion of consistent policy preference measures in the 1984-2008 ANES also allows me to test the relationship between ideological social identity and ideological constraint. As noted above, scholars have debated for many years ideology’s plausibility as a meaningful source of political identity and behavioral guidance; while ideology proves to be one of the most powerful predictors of myriad political attitudes and behaviors at the aggregate level, it is also the case that the American public understands political concepts quite poorly and seems unable or unwilling to think in terms of ideological abstractions. I argue that individuals need not have a deep understanding of
ideological concepts in order to act in ideologically consistent ways. Drawing upon the theoretical and empirical insights of Social Identity Theory, I argue that self-categorization as a liberal or conservative should cause many individuals to develop a psychological attachment to their ideological in-group and then seek out and follow behavioral cues from other in-group members in order to maintain their status within the in-group and avoid destabilizing their self-concept.

To the extent that this argument has merit, it is likely that many individuals who are not adept at understanding and applying ideological abstractions nonetheless act and think in an ideologically consistent manner because they are motivated to follow in-group cues relevant to political attitudes and behaviors including, but not limited to, policy preference and vote choice. Indeed, I hypothesize in Chapter 4 a positive relationship between ideological social identity and ideological constraint, such that the ideological consistency of a respondent’s policy preferences increases as his or her psychological attachment to an ideological in-group becomes stronger.

To test this hypothesis, I construct an ideological constraint variable measuring the consistency with which respondents take ideologically consistent positions on five policy positions (government spending and services, healthcare, abortion, defense spending, and government aid to African-Americans). For each election year, I test the relationship between ideological social identity and ideological constraint, controlling on ideological self-placement, party identification, partisan social identity, and several relevant demographic variables. To the extent that this analysis supports my hypothesis, particularly across election years, it would provide compelling evidence of ideological social identity’s relevance to important debates in the political science literature. In
particular, the study of ideological social identity could help to explain why ideology proves to be a consistent and powerful predictor of political attitudes and behavior despite the mass public’s general lack of ideological sophistication. In short, my explanation would be that individuals are not always relying upon their comprehension and application of ideological abstractions to make political decisions, but they are often following cues from other ideological in-group members in order to maintain their sense of social identity.

Chapter 5

I conclude this dissertation in Chapter 5 with a summary of my empirical findings and some reflections on the scholarly contributions of my analysis, followed by a discussion of the prospects for future research on ISI. As a conclusion to the first study of ideological social identity, and the first study examining the interrelationship between multiple politically-based social identities, this discussion is particularly important for evaluating the theoretical and empirical value of ideological social identity research. Also, this discussion should help to provide useful direction for future research that might contribute to further advancements in the political science literature.
CHAPTER 2: IDEOLOGICAL SOCIAL IDENTITY IN THE MASS PUBLIC

Introduction

As the first empirical analysis of ideological social identity (ISI), in this chapter I aim to answer fundamental questions about ISI’s credibility, prevalence, variability, and behavioral significance. Are feelings of psychological attachment to an ideological in-group common in the general public? Do such attachments represent a distinct dimension of ideological identification, apart from what the standard ideological self-placement scale measures? Does the strength of ideological social identity vary across political groups, electoral contexts, and question order manipulations, and if so how? Finally, what role does ISI play in shaping political behavior? Does ISI condition the effect of self-placement on vote choice, and thus provide more comprehensive and precise estimates of ideology’s behavioral significance?

I examine these and many other related questions in the analysis that follows. My overarching objective in doing so is to establish whether ISI is a credible and valuable subject for subsequent theoretical and empirical analysis, for the purposes of this dissertation and for future research. To that end, I test a series of hypotheses critical to evaluating ISI’s empirical distinctiveness, prevalence, variation across political groups and contexts, and its behavioral effects. I begin by explaining my hypotheses and my
theoretical bases for proposing them. Then, I describe the nationally representative survey experiment and empirical measurements that I use to test these hypotheses. Finally, I provide empirical analysis of each hypothesis and discuss the scholarly implications of my findings.

Hypotheses

The first theoretical and empirical concern that I address in this analysis is ideological social identity’s distinctiveness in comparison to traditional measures of ideological identification, namely the ideological self-placement scale. Do ISI measures capture psychological attachment to ideological groups in a way that the self-placement scale cannot? And, if so, to what extent do the two measures categorize individuals differently in terms of their ideological identification? Certainly, the ISI and self-placement scales should correlate fairly highly, since they are both measuring the same general concept: ideological identification. However, if the measures correlate too highly, this would indicate that the ISI scale is not capturing any unique aspects of identification beyond what the self-placement scale captures. I expect the two measures to be highly correlated, yet also distinct enough to conclude that they tap different aspects of ideological identification.

In a similar vein, I expect many individuals to be classified differently on the ISI and self-placement measures. For example, some individuals who place themselves at the “extremely liberal” point on the ideological scale might have a low level of psychological attachment to liberals, as a social group, while others may place
themselves at the “slightly liberal” or “liberal” points on the ideological scale but have a high level of psychological attachment to liberals. If the data support these expectations, I can conclude that ISI represents a distinct aspect of ideological identification.

The next logical objective in this analysis is to determine how commonly individuals have what could be reasonably considered an ideological social identity. I hypothesize that a substantial proportion of the United States population has at least a moderate level of ideological social identity, for many of the reasons described in Chapter 1.

Additionally, I hypothesize that a substantial proportion of the public identifies with an ideological in-group more strongly than a partisan in-group; operationally, this would mean that an individual’s reported ISI level exceeds his or her reported partisan social identity (PSI) level. Given the lack of widespread ideological sophistication in the mass public and the fact that many more individuals identify with partisan than ideological labels, this hypothesis might seem unlikely to find empirical support. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, ideology’s predictive capacity often is significant even when controlling for party identification, and many individuals, including influential political figures, claim primary loyalty to an ideological group (e.g. “I’m a conservative first, and a Republican second”). Measuring the relative strength of ideological and partisan social identities therefore provides a valuable opportunity to evaluate whether, and for whom, ideology might influence political behavior and attitudes above and beyond party attachment.

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11 Approximately two-thirds to nine-tenths of Americans consistently identify with a political party, depending on the classification of partisan leaners, while approximately one-half identity as conservatives or liberals (see Knight 1999).
Another important question about ideological social identity concerns its variability across different political contexts. Is it the case that ISI is stable across all political contexts, or does it become stronger as the salience of ideological and other political considerations increases? Previous research in the psychology literature demonstrates that social identities generally become stronger in contexts where the identity in question is made salient (Mullen, Brown, and Smith 1992). With this in mind, I expect ISI levels to vary across political contexts, becoming stronger when ideological considerations are most salient. Since party primaries represent political contexts in which ideological considerations are exceptionally salient (Conover and Feldman 1989; Devine 2010) – with all candidates sharing the same party affiliation and ideological positions often representing the most pronounced point of difference between the candidates – I hypothesize that ISI strengthens above baseline levels when individuals are primed to think about a party primary contested by candidates representing different ideological positions within their party. Also, I hypothesize that ISI is stronger in party primaries than in general elections, because the salience of partisan considerations would figure to dominate in the latter context. These hypotheses are key to establishing the stability of ISI levels, as well as the real-world conditions under which ISI is most relevant to political behavior and attitudes.

In a similar vein, one might suspect that ISI levels vary between members of different ideological and partisan groups due in large part to the negative connotations often associated with the word “liberal.” Decades of research indicate that Americans have a symbolic preference for the conservative label despite tending to prefer liberal policies (Ellis and Stimson n.d.; Free and Cantril 1967). Moreover, a recent study of
mine demonstrates that Republican elites are significantly more likely to use ideological labels in public speeches than their Democratic counterparts, thus reinforcing Americans’ tendency to view the conservative label positively and the liberal label negatively (Devine 2010). Therefore, the tendency toward positive evaluation of an ideological in-group should be greater among conservatives because such evaluations are encouraged and reinforced by the prevailing political environment. Also, conservatives consistently prove more inclined toward ideological thinking than liberals or moderates; 65% of respondents classified as Ideologues on the Levels of Conceptualization are self-described conservatives (Knight 1985), while conservatives are two to three times more likely than liberals to be qualify as ideologues using Levitin and Miller’s (1979) classification method. Based upon these considerations, I hypothesize that conservatives typically have a stronger sense of ideological social identity than liberals.

Perhaps the most important question to answer with this analysis concerns the empirical value of accounting for ideological identification’s potential social identity dimension. Undoubtedly, ideological self-placement contributes critically to explaining ideology’s behavioral effects; more ideologically extreme individuals should behave differently than more ideologically moderate individuals in many important political contexts. However, the general public’s demonstrated lack of ideological sophistication suggests that self-placement is a limited indicator of the relationship between ideological identification and political decision-making. I argue that the abstractness and complexity of ideological self-placement limits its effect, in the aggregate, so that it is more likely to be significant when individuals also feel a sense of psychological attachment to their ideological in-group. Therefore, I hypothesize that self-placement’s effect on political
behavior, operationalized as vote choice in this analysis, is not significant when ideological social identity is weak. For individuals with an ideological social identity that is at least moderate in strength, I expect the effect of self-placement to be significant and to become stronger as ISI also becomes stronger. In other words, I expect to find an interaction effect whereby ideological social identity intensifies the behavioral significance of ideological self-placement.

To evaluate the hypothesized interaction effect, I test models predicting vote choice in three experimentally-created election scenarios (a general election, a Democratic Party primary, and a Republican Party primary) and two actual electoral contests (the 2008 presidential and U.S. House elections). For each election, I test a logit model estimating the interaction effect of ideological self-placement and ideological social identity, and then calculate the predicted probabilities of vote choice across values of the interaction.

Methodology

To test the hypotheses set forth above, I designed an online survey experiment that was administered by Knowledge Networks and funded with financial support from the Time-Sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (TESS) project.12 The survey experiment contained three manipulations as well as a series of ideological and partisan social identity measures, each of which I describe below.

12 TESS uses funds from a National Science Foundation grant to provide financial support for scholars to conduct online survey experiments among nationally representative participant samples. For more information about TESS, see: http://tess.experimentcentral.org.
The Participant Sample

Fielding my survey experiment through Knowledge Networks (KN) allowed me to test my hypotheses among a nationally representative sample of adult participants. KN uses random-digit dial and address-based sampling methods to recruit a representative group of Americans into its Knowledge Panel. Because KN conducts all of its surveys via the Internet, it provides Internet access and necessary hardware, including computers, to Knowledge Panel participants that otherwise might not be able to participate in Internet surveys.

KN randomly selected 1,666 Knowledge Panel participants to receive an e-mail in April 2010 inviting them to complete my survey experiment. Sixty-five point nine percent of those who were contacted completed the survey experiment, yielding a sample of 1,089 participants. KN included a post-stratification weight in the deliverable data to correct for demographic unrepresentativeness on age, education, race, region, and similar characteristics. I use this weight in the subsequent analyses when appropriate.

In Table 2.1, I evaluate the national representativeness of my weighted participant sample by comparing it to the 2008 American National Election Studies’ (ANES) weighted respondent sample. This dataset represents an optimal basis for such a comparison because the ANES use rigorous sampling methods to ensure representativeness and its surveys are among the most reputable ones in the political science literature. Therefore, a favorable comparison with the ANES sample would reflect positively upon my dataset and the generalizability of conclusions drawn from it.

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13 I also use a post-stratification weight (V080102) for the 2008 ANES, which corrects for demographic unrepresentativeness (e.g. age, education) and oversamples of racial and ethnic groups.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Survey Experiment</th>
<th>2008 ANES</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>46.5</td>
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<td>12.0%</td>
<td>-0.8%</td>
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<td>7.9%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>74.4%</td>
<td>-5.7%</td>
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<td>55.3%</td>
<td>-3.2%</td>
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<td>29.5%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
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<td>15.6%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Degree</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>-2.5%</td>
</tr>
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<td>14.1%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region: Midwest</td>
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<td>21.0%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region: South</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>-7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region: West</td>
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<td>21.4%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 Pres. Vote: Obama</td>
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<td>54.9%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 House Vote: Dem.</td>
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<td>53.5%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
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<td>50.7%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>40.3%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
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<td>26.9%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: National Representativeness of the Survey Experiment Participants

*Note:* I use demographically-based post-stratification weights for both datasets. The ANES weight is V080102.

Demographically, the survey experiment sample closely mirrors the ANES respondent sample; across age, race/ethnicity, gender, education, and region categories, differences between the samples are quite minimal. In fact, these differences exceed five percentage points only for whites, Latinos, and southerners. With respect to demographic
characteristics, then, my survey experiment sample meets conventional standards for national representativeness by closely approximating the 2008 ANES sample.

The survey experiment and ANES samples are also comparable in terms of political characteristics. However, the former consistently overestimates identification with partisan and ideological groups, as well as voting for Democratic candidates in the 2008 presidential and U.S. House elections. Differences between the samples are around five percentage points in several cases, but they never reach as high as six percentage points. These differences in political characteristics are large enough to merit attention, but they fall well short of jeopardizing the representativeness of the survey experiment sample, particularly given the impressive demographic results described above.

Experimental Manipulations

The survey experiment uses a 3 (election condition) x 2 (social identity question order) x 2 (candidate presentation order), between-groups factorial design. The first manipulation was designed to capture variation in ideological social identity levels across electoral contexts in which ideological, partisan, or neither of these considerations were made contextually salient. To this end, participants were randomly assigned to one of three hypothetical election scenarios: a control condition, a general election condition, and a party primary condition. Using KN profile data provided by participants upon entering the Knowledge Panel, and regularly updated afterward, participants in the party primary condition were assigned to a primary within the party to which they reported belonging. In other words, if randomly assigned to the party primary condition,
participants who had previously reported being affiliated with the Republican Party were assigned to a Republican Party primary condition and participants who had previously reported being affiliated with the Democratic Party were assigned to a Democratic Party primary condition. Participants who had previously reported being Independents were randomly assigned to one of the two party primary conditions.\(^{14}\)

Immediately upon beginning the survey experiment, participants in the two treatment conditions were asked to read a brief stimulus page describing a hypothetical primary to determine their party’s nominee for the U.S. Senate (in the party primary condition) or a hypothetical general election to determine their state’s next U.S. Senator (in the general election condition). Control group participants did not read any election stimulus page, instead beginning the survey by responding the social identity measures. The general election stimulus characterized the two candidates in terms of their partisan affiliation, major campaign themes, and the implications of each candidate’s victory for the partisan direction of the country. Similarly, the party primary stimulus characterized the two candidates in terms of their ideological reputations, major campaign themes, and the implications of each candidate’s victory for the ideological direction of their party. Immediately after reading one of these stimuli, treatment group participants were asked to report the candidate for whom they would vote in the election.\(^{15}\)

To account for potential order effects in the election stimuli, participants were randomly assigned the order in which Republican and Democratic candidates (in the

\(^{14}\) I treated participants as Independents only if they had reported being Independents and not leaning toward either party. Partisan “leaners” were treated as members of the party toward which they leaned, as many other scholars also have done (e.g. Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Knight 1984).

\(^{15}\) I provide the full text of the stimulus pages and the vote choice question in Appendix A.
general election condition) or ideologically moderate and orthodox candidates (in the party primary condition) appeared. In other words, approximately half of the general election condition participants read a stimulus page describing a Republican candidate before a Democratic candidate, while approximately half read a stimulus page describing a Democratic candidate before a Republican candidate, and likewise in the party primary condition (the ideologically moderate candidate first and the ideologically orthodox candidate second, or vice versa).

The third experimental manipulation also addressed order effects, this time with respect to the ordering of partisan and ideological social identity measures. Across the entire sample, participants were randomly assigned to respond to PSI measures before ISI measures, or vice versa. I included this manipulation because I was concerned that some participants might allow their responses to the first set of social identity measures to influence their responses to the second set of social identity measures. Indeed, from a methodological standpoint, it is quite useful to analyze order effects within these data, since SIT studies typically do not measure multiple social identities at the same time. If the data indicate that question ordering does, in fact, significantly influence responses, future studies of these and other social identities should take care to randomly vary the order in which social identity measures are presented. If this is not the case, then such efforts are probably unnecessary.
Social Identity Questions

Participants responded to the ideological and partisan social identity measures immediately upon beginning the survey experiment (for control group participants) or immediately after completing the election stimulus page (for treatment group participants). For each of these measures, participants reported the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following items, using a seven-point scale ranging from strong disagreement (one) to strong agreement (seven):

1. When someone praises (this group), it feels to me like a personal compliment.
2. (This group’s) successes are my successes.
3. If a prominent (member of this group) got caught in a scandal, I would not feel embarrassed at all. (reversed)

I inserted partisan groups (Republicans/Democrats/Independents) in the parentheses when measuring partisan social identity, and ideological groups (political conservatives/political liberals/political moderates) when measuring ideological social identity. Participants answered only one set of PSI measures and one set of ISI measures, corresponding to the partisan and ideological affiliations they had reported in the Knowledge Panel profile data.

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16 While devising appropriate partisan group labels was straightforward, devising appropriate ideological group labels was not. Given that the terms liberal and conservative have well-known extra-political connotations that often seem to influence evaluations of those labels (see Ellis and Stimson n.d.; Schiffer 2000), I sought to include an additional word clarifying the measure’s political context. “Ideological conservatives/liberals/moderates” is a plausible alternative, however the term “ideological” has quite negative connotations that are likely to artificially suppress reported ISI. I decided that “political” would be the most appropriate modifier. It provides a clear political context for the ideological labels, and the negative connotations of “political” seem less severe than for “ideological.”
These social identity measures closely approximate items from Mael and Tetrick’s (1992) ten-item Identification with a Psychological Group (IDPG) scale. The IDPG is a valid and reliable measure of social identity (Brewer and Silver 2000) that has been used regularly and with great success in the partisan social identity literature (Green et al. 2005; Greene 1999; Weisberg and Hasecke 1999). The first two measures directly replicate items from Mael and Tetrick’s original IDPG scale, while the third measure modifies an original item reading: “If a story in the media criticized (this organization), I would feel embarrassed.”

Social Identity Scale Reliability

The Cronbach’s Alpha statistics for the three ISI measures are: 0.65 (conservative social identity), 0.47 (liberal social identity), and 0.55 (moderate social identity). Similarly, the Cronbach’s Alpha statistics for the PSI measures are: 0.66 (Republican social identity), 0.50 (Democratic social identity), and 0.39 (Independent social identity). These numbers fall below conventional standards for scale reliability, and, in the case of partisan social identity, they are much lower than in previous studies of PSI.

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17 Cost constraints prevented me from including more social identity measures. However, it should be noted that Green et al. (2005) also use a three-item subset of the original ten-item IDPG scale to study partisan social identity, and Weisberg and Hasecke (1999) use four items. In both cases, these reduced scales yield valid and reliable measures of PSI.

18 I changed this item to focus on embarrassment over a scandal because I believe the original item does not apply well enough to politically-based social identities. Specifically, participants’ support for partisan or ideological groups might make them resistant to media criticisms of those groups. Also, it is likely that many participants who have strong ISI so distrust the media that they would not regard media criticisms as credible and not feel embarrassed by them. Consequently, I anticipated that my modified measure would more accurately capture feelings of social identity by removing confounding factors including attitudes toward media and resistance to criticism of political groups.
Why do the social identity scales perform so poorly? A close inspection of the data reveals that the statement referencing embarrassment over a scandal is principally responsible for the low reliability statistics. When pairing this item with either of the other two items, Cronbach’s Alpha statistics range from only 0.02 to 0.29 for liberal, moderate, Democratic, and Independent social identities; these statistics improve for conservative and Republican social identities, but they range no higher than 0.48.

When excluding the scandal item, however, reliability estimates reach or closely approach conventional standards in each case. Cronbach’s Alpha statistics for only the compliment and success items are: 0.78 (conservative social identity), 0.75 (liberal social identity), 0.78 (moderate social identity), 0.78 (Republican social identity), 0.77 (Democratic social identity), and 0.67 (Independent social identity). Clearly, the social identity scales are not reliable when including the scandal item and they are reliable when excluding it.

There are two likely explanations for the scandal item’s poor performance. First, unlike the other two items, the scandal item was not directly adapted from the Mael and Tetrick IDPG scale, and therefore its reliability was less predictable. Second, and also unlike the other two measures, the scandal item was balanced so that strong agreement with the statement indicated low social identity. Thus, the scandal item might be inappropriate for measuring social identity, participants might have been confused by the reversed implications of agreement, or both of these explanations might apply. In any case, the question becomes whether to use all three items in my ISI and PSI scales, despite the subpar scale reliability that this yields, or to exclude the scandal item and proceed with my analysis using a more limited but much more reliable two-item scale.
comprising the compliment and success statements. In order to test my hypotheses using measures that can be reasonably and confidently interpreted as capturing ideological and partisan social identity, I choose the more reliable two-item scale.\textsuperscript{19}

To create ISI and PSI scores, I coded each response as ranging from one (weakest social identity) to seven (strongest social identity) and then calculated participants’ average scores on the two scales. In the analyses that follow, I use these scores to measure the strength and prevalence of ISI and PSI in the general public and to test for variation across ideological groups and experimental conditions. To test the relative strength of ideological and partisan social identity, I subtract PSI scores from ISI scores so that a higher score indicates stronger relative attachment to an ideological in-group over a partisan in-group. Again, I also use this last measure to test for variation in the relative strength of ISI and PSI across experimental conditions and political groups.

Finally, to test the interaction effect of ideological self-placement and ideological social identity, I construct a variable multiplying values of the ISI scale by values of the self-placement scale and use this as a predictor of vote choice in logistic regression analyses.

\textbf{Results}

The first and most fundamental objective of this analysis is to determine whether the ideological social identity (ISI) scale provides a measure of ideological identification

\textsuperscript{19} I have also run my analyses using the three-item ISI and PSI scales. The results are generally quite similar, although less consistent, as one might expect given the lack of coherence in the three-item scales. The same pattern of results obtains when including or excluding unreliable items from my analysis in Chapter 3.
that is distinct from the traditional ideological self-placement scale. Again, the ISI scale ranges from one (weakest ideological social identity) to seven (strongest ideological social identity), and these scores represent the average level of agreement with items tapping psychological attachment to the participant’s reported ideological in-group. To compare the ISI scale directly with the self-placement scale, first it is necessary to fold the latter so that both scales range from weakest to strongest ideological identification.\textsuperscript{20} The folded self-placement scale’s values, then, are: one (moderate/middle-of-the-road), two (slightly liberal/slightly conservative), three (liberal/conservative), and four (very liberal/very conservative).

**Empirical Distinctiveness of the Ideological Social Identity Scale**

The ISI and self-placement scales show some signs of empirical similarity. Most notably, participants’ mean ISI scores increase as ideological extremity increases. ISI scores are highest among self-described “Very liberal/conservative” participants ($M = 4.82$), somewhat weaker among self-described “Liberal/conservative” participants ($M = 4.60$), and substantially weaker among self-described “Slightly liberal/conservative” participants ($M = 3.88$).\textsuperscript{21} Self-described moderates have a slightly higher ISI than the

\textsuperscript{20} The alternative modification would be to create a single continuous ISI scale ranging from strongest liberal social identity to strongest conservative social identity. However, doing so begs the question of how to place moderates on this scale. The obvious solution would be to place moderate social identity scores in the middle, between the liberal and conservative scores. However, because high moderate social identity is not logically more or less proximate to high conservative social identity, or liberal social identity, using such a scale would be inappropriate for describing the full range of ideological social identity. Also, since liberals only answered the liberal social identity measures, and conservatives only answered the conservative social identity measures, participants would necessarily fall on the same side of each scale, thereby artificially inflating the correlation coefficient.

\textsuperscript{21} When analyzing liberals and conservatives separately, I find the same the same pattern of results.
latter group, though \((M = 3.91)\). It is clear from this analysis that the ISI and self-placement scales are similar enough to assume that they are measuring the same concept: ideological identification. It is also reassuring that Greene (2004) finds the same relationship pattern when testing his partisan social identity measure. Nonetheless, more systematic analysis is necessary to determine whether these scales are empirically distinct enough to capture separate aspects of ideological identification.

Indeed, the correlation between respondents’ scores on the ISI and self-placement scales is modest, at 0.283. The same can be said when examining liberals and conservatives separately. The correlation between liberals’ ISI scores and the liberal half of the self-placement scale (1 = slightly liberal, 2 = liberal, 3 = very liberal) is 0.232, and the correlation between conservatives’ ISI scores and the conservative half of the self-placement scale (1 = slightly conservative, 2 = conservative, 3 = very conservative) is 0.322.

As these findings suggest, it is not the case that only participants on the relative extremes of the ideological spectrum feel a strong sense of psychological attachment to their ideological in-group. If this were the case, the correlation between ISI and self-placement would be much higher. To further explicate the relationship between the two scales, I conduct a crosstabulation of ISI and self-placement values, for liberals and conservatives separately. For ease of interpretation, I recoded ISI scores into three categories. Participants scoring between 1.0 – 3.0 on the ISI scale are coded as having a weak ISI, participants scoring between 3.5 – 5.0 are coded as having a medium ISI, and participants scoring between 5.5 – 7.0 are coded as having a strong ISI. Figure 2.1 presents the percentages of participants with low, medium, and high levels of ISI at each
level of conservative self-placement, and Figure 2.2 presents the percentages of participants with low, medium, and high levels of ISI at each level of liberal self-placement.\footnote{I do not present a similar comparison for moderates, because there is only one moderate position on the self-placement scale (moderate/middle-of-the-road).}
Figures 2.1 and 2.2 clearly show that strong ideological social identities are not exclusive to participants placing themselves at the extreme ends of the ideological scale. A minority of self-described very conservative participants, 42.0%, has strong ISI, while 50.0% have medium ISI and 8.0% have weak ISI. More dramatically, only 8.0% of self-described very liberal participants have strong ISI, while 72.7% have medium ISI and 19.3% have weak ISI. The difference in the percentages of liberals and conservatives with strong ISI is quite striking. While a minority of very conservative participants has
strong ISI, the percentage is far higher than that of very liberal participants with a strong ISI. This finding provides some initial evidence in favor of my hypothesis that ideological social identity is stronger among conservatives than among liberals.

The results described above indicate that the ISI and self-placement scales tap distinct but related dimensions of ideological identification; presumably, the self-placement scale is tapping ideological extremity, whereas the ISI scale is tapping a distinct component of identification, that is the participant’s sense of psychological attachment to an ideological in-group. Although ideological social identity becomes stronger, on average, as ideological extremity increases, the correlation between ISI and self-placement is only moderately strong and the distribution of ideological positions across ISI scores is quite varied. Moreover, it is not only the most ideological participants who have relatively strong ideological social identities; for both conservatives and liberals, a minority of participants placing themselves at the extreme ends of the ideological spectrum score relatively highly on the ISI scale, although this percentage is much higher among conservatives. The majority of liberals with strong ISI are those describing themselves as “liberal,” while half of conservatives with strong ISI describe themselves as “conservative.” This evidence indicates that many individuals with a relatively extreme ideological location are not strongly attached to their ideological group – and vice versa.
Having demonstrated ideological social identity’s distinctiveness as a measure of ideological identification, in comparison to the self-placement scale, my next objective is to use the data from my nationally representative participant sample to estimate the prevalence and strength of ideological social identity in the mass public. Subsequently, I discuss the relative strength of participants’ ideological and partisan social identities. Figure 2.3 graphs the distribution of ideological social identity levels, using kernel density plots. In the analysis that follows, I also discuss relevant means and percentages for ideological and partisan social identities where appropriate.

Kernel density plots are preferable for these figures because they provide a visual representation of a variable’s distribution that is more intuitive and precise than tables or traditional bar graphs and histograms can provide. Kernel density estimation is a non-parametric method of estimating a variable’s probability density function (pdf), and it includes a smoothing parameter (bandwidth) that enhances the depiction of a variable’s distribution in comparison to histograms’ reliance on predetermined bin width. For more information on kernel density estimation, see Silverman (1986).
Figure 2.3: Ideological Social Identity Scores of Survey Experiment Participants (Kernel Density Plot)

The kernel density plot in Figure 2.3 shows that a substantial proportion of the participant sample scores higher than the ideological social identity scale’s neutral point, although the bulk of participants cluster around the middle values. In the aggregate, 41.5% of participants score above the ISI scale’s neutral point, and nearly 29% at least slightly agree with the ISI measures, on average. More concretely, a t-test reveals that the mean ISI score for all participants ($M = 4.21, SD = 1.20$) is significantly higher than
the scale’s neutral point of four, $t(1079) = 5.68, p = 0.000$. These findings indicate that ideological social identity is, in fact, common in the mass public and reasonably strong for many individuals.

*Variation in Ideological Social Identity by Ideological Groups.* Comparing across ideological groups, one-way ANOVAs show that conservatives ($M = 4.44, SD = 1.25$) score significantly higher than moderates on the ISI scale ($M = 3.91, SD = 1.07$), $F(1, 826) = 42.67, p = 0.000$, while conservatives differ from liberals at a marginal level of statistical significance ($M = 4.25, SD = 1.21$), $F(1, 698) = 3.57, p = 0.059$. In fact, a slight majority of conservatives score above the ISI scale’s neutral point, and 40% of conservatives at least slightly agree with the ISI statements, on average. These findings provide additional initial evidence of ISI being particularly strong among conservatives, significantly more so than moderates and, at a marginal level, liberals.

*Relative Strength of Ideological and Partisan Social Identities.* To measure the relative strength of ideological and partisan social identities, I subtract PSI scores from ISI scores to create a measure ranging from strong relative attachment to a partisan in-group over an ideological in-group (on the low end of the scale), to strong relative attachment to an ideological in-group over a partisan in-group (on the high end of the scale). Figure 2.4 plots the distribution of these relative ISI/PSI scores, using kernel density estimation.
It is clear from Figure 2.4 that most participants have ISI and PSI scores that are identical or very similar, since the probability density function is highest in the middle of the scale. Indeed, the plurality of participants, 43.5%, scores identically on the ISI and PSI scales. Again, though, a substantial proportion of participants, 27.4%, score above the scale’s neutral point, indicating that their ideological social identity is stronger than their partisan social identity. This proportion is only slightly lower than the proportion of
participants scoring higher on PSI than on ISI, 29.1%. On average, participants have ISI and PSI scores that are essentially identical (ISI – PSI mean = -0.01). Thus, in the aggregate, there is no clear difference in participants’ levels of attachment to ideological and partisan in-groups. However, ideological in-group attachment is stronger than partisan in-group attachment for more than one-quarter of participants.

*Variation in Relative ISI/PSI Strength by Political Groups.* In addition to depicting aggregate levels of relative ISI/PSI scores, Figure 2.4 also presents this distribution for the most common ideological group within each partisan group (e.g. liberal Democrats, moderate Independents, and conservative Republicans). While these distributions are mostly similar across ideological/partisan groups, it appears from Figure 2.4 that stronger relative ISI scores are somewhat more common on the political Right. Indeed, participants identifying as conservatives and Republicans score significantly higher in terms of ideological social identity ($M = 4.62, SD = 1.20$) than they do in terms of partisan social identity ($M = 4.40, SD = 1.15$), $t(350) = 4.19, p = 0.000$. In contrast, moderate Independents score significantly higher on PSI ($M = 4.10, SD = 1.04$) than on ISI ($M = 3.60, SD = 1.01$), $t(48) = -3.54, p = 0.001$. Also, liberal Democrats have a higher PSI ($M = 4.46, SD = 1.22$) than ISI, but this difference reaches only marginal levels of statistical significance ($M = 4.33, SD = 1.22$) $t(211) = -1.83, p = 0.070$.

Thus, conservative Republicans are unique in having a significantly stronger attachment to their ideological in-group (conservatives) than their partisan in-group (Republicans), on average. Liberal Democrats and moderate Independents, on the other hand, have a stronger psychological attachment to their partisan in-group than to their
ideological in-group, although this difference is only marginally significant for liberal Democrats.

Summary. These findings support my hypotheses concerning the prevalence and strength of ideological social identity in general, and they provide limited support for my hypothesis concerning ISI’s greater strength among conservatives. First, the data indicate that a substantial proportion of the population possesses at least a moderate sense of psychological attachment to an ideological in-group. Second, conservatives have a higher average ISI score than moderates and liberals, but the difference only reaches conventional significance levels when comparing conservatives to moderates. Interestingly, though, conservative Republicans have a stronger sense of psychological attachment to conservatives, as a social group, than to Republicans, as a social group, while liberal Democrats and moderate Independents tend toward stronger partisan attachments.

Variation in Social Identity Levels by Experimental Conditions

The next important question for this analysis concerns ideological social identity’s variation across experimental conditions. Is the reported strength of ideological social identity stable, or does it vary depending on the contextual salience of ideological and partisan considerations? Also, does the reported strength of ideological social identity vary depending upon the order in which participants respond to ideological and partisan social identity measures? These questions are critical for understanding how best to
measure ideological social identity, as well as whether (and when) ISI becomes stronger or weaker in response to different political contexts.

**Description of the Empirical Models.** To test the impact of political contexts and question ordering on reported ISI levels, as well as PSI levels and the relative strength of ISI and PSI, I conduct a series of linear regression analyses predicting ISI scores, PSI scores, and relative ISI/PSI scores (subtracting PSI scores from ISI scores).

The first independent variables in these models represent the experimental manipulations capturing variation in political contexts and question ordering. I include two variables representing manipulations of the political context: assignment to the general election condition (coded one for assignment to this condition and zero for assignment to a party primary or control condition) and assignment to the party primary condition (coded one for assignment to this condition and zero for assignment to a general election or control condition). Assignment to the control condition (no election stimulus) is the excluded category in these analyses. I also include a variable representing the order in which participants answered ISI and PSI measures (coded one for answering ISI measures before PSI measures, and zero for answering PSI measures before ISI measures). Finally, given my earlier finding that ISI and relative ISI/PSI levels vary between members of different ideological and partisan groups, I also include two control variables representing ideological self-placement (ranging from one, very liberal, to seven, very conservative) and party identification (ranging from one, Strong Democrat, to seven, Strong Republican).

**Electoral Context Effects.** Table 2.2 presents results from the three linear regression models predicting ISI, PSI, and relative ISI/PSI levels. These tests clearly
demonstrate that ISI, PSI, and relative ISI/PSI levels are not stable across all political contexts. Participants assigned to the party primary condition report significantly stronger ideological social identities than participants assigned to the excluded election stimulus category, the control condition. This finding is consistent with my hypothesis that ideological social identity becomes stronger in response to the heightened salience of ideological considerations typically occurring in party primary contexts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Ideological Soc. ID</th>
<th>Partisan Soc. ID</th>
<th>ISI - PSI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Election Condition</td>
<td>0.260**</td>
<td>0.103</td>
<td>0.159*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.088)</td>
<td>(0.090)</td>
<td>(0.078)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Primary Condition</td>
<td>0.256**</td>
<td>0.289***</td>
<td>-0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.088)</td>
<td>(0.089)</td>
<td>(0.077)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social ID Question Ordera</td>
<td>0.127+</td>
<td>-0.077</td>
<td>0.200**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.072)</td>
<td>(0.074)</td>
<td>(0.064)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Self-Placement</td>
<td>0.068*</td>
<td>-0.027</td>
<td>0.096***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.030)</td>
<td>(0.031)</td>
<td>(0.027)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
<td>(0.023)</td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.545***</td>
<td>4.151***</td>
<td>-0.604***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.128)</td>
<td>(0.132)</td>
<td>(0.113)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2: Predictors of Social Identity Scores

*Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients, standard errors are in parentheses.
***Significant at .001; **Significant at .01; *Significant at .05; +Significant at .1.

Social identity scores represent participants' average level of agreement with two statements tapping psychological attachment to an ideological in-group (ISI) or partisan in-group (PSI).

A higher value means participants answered ISI measures before PSI measures.
However, it is also the case that assignment to the *general election* condition leads to significant increases in reported ISI levels, and the regression coefficient is virtually identical to that of the party primary condition variable. This finding is inconsistent with my hypothesis, because it indicates that electoral contexts explicitly raising the salience of ideological considerations are not uniquely, or even exceptionally, likely to raise ISI levels. Instead, it would appear that electoral contexts, in general, strengthen feelings of ideological social identity significantly above baseline levels. A plausible explanation would be that inter-party competition, namely a general election, implicitly invokes ideological considerations, and this effect is just as strong as it is when *explicitly* invoking ideological considerations. While additional research is necessary to more firmly establish this interpretation, these initial results suggest just such an effect.

The models predicting PSI and relative ISI/PSI levels also provide valuable insight into the variability of social identity across electoral contexts. In the former, the general election condition variable is not a statistically significant predictor of partisan social identity. The party primary condition variable, however, is a statistically significant predictor of partisan social identity, with participants assigned to the party primary condition reporting significantly stronger PSI. This finding is quite surprising, given that partisan considerations would figure to be exceptionally salient in a general election pitting a nominee of one party against a nominee of the other party. Also, the general election condition stimulus described candidates only in terms of their partisan affiliation, whereas the party primary condition stimulus described candidates in terms of their ideological and partisan affiliations. Apparently, party primaries do not neutralize the effects of partisan social identity, as I had expected because primaries feature
candidates from the same party. Instead, party primaries strengthen feelings of ideological *and* partisan social identity above baseline levels, while general elections strengthen only feelings of ideological – and not partisan – social identity above baseline levels.

The results from the model predicting relative ISI/PSI levels reinforce this conclusion, at least in terms of general elections. The general election condition variable is a significant predictor of the difference between ISI and PSI scores, with participants assigned to the general election condition reporting significantly stronger feelings of ideological social identity, relative to their feelings of partisan social identity, than control condition participants. Assignment to the party primary condition, on the other hand, has no discernible effect on relative feelings of ideological versus partisan social identity, as this variable is not statistically significant.

These findings are inconsistent with my hypothesis that ideological and partisan social identities become strongest in political contexts that explicitly raise the salience of ideological and partisan considerations, respectively, and yet they are actually encouraging for the study of ideological social identity. Rather than having limited applicability to party primaries, and being overwhelmed by partisan social identity during general elections, it appears that feelings of ideological social identity strengthen significantly in response to party primaries *and* general elections. Moreover, general election contexts appear to make feelings of ideological social identity stronger in relation to feelings of partisan social identity, whereas party primaries do not affect the relationship between identities. The exact explanation for these findings is unclear, but it does appear that ideological social identity is strong in more than just party primaries.
Electoral competition seems to strengthen ISI, at least in the short-term, regardless of whether ideological considerations are made explicitly salient (the party primary condition) or perhaps made implicitly salient by inter-party competition (the general election condition).

*Question Order Effects.* Whereas the electoral context manipulation clearly has a substantial effect on social identity levels, the question order manipulation has a rather limited effect. When predicting the strength of ideological social identity, the question order variable reaches only marginal levels of statistical significance, and when predicting the strength of partisan social identity it is not even marginally significant. However, when predicting the relative strength of ideological and partisan social identity, question ordering does have a significant effect. The strength of ideological social identity, relative to partisan social identity, is significantly greater for participants answering the ISI measures before the PSI measures. The methodological implications of these results are mixed; question ordering has some effect on reported social identity levels in terms of the relative strength of ISI and PSI, but it does not have a direct effect on either social identity level. Thus, it appears unnecessary to include this manipulation in future social identity studies, although some researchers may find it prudent to do so.

*A Note on Ideological Self-Placement and Party Identification.* Finally, the control variables included in Table 2.2’s models help to clarify the differences between ideological groups discussed in a previous section of this analysis. Independent of other

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24 Conover and Feldman’s (1989) research perhaps provides some basis for making sense of these findings. They find that candidates are viewed as more ideologically extreme during general elections, because they tend to be seen less as unique individuals and more as representatives of their party and its ideological characteristics. For example, Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, two relatively moderate presidential candidates, were viewed during the 1976 general election as considerably more ideologically extreme than objective evaluations would seem to warrant.
variables included in the models, ideological self-placement significantly predicts ideological social identity, with conservatives scoring higher on the ISI scale. Additionally, the relative strength of ISI, compared to PSI, is significantly greater for conservatives. Ideological self-placement does not have a significant effect on the strength of a participant’s partisan social identity, though. Finally, party identification does not have a significant effect in any of the models. These findings provide some clearer evidence in favor of my hypothesis that conservatives have exceptionally strong ideological social identities, and that they identify with their ideological in-group more strongly than their partisan in-group, even when controlling for the effects of party identification.

Summary. The evidence presented in Table 2.2 provides valuable perspective regarding the stability of ideological social identity, as well as partisan social identity and the relative strength of both identities. As the Social Identity Theory literature would suggest, the strength of ideological social identity is not stable across all contexts. However, contrary to what the same literature would suggest and to what my hypothesis proposed, ISI levels do not only increase significantly for participants exposed to a party primary stimulus heightening the contextual salience of ideological considerations. Instead, ISI levels also increase significantly for participants exposed to a general election stimulus that did not directly invoke ideological considerations. These findings indicate that electoral contexts, in general, might strengthen feelings of psychological attachment to ideological in-groups, and that ISI’s relevance is not limited to party primary contexts. Whether other political events, besides elections, might trigger
increased ISI levels in a similar fashion is a question that future research can, and should, address.

Also, while ideological social identity becomes stronger, at least temporarily, in response to electoral competition, it does not appear to be easily manipulated by question ordering effects. This finding suggests that ISI has considerable stability in some respects. While its strength varies in response to relevant events, such as elections, it does not vary significantly in response to what should be irrelevant factors, such as the order in which participants answer items tapping ideological versus partisan social identity.

*Ideological Social Identity and Vote Choice*

In the remaining analyses, I use logistic regression models to estimate the interaction effect of ideological social identity and ideological self-placement on vote choice in a series of hypothetical and actual elections. In accordance with my previously stated hypotheses, I expect the effects of ideological self-placement to be conditioned by the strength of ideological social identity. Specifically, self-placement should not have a significant effect on vote choice when ISI is weak. Instead, self-placement should have a significant effect on vote choice only for participants with at least a moderate level of ISI, and these effects should become stronger as ISI becomes stronger. In other words, I expect ideological social identity to intensify the behavioral effects of ideological self-placement.
Empirical support for the hypothesized interaction effect would demonstrate that ideological social identity, in addition to constituting a distinct dimension of ideological identification, has real and important consequences for understanding political behavior. Indeed, it would suggest that the standard ideological self-placement measure cannot fully capture ideological identification’s behavioral effects, whereas the more comprehensive measure herein proposed and tested does so with greater conceptual and empirical precision.

Dependent Variables. I test the interaction effect of ideological social identity and ideological self-placement using five vote choice models. The first three models predict vote choice in the general election, Democratic Party primary, and Republican Party primary scenarios included in my survey experiment. The fourth and fifth vote choice models, respectively, predict vote choice in the 2008 presidential and U.S. House elections, using information obtained from Knowledge Panel profile data.

To measure vote choice in the experimental general election and party primaries, I asked participants to identify the candidate for whom they would prefer to vote in the election condition to which they were randomly assigned. In the general election condition, responses are coded one if a participant reported that he or she would vote for the Democratic candidate, zero if a participant reported that he or she would vote for the Republican candidate, and missing otherwise. In the party primary condition, responses are coded one if a participant reported that he or she would vote for the ideologically orthodox candidate (the liberal candidate in the Democratic Party primary condition or the conservative candidate in the Republican Party primary condition), zero if a
participant reported that he or she would vote for the ideologically moderate candidate, and missing otherwise.

In the presidential vote choice model, voting for Barack Obama is coded one, voting for John McCain is coded zero, and voting for another candidate or refusing to respond is coded missing. Finally, in the U.S. House vote choice model, voting for a Democratic candidate is coded one, voting for a Republican candidate is coded zero, and voting for another candidate or refusing to respond is coded missing.

**Independent Variables.** The key independent variables in my vote choice models are the ideological self-placement scale, the ideological social identity scale, and the interaction of these scales. The self-placement variable is coded to range from one, very liberal, to seven, very conservative. The ISI scale, which represents a participant’s average level of agreement with two ideological social identity measures, is coded to range from one (strongly disagree, indicating weak social identity) to seven (strongly agree, indicating strong social identity). The interaction term multiplies values from each of these scales.

Since I am testing whether, and to what extent, ideological social identity conditions the effects of ideological self-placement on vote choice, it might seem theoretically inappropriate to include ISI as an independent variable in these models. However, it is methodologically necessary to include all lower-order interaction terms when testing for interaction effects. Braumoeller (2004, p. 811) addresses the “perils of omitting some or all of the lower-order terms [from a test of an interaction effects].” He explains:

In any interaction of $k$ independent variables, a full set of $\sum_{k-1}^{n} \binom{n}{k}$ coefficients must be estimated to avoid forcing the estimated hyperplane to assume a shape that may not conform to the general tendency of the pointcloud that it is intended to describe. If $\beta_{1x1x3}$ were omitted from the equation, for example, the slope of the line at $X_2 = 0$ would be held constant across all levels of $X_3$, by assumption, and the remaining coefficients most likely biased as a result. The outcome is analogous to omitting the constant term from a simple bivariate regression, thereby forcing the regression line through the origin regardless of the pattern of the data: the consequences for inference may be negligible or severe.

Heeding these cautions, I include ISI and self-placement, as well as the interaction of these two variables, in each of the vote choice models in this chapter and in Chapter 4.
In addition to the key variables just described, I include several relevant control variables in my vote choice models. First, to control for potential order effects, I include a variable in each of the experimental election models representing the order in which candidates were presented in the experimental stimuli. In the general election model, this variable is coded one if the Republican candidate preceded the Democratic candidate and zero if the Democratic candidate preceded the Republican candidate. Likewise, in the Democratic (Republican) Party primary model, this variable is coded one if the liberal (conservative) candidate preceded the moderate candidate and zero if the moderate candidate preceded the liberal (conservative) candidate.

To control for the effects of partisanship on vote choice, I include a standard party identification scale ranging from one (Strong Democrat) to seven (Strong Republican), and a partisan social identity scale constructed in the same manner as the ISI scale. Additionally, I control for several demographic factors likely to influence vote choice, including: age; gender (coded one for females and zero for males); race (coded one for racial/ethnic minorities and zero for whites); and education (coded from one, having an eighth grade education or lower, to eleven, having a professional or doctoral degree).

*Vote Choice in the Experimental Election Models.* Table 2.3 presents the results of the three experimental election vote choice models. Among the control variables, only age, education, and party identification in the general election model and race and education in the Democratic Party primary model are statistically significant. The order of candidates’ presentation in the experimental stimuli does not have a significant effect in any of the models.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>General Election</th>
<th>Dem. Primary</th>
<th>Rep. Primary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Order$_a$</td>
<td>-0.069 (0.389)</td>
<td>-0.610 (0.444)</td>
<td>0.419 (0.514)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.024* (0.012)</td>
<td>0.005 (0.011)</td>
<td>0.009 (0.013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.210** (0.080)</td>
<td>0.203* (0.099)</td>
<td>-0.026 (0.108)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>-0.306 (0.499)</td>
<td>1.084* (0.443)</td>
<td>-0.172 (0.598)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.171 (0.403)</td>
<td>-0.453 (0.445)</td>
<td>-0.279 (0.446)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.762*** (0.133)</td>
<td>-0.442+ (0.256)</td>
<td>-0.078 (0.264)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisan Social Identity</td>
<td>0.216 (0.196)</td>
<td>-0.070 (0.218)</td>
<td>0.180 (0.274)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Self-Placement</td>
<td>0.858 (0.568)</td>
<td>0.452 (0.794)</td>
<td>0.102 (0.690)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Social Identity</td>
<td>1.049+ (0.553)</td>
<td>0.780 (0.731)</td>
<td>-0.142 (0.927)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISI * Self-Placement</td>
<td>-0.309* (0.134)</td>
<td>-0.317+ (0.187)</td>
<td>0.088 (0.173)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-3.287 (2.500)</td>
<td>-0.648 (3.120)</td>
<td>-1.738 (4.215)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| N                             | 318              | 157          | 168          |
| Log-Likelihood                | -134.880         | -80.023      | -92.766      |

Table 2.3: Predictors of Vote Choice in the Experimental Stimulus Elections

Note: Entries are logistic regression coefficients, standard errors are in parentheses.

***Significant at .001; *Significant at .01; *Significant at .05; +Significant at .1.

General election vote choice coding: 1 (Democratic candidate), 0 (Republican candidate), missing (other).
Democratic primary vote choice coding: 1 (liberal candidate), 0 (moderate candidate), missing (other).
Republican primary vote choice coding: 1 (conservative candidate), 0 (moderate candidate), missing (other).

Higher values indicate participants first read about a Democratic candidate in the general election; a liberal candidate in the Democratic Primary; or, a conservative candidate in the Republican primary.
Since it is not appropriate to infer substantive conclusions from the parameter estimates and statistical significance of an interaction term comprising two continuous variables, Figures 2.5 – 2.9 plot the marginal effect of ideological self-placement on vote choice across levels of ideological social identity. The solid line in Figure 2.5 represents the marginal effect of ideological self-placement on vote choice in the experimental general election, as a participant’s ideological social identity becomes stronger. The solid lines in Figures 2.6 and 2.7, respectively, represent the marginal effect of ideological self-placement on vote choice in the experimental Democratic Party or Republican Party primary, as a participant’s ideological social identity becomes stronger. In each figure, the dashed lines represent the upper and lower 95% confidence intervals for the marginal effect. The effect of ideological self-placement on vote choice is statistically significant at any point on the ideological social identity scale that the 95% confidence intervals do not include a value of zero.
Figure 2.5: Predicting Vote Choice in the Experimental General Election

Figure 2.5 shows that the marginal effect of ideological self-placement on vote choice is statistically significant only at or above the midpoint of the ideological social identity scale (4) in the experimental general election. Thus, for participants with a weak ideological social identity, ideological self-placement does not significantly influence vote choice in this election. However, for participants with a moderate to strong ideological social identity, a majority of the survey experiment sample, ideological self-placement does significantly influence vote choice. These initial results are entirely consistent with my hypothesis regarding the interaction effect of ISI and self-placement.
They suggest that ideological self-placement significantly influences vote choice, but only insofar as an individual also feels at least a moderate degree of psychological attachment to his or her ideological in-group.

Figure 2.6 provides additional support for the conclusions drawn from Figure 2.5. When predicting vote choice in the experimental Democratic Party primary, the marginal effect of ideological self-placement becomes statistically significantly at a score of 3.0 on the 1-7 ideological social identity scale, this time below the scale’s midpoint. Again, self-placement has no discernible effect on vote choice for participants with a weak ISI. However, for the majority of participants with at least a moderate, and even a slightly weak, level of ISI, self-placement significantly predicts vote choice in the experimental Democratic Party primary. These findings are particularly interesting for two reasons. First, in combination with Figure 2.5’s results, they suggest that ideological social identity influences vote choice both in general elections and in party primaries. Second, despite my previous finding that liberals feel less psychological attachment to their ideological in-group than conservatives, ideological social identity contributes significantly to explaining vote choice in a Democratic Party primary mostly composed of liberal participants.
Figure 2.6: Predicting Vote Choice in the Experimental Democratic Party Primary

Figure 2.7 provides the first exception to the emerging pattern of results supporting the hypothesized interaction effect. The marginal effect of ideological self-placement on vote choice in the experimental Republican Party primary is not statistically significant at any point on the ideological social identity scale, although it comes quite close to significance near the scale’s midpoint. Thus, in contrast to the first two vote choice models, this model indicates that ideological self-placement’s effect on vote choice does not depend on the strength of ideological social identity.
Since this is the last of the two party primary vote choice models, there is no way to tell from the available data which of the two models’ interaction effects is more generally applicable to party primaries, and whether the interaction effect truly differs between Democratic and Republican Party primary electorates. Also, the available data cannot clarify whether these findings extend from the experimental setting to explain voting behavior in actual party primaries. The available data do, however, allow me to test the interaction effect for actual voting behavior in the 2008 presidential and U.S. House elections. To determine whether, and under what conditions, the interaction effect
significantly influences vote choice in actual elections, and to provide additional tests capable of more clearly establishing a pattern of empirical results, next I turn to the presidential and U.S. House vote choice models.

Vote Choice in the Actual Election Models. Table 2.4 reports the results of two models, the first predicting vote choice in the 2008 presidential election and the second predicting vote choice in the 2008 U.S. House elections. In both models, the dependent variable is coded one for a vote in favor of the Democratic Party candidate (Barack Obama or the Democratic Party’s House candidate), zero for a vote in favor of the Republican Party candidate (John McCain or the Republican Party’s House candidate), and missing otherwise. The independent variables included in these models are identical to those included in the experimental vote choice models, with the exception of the candidate order manipulation variable (which is not relevant to voting in past elections).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Presidential Election</th>
<th>U.S. House Elections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.161*</td>
<td>0.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.070)</td>
<td>(0.102)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>1.282***</td>
<td>1.723***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.373)</td>
<td>(0.501)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.534+</td>
<td>0.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.283)</td>
<td>(0.320)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.817****</td>
<td>-1.227***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.086)</td>
<td>(0.119)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisan Social Identity</td>
<td>-0.039</td>
<td>-0.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.154)</td>
<td>(0.171)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Self-Placement</td>
<td>-0.297</td>
<td>-0.438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.645)</td>
<td>(0.429)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Social Identity</td>
<td>0.235</td>
<td>-0.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.745)</td>
<td>(0.445)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISI * Self-Placement</td>
<td>-0.095</td>
<td>-0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.155)</td>
<td>(0.100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>4.084</td>
<td>7.519***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.742)</td>
<td>(2.322)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 764
Log-Likelihood = -225.149

Table 2.4: Predictors of Vote Choice in the 2008 Presidential and House Elections

Note: Entries are logistic regression coefficients, standard errors are in parentheses.
***Significant at .001; **Significant at .01; *Significant at .05; +Significant at .1.

Presidential vote choice coding: 1 (Barack Obama), 0 (John McCain), missing (other).
House vote choice coding: 1 (Democratic candidate), 0 (Republican candidate), missing (other).

Of the control variables, only party identification and race are statistically significant predictors of vote choice in both models, with Democrats and minorities being
more likely to vote for the Democratic candidates. In the presidential vote choice model, more educated participants are also more likely to have voted for Barack Obama.

To evaluate the significance of the interaction term, again I plot the marginal effect of ideological self-placement on vote choice across levels of ideological social identity. Figure 2.8 reports the marginal effect in the presidential vote choice model, and Figure 2.9 reports the marginal effect in the House vote choice model.

Figure 2.8: Predicting Vote Choice in the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election
In Figure 2.8, the marginal effect of ideological self-placement on vote choice in the 2008 presidential election is statistically significant starting at a score of 2.5 on the 1-7 ISI scale. Thus, ideological self-placement has no discernible effect on vote choice for participants with very weak ideological social identities, while it does have a significant effect for participants with moderately weak to very strong ideological social identities.

Figure 2.9 yields similar results to those of Figure 2.8. The marginal effect of ideological self-placement on vote choice in the 2008 U.S. House elections once more becomes statistically significant at about 2.5 on the ISI scale. However, unlike Figure
2.8, the confidence intervals widen to include zero at the ISI scale's maximum value. Thus, ideological self-placement is shown to have a significant effect on House vote choice for participants with moderately weak to strong, but not the strongest, ideological social identities.

The presidential and House vote choice models featured in Figures 2.8 and 2.9 largely confirm the pattern of results from the experimental general election and Democratic Party primary vote choice models. In actual elections, as well as in those two experimental elections, the effect of ideological self-placement on vote choice is conditioned by the strength of ideological social identity. Self-placement does not have a significant effect on vote choice for participants with weak ideological social identities, according to each of these four models. Its effects are significant beginning with participants having a moderately weak ISI in the actual election models, and beginning with participants having an ISI that is moderate in strength in the experimental election models. From there, the marginal effect remains significant as ISI becomes stronger in all four models, excepting only the maximum ISI value in the House vote choice model.

Of course, it is important to note that the marginal effect of self-placement is not significant at any point on the ISI scale for the experimental Republican Party primary model. Given the consistency of the other four models, however, it seems much likelier that the null findings from this model are aberrant or somehow particular to that election. Indeed, the consistency of Figures 2.5, 2.6, 2.8, and 2.9 is rather impressive. Together, these results provide strong evidence for the hypothesized effects of ideological social identity. They indicate that ideological self-placement does not significantly influence vote choice when ideological social identity is weak. Instead, this effect is only
significant when participants have an ideological social identity that is at least moderate, 
or even somewhat weak, in strength. Thus, ideological social identity not only 
constitutes a distinct dimension of ideological identification, but it also contributes 
significantly to explaining ideology’s effect on voting behavior.

*Predicted Probabilities of Vote Choice by ISI and Self-Placement.* Finally, to 
provide a more precise demonstration of the ideological interaction effect, Table 2.5 
reports the predicted probabilities of voting for the Democratic candidate in the 2008 
presidential election and the experimental general election. For both models, I predict the 
probability of voting for a given candidate at each value on the ideological self-placement 
scale, and at the neutral and maximum values on the ISI scale.26 When calculating 
predicted probabilities, I manipulate only the values of the self-placement scale, the ISI 
scale, and the interaction term, holding all other variables at their mean or modal values.

---

26 I begin with the middle value of the ISI scale because the marginal effect of ideological self-placement on vote choice is significant at this point in both models.
### Table 2.5: Predicted Probability of Democratic Vote Choice in Experimental and Actual General Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideological Self-Placement</th>
<th>2008 Presidential Election</th>
<th>Experimental General Election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Liberal</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
<td>67.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>82.9%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly Liberal</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly Conservative</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Conservative</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>95.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>83.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>58.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-10.9%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-15.3%</td>
<td>-12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-13.8%</td>
<td>-21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-9.8%</td>
<td>-16.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.5’s results strongly support my hypothesis concerning the interaction effect of ideological social identity and ideological self-placement on vote choice. In both models, the predicted probability of voting for a Democratic candidate changes in the expected direction when moving from a moderate to very strong ISI and holding self-placement constant. The predicted probability of voting for the Democratic candidate...
increases as ISI becomes stronger for very liberal, liberal, and slightly liberal participants, excepting only slightly liberal participants in the 2008 presidential election. Likewise, the predicted probability of voting for the Democratic candidate decreases as ISI becomes stronger for very conservative, conservative, and slightly conservative participants, in both elections.

The pattern of change in predicted probabilities varies substantially between the two vote choice models, with conservatives showing greater change across ISI values in the presidential election and liberals showing slightly greater change across ISI values in the experimental general election. Also, the change in predicted probabilities for liberals is far greater in the experimental general election than in the presidential election, while it differs minimally for conservatives between the two elections. Despite these differences, the essential conclusion from both models is the same: ideological self-placement’s effect on vote choice becomes stronger as ideological social identity also becomes stronger. This finding reinforces and amplifies the general conclusion I draw from Figures 2.5 – 2.9, by demonstrating that the interaction effect is consistent and usually robust across values of ideological self-placement. Indeed, ideological self-placement is a valuable but limited predictor of vote choice, with its effects depending significantly upon the strength of an individual’s ideological social identity.

Discussion

For many years, political scientists have debated the political significance of ideological identification. At the same time, they have overwhelmingly agreed upon
conceptualizing ideological identification in terms of a self-placement scale that does not appear capable of adequately capturing social identity. The preceding analyses demonstrate that the nature of ideological identification and its behavioral effects are more complex than previously understood. Indeed, traditional measurements of ideological identification apparently fail to capture a distinct dimension herein represented as ideological social identity.

The evidence from my nationally representative survey experiment indicates that a large proportion of participants feel at least a moderate sense of psychological attachment to their ideological in-group, in many cases exceeding psychological attachment to their partisan in-group. Moreover, ideological social identity has real and important consequences for political behavior. In four of five vote choice models, the effect of ideological self-placement proves not to be significant when ideological social identity is weak, and significant when social identity is at least moderate in strength. Additionally, as ideological social identity becomes stronger, so, too, does the relationship between ideological self-placement and vote choice. This apparent interaction effect reveals much about the conditions under which a more traditional spatial conceptualization of ideological identification is appropriate for predicting political behavior, and when it is not. Specifically, the significance and strength of ideological self-placement depends upon the extent to which an individual feels psychologically attached to his or her ideological in-group.

The scholarly contributions of these findings rest largely upon the quality of the participant sample and the ideological social identity measures. Table 2.1 demonstrates that the weighted participant sample compares very favorably to the 2008 American
National Election Study’s weighted sample, in terms of its demographic and political representativeness. Additionally, the two measures that I use to construct the ISI scale reach conventional levels of reliability, and they are directly based upon measures used throughout the social identity literature that have proven valid and reliable in political and non-political contexts.

The ISI scale also proves to be a measure of ideological identification that is empirically, as well as conceptually, distinct from ideological self-placement. The correlation between the ISI scale and the folded self-placement scale is 0.283 for the entire sample and not very different when analyzing conservatives and liberals separately. Also, as shown in Figures 2.1 and 2.2, only a minority of participants placing themselves at the extremes of the ideological scale has a relatively strong ideological social identity. Far from mimicking ideological self-placement, then, the ISI scale seems to capture a distinct component of ideological identification most reasonably characterized in terms of social identity.

To the extent that my data provide generalizable information about ideological social identity, and the ISI scale measures an aspect of ideological identification that is distinct from self-placement, it is fair to conclude that feelings of psychological attachment to an ideological in-group are common and often strong in the American public. In fact, the average ISI score for the aggregated sample significantly exceeds the scale’s neutral point. Moreover, nearly one-third of participants report an ideological social identity that is stronger than their partisan social identity, and conservative Republicans have a significantly stronger attachment to their ideological in-group than their partisan in-group. Throughout this analysis, ideological social identity proves to be
at least somewhat stronger among conservatives. Conservatives’ mean ISI score is higher than those of liberals or moderates, although the difference from the former is only marginally significant. More impressively, regression analysis shows that ISI scores increase significantly as conservatism also increases, even when controlling on party identification (which is not significant).

The strength of ideological social identity also varies across electoral contexts, albeit not always in accordance with my hypotheses and previous findings in the Social Identity Theory literature. As hypothesized, participants assigned to read about a hypothetical party primary raising the contextual salience of ideological considerations report an ISI significantly stronger than that of participants assigned to a control condition in which they did not read any stimulus materials. However, participants assigned to read about a hypothetical general election raising the contextual salience of partisan considerations also report an ISI significantly stronger than that of control group participants, and equal to that of participants assigned to the party primary condition. Additionally, only participants assigned to the party primary condition score significantly higher than control group participants on the partisan social identity scale, while participants assigned to the general election condition have a significantly higher ISI score, relative to their PSI score.

These findings suggest that partisan social identity is exceptionally strong in party primaries, while general elections stimulate feelings of ideological and partisan social identity and increase relative attachment to ideological, over partisan, in-groups. Thus, the political relevance of ISI is not limited to contexts explicitly raising the salience of ideological considerations; in fact, general elections appear to implicitly raise the salience
of ideological considerations and strengthen feelings of ideological social identity, at least in the short-term.

Finally, and most importantly, I test the interaction effect of ideological social identity and ideological self-placement on vote choice in several elections. As hypothesized, self-placement does not have a significant effect on vote choice for participants with weak feelings of psychological attachment to their ideological in-group. In four of five models, a participant’s location on the ideological spectrum significantly predicts vote choice only when ideological social identity is at least moderate in strength, while in one model it is not significant at any point. In the 2008 presidential and U.S. House elections, self-placement becomes significant halfway between the ISI scale’s lowest and middle values (at about 2.5 on the seven-point scale). When predicting vote choice in my survey experiment’s hypothetical general election, self-placement becomes significant at the midpoint of the ISI scale. Finally, when predicting vote choice in the hypothetical Democratic Party primary, self-placement becomes significant at slightly below the midpoint of the ISI scale. What is more, Table 2.5 demonstrates that the predicted probability of voting in an ideologically consistent direction (e.g. liberals voting for the Democratic candidate and conservatives voting for the Republican candidate) increases with nearly perfect consistency as ISI becomes stronger and self-placement is held constant.

These findings contribute valuably to the scholarly literature on ideology and political behavior. First, they help to clarify why individuals find ideology meaningful, and how they use it to make political decisions. My analysis indicates that many individuals feel at least a moderately strong sense of psychological attachment to their
ideological in-group, as judged by adaptations of standard measures from the Social Identity Theory literature. According to SIT, then, individuals should often derive self-esteem and a sense of identity from their membership in an ideological in-group, both of which will motivate them to evaluate that group positively and attend to in-group behavioral cues. These theoretical assumptions receive greater empirical scrutiny in the two chapters that follow.

Second, this analysis helps to identify the conceptual and empirical limitations of the ideological self-placement scale that is standard throughout the political science literature. Indeed, the self-placement scale does not adequately capture the social identity components of ideological identification. Also, the significance and strength of self-placement’s effect on vote choice appears from this analysis to depend upon the strength of ideological social identity. To be clear, though, I do not argue that ideological self-placement measures are obsolete, invalid, or even inferior to an ISI measurement strategy. In fact, the self-placement scale is more practical and economical than constructing an ISI scale based on multiple survey items targeted toward specific ideological in-groups. Nevertheless, a more comprehensive ideology measure, integrating the self-placement and ISI scales, has clear conceptual and empirical benefits to which scholars should avail themselves by including ISI scales in questionnaires and empirical models whenever it is practical to do so.

Finally, this analysis adds to Social Identity Theory’s expanding influence within the political science literature, by demonstrating its applicability to a new and particularly complex identity: ideological identification. To further examine ideological social identity and its political significance, in the next chapter I analyze the results of an
original survey conducted among delegates to the 2008 national party conventions. The purposes of this analysis are threefold; first, to evaluate potential differences in ISI’s strength when comparing party elites to participants from a nationally representative sample; second, to evaluate the relative primacy of ideological and partisan in-groups among individuals particularly likely to have strong psychological attachment to both groups; third, to evaluate ideology’s role in shaping attitudes toward various partisan and ideological in-groups and out-groups. Such analysis will add valuable validity and complexity to this chapter’s findings, while at the same time expanding my study of ideological social identity to include other important political actors (party elites) and outcome variables (inter-group attitudes).
CHAPTER 3: IDEOLOGICAL SOCIAL IDENTITY AMONG PARTY ELITES

Introduction

Evidence from Chapter 2 indicates that ideological social identity (ISI) is common within the general public, and it provides a distinct measure of ideological identification with important behavioral consequences. Is the same true for party elites, though? Might ideological social identity be much stronger among elites than within the general public, or is the difference minimal? Is partisan social identity so strong among elites that it far exceeds ideological social identity, in contrast to the relative parity evident in the mass public? Answering these questions is critical to comprehensively evaluating ISI’s political significance, since elite actors have exceptional influence over political events and they seem especially likely to be motivated by ideological, as well as partisan, social identity.

In this chapter, I compare ISI levels among party elites to those of the general public. Also, I pursue two new lines of empirical inquiry that shed valuable light on the nature and attitudinal effects of ideological social identity. First, since party elites are particularly likely to have strong ideological and partisan social identities, I capitalize upon the unique characteristics of the elite sample to study the relative primacy of ideological and partisan social identities. Second, having established ISI’s behavioral significance in the previous chapter, I test ISI’s attitudinal significance using a diverse
array of inter-group attitude measures. Data for these analyses come from an original survey of 2008 national party convention delegates that included direct measures of ideological social identity, partisan social identity, perceptions of partisan and ideological group composition, and attitudes toward a variety of partisan and ideological in-groups and out-groups.

This analysis expands the study of ideological social identity in a number of valuable ways. First, it represents an unprecedented attempt to measure ideological, as well as partisan, social identity among party elites, and to identify points of similarity and difference between mass public and elite social identity levels. Second, as noted above, the exceptional characteristics of an elite sample make this chapter’s data ideal for testing the relative primacy of ideological and partisan social identities among individuals particularly likely to identify strongly with both types of in-groups. Third, a unique series of measures included in the elite survey allows me to comprehensively evaluate inter-group attitudes across a wide range of political groups and then test the role of ideological social identity in shaping these inter-group attitudes. Altogether, these efforts greatly expand the scope of ISI research beyond that presented in the previous chapter, while also providing valuable insights into such important concerns of the political science literature as mass public/elite political differences and the nature of political polarization.
Hypotheses

My first and most fundamental objective in this chapter is to compare ideological social identity levels among party elites and the general public, the latter of which I document extensively in Chapter 2. Such analysis is valuable because party elites represent perhaps the most politically active and influential segment of the American electorate, and there is good reason to believe ISI might be especially relevant to elites’ political views and behaviors. To the extent that elites have exceptionally high levels of ideological and partisan social identity, as I hypothesize below, my analysis also provides valuable opportunities to evaluate the relative primacy of ideological and partisan social identities and their role in shaping attitudes toward political groups.

For decades, political scientists have used data on national party convention delegates to study the political views and behaviors of party elites, in general, often for the purpose of making comparisons with the general public (Herrera 1993, 1999; Jennings 1992; McClosky, Hoffman, and O’Hara 1960; Miller and Jennings 1986; Roback 1975, 1980). Of course, elected officials would be preferable subjects for many such studies, but privacy and related electoral concerns typically discourage them from participating in surveys. Delegates, on the other hand, are much more accessible; large and reputable delegate surveys have been conducted for many years, including the Center for Political Studies’ Convention Delegate Study and the CBS/New York Times Delegate Poll. To obtain measures of ideological and partisan social identity capable of testing the hypotheses described below, however, it was necessary that I conduct an original survey rather than use an existing survey.
In comparison to the mass public, I expect ideological social identity levels to be higher among party elites. Indeed, much of the literature on convention delegates focuses upon perceptions that they are more ideologically extreme and ideologically motivated than members of the mass public, or even other party leaders and activists (Carsey, Green, Herrera, and Layman 2006; Dodson 1990; Layman, Carsey, Green, Herrera, and Cooperman 2010; Soule and Clarke 1970; Soule and McGrath 1975; Stone and Abramowitz 1983). More to the point, delegates exhibit higher levels of ideological comprehension than members of the mass public (Herrera 1992; Jennings 1992; Kritzer 1978). Since party elites more readily comprehend ideological concepts and find them to be particularly relevant motivators for political behavior, it is reasonable to expect that they would have particularly strong ideological in-group attachments. Thus, I hypothesize that ideological social identity is stronger among party elites, herein represented by convention delegates, than among members of the general public.

As party activists invited to participate in a national nominating convention, and in many cases high-ranking officials within local or state party organizations, it stands to reason that convention delegates should have exceptionally high levels of psychological attachment to their partisan in-group as well. Thus, I hypothesize that delegates will exhibit higher levels of partisan social identity than members of the general public. Also, for reasons developed more fully when discussing the relative primacy of ISI and PSI below, I expect participants to exhibit higher levels of attachment to their partisan in-group than to their ideological in-group, on average.

Consistent with the previous chapter, I also hypothesize that ideological social identity levels are higher among conservative than liberal delegates. Even among the
highest-ranking party elites, presidential nominees, Republicans are significantly more likely than Democrats to invoke ideological distinctions and describe themselves in ideological terms (Devine 2010). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that conservative elites will exhibit greater psychological attachment to their ideological in-group than liberal elites, much like I find in the previous chapter that conservatives have somewhat higher ISI levels than liberals within the general public. However, it is also possible that liberal elites, including Democratic presidential nominees, rarely invoke the liberal label because they believe it does not resonate with voters, and not because they lack psychological attachment to liberals as an in-group. If it is the case that party elites of all political persuasions consider ideology a comprehensible and salient motivator for political action, then ideological social identity might in fact prove equally strong among conservative and liberal delegates.

As a further check on the validity of Chapter 2’s findings, and to identify potential differences between mass public and elite samples, I test once more the ideological social identity scale’s distinctiveness as a measure of ideological identification. As in the previous chapter, I expect to find that the ISI scale is related to, but empirically distinguishable from, the traditional ideological self-placement scale. In particular, I expect to find that the two scales vary in similar patterns but that they are only modestly correlated. This, of course, is what I find in the previous chapter’s representative sample, and I have no reason to expect that the ISI scale would perform differently among party elites.

The preceding hypotheses are intended to capture important similarities and differences regarding ideological and partisan social identities among party elites and the
mass public, building upon the empirical results from Chapter 2. In contrast, the remaining hypotheses address new areas of empirical inquiry critical to understanding ideological social identity and made possible by the exceptional characteristics of the party elite sample.

The first such hypothesis investigates the relative primacy of partisan and ideological social identities. Put differently, this hypothesis aims to identify the social identity that is most integral to an individual’s self-concept, and to determine whether the other social identity in-group is subordinate to, or independent from, that central in-group. Previous studies in the Social Identity Theory literature demonstrate that individuals typically have multiple social identity in-groups. Also, these studies find that individuals vary in their subjective representations of the relationship between identity groups; some individuals view their overall identity in-group exclusively, as including only individuals belonging to each relevant identity in-group, while others view their overall identity in-group inclusively, as including all individuals belonging to any relevant identity in-group (Roccas and Brewer 2002). With respect to the relationship between partisan and ideological social identities, I hypothesize that most individuals view the partisan in-group as their dominant, or superordinate, political in-group; by extension, ideological groups constitute sub-groups competing for influence within the partisan superordinate category.

Although I find in Chapter 2 that many individuals have stronger psychological attachment to ideological than partisan in-groups, partisan in-groups are more likely to constitute superordinate in-group identities because they are exceptionally salient and comprehensible in comparison to ideological groups. Indeed, partisan groups constitute
offical organizations with which many millions of individuals officially register, and partisan labels appear regularly on ballots and in media coverage; ideological groups, on the other hand, are unofficial groups with no registered membership, and ideological labels never appear on ballots nor are they nearly as visible in media coverage as partisan labels.\textsuperscript{27} Also, partisan groups are more readily comprehensible than ideological groups; whereas approximately 90\% of survey respondents regularly identify themselves as Democrats or Republicans to some degree, approximately 50\% regularly identify themselves as liberals or conservatives (Knight 1999).\textsuperscript{28} Thus, while many individuals have partisan and ideological social identities, it is more probable that individuals, including convention delegates, will view ideological groups as subordinate to, or nested within, dominant partisan superordinate groups, rather than viewing partisan groups as nested within dominant ideological superordinate groups.\textsuperscript{29}

The significance of these findings would be to show that partisan in-groups typically are most essential to the self-concept of individuals with strong partisan and

\textsuperscript{27} Kinder and Kalmoe (2009, p. 18) make much the same argument:

Political parties are actual entities, with organizations, resources, buildings, employees, and, so-to-speak, large megaphones. Campaigns are organized by Democrats and Republicans; conventions are held by Democrats and Republicans; and candidates run for office as Democrats and Republicans…. There is not stable two-ideology system. Even if so inclined, a voter cannot cast a ballot for the Liberal Party or the Conservative Party (except from occasional precincts in upstate New York). Liberalism and conservatism belong almost entirely to the realm of ideas.

\textsuperscript{28} As noted in Footnote 1, though, such differences might be attributable, at least in part, to discrepant measurement strategies.

\textsuperscript{29} There is some reason to expect that party elites would identify more strongly with ideological, over partisan, in-groups. Recent examples of party elites resisting party leadership in primaries (e.g. Tea Party versus establishment candidates in the 2010 Republican Party primaries) and in major policy debates (e.g. liberal and conservative opposition to Congress’ extension of the Bush tax cuts in 2010 and Congress’ approval of the 2011 federal budget) abound, and they might suggest that party elites are exceptionally likely to prioritize ideological over partisan loyalties. However, I maintain that partisan loyalties are most salient, particularly for convention delegates who are, in most cases, pledged to support a party nominee and often hold prominent positions within party organizations.
ideological social identities. Also, these individuals should tend to view an ideological in-group as a sub-group within the party, competing for influence with other ideological sub-groups, and they should evaluate all sub-groups within a party-centered context. To the extent that the evidence supports these expectations, my analysis will have important implications for understanding the nature of intra-party dynamics, with particular relevance to party primaries and the ideological divisions that they so often produce (or reveal) within parties.

The other new area of inquiry that I explore concerns inter-group attitudes and their relationship to ideological and partisan social identities. Attitudes toward, and evaluations of, partisan and ideological groups play an important role in the political science literature. Indeed, these evaluations are central to such influential theoretical innovations as Brady and Sniderman’s (1985) “likeability heuristic” and Conover and Feldman’s (1981) use of symbolic group associations to explain ideological self-identification. If it is the case that evaluations of ideological and partisan groups influence political views and identification, as scholarship on this subject strongly suggests, then it is also important to understand what role social identity might play in shaping inter-group attitudes.

Also, analyzing delegates’ attitudes toward ideological and partisan in-groups and out-groups affords valuable opportunities to better understand the nature of contemporary political competition. Indeed, partisan and ideological polarization is a topic of considerable controversy within the political science literature and mainstream political debate. Typically, discussions of political polarization focus upon ideological extremity and ideological sorting in the mass public, as well as among political elites (Abramowitz
2010; Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Baldassarri and Bearman 2007; Fiorina and Abrams 2008; McCarty et al. 2006). Implicitly, though, these studies also address the notion that polarization might threaten, or have already condemned, civility and cooperation in the American political system.\(^{30}\) In this way, polarization could also be analyzed in terms of attitudes toward competing political groups, with evidence of substantial affective distance between in-groups and out-groups indicating a high degree of polarization in the political system. In fact, there is some precedent for studying political polarization in terms of group evaluations (Fiorina 2006; Hetherington 2001).

I perform such an analysis using party elites’ ratings of diverse ideological and partisan in-groups and out-groups to evaluate the prevalence and nature of inter-group bias in American politics. Next, and most importantly for the purposes of this dissertation, I test the empirical relationship between social identity and relevant inter-group evaluations. To the extent that inter-group attitudes provide valuable information about the nature of contemporary political competition, and social identity is shown to shape these attitudes, my analysis will further demonstrate the political significance of ideological and partisan social identity.

The SIT literature provides ample theoretical and empirical motivation for positing a causal link between social identity and inter-group bias, which Hewstone, Rubin, and Willis (2002, p. 576) define as “the systematic tendency to evaluate one’s own membership group (the in-group) or its members more favorably than a nonmembership group (the out-group) or its members.” Tajfel and Turner (1979) cite in-

\(^{30}\) A good example comes from Abramowitz and Saunders, who title a 2005 article: “Why Can’t We All Just Get Along: The Reality of a Polarized America.”
group identification as one of the three primary factors influencing inter-group bias, and experimental studies demonstrate a positive relationship between in-group identification and inter-group bias (e.g. Branscombe and Wann 1994; Perreault and Bourhis 1999). The apparent motivation for engaging in inter-group bias is the same that SIT scholars traditionally have used to explain the adoption of social identities: self-esteem (but see Brewer 1991; Mullin and Hogg 2008). Specifically, inter-group bias is thought to enhance self-esteem by improving, in absolute or relative terms, the image or circumstances of the in-group constituting an extension of an individual’s self-concept.

SIT and relevant empirical evidence therefore suggest that individuals with strong ideological and partisan social identities will engage in inter-group bias with respect to ideological and partisan groups, as well as ideological (partisan) sub-groups within a partisan (ideological) superordinate category. The precise nature of that inter-group bias is not immediately clear, however; most evidence from the SIT literature indicates that individuals exhibit inter-group bias only in a relative sense, by favoring their in-group above all out-groups but neither favoring nor punishing out-group members (Brewer 1979; Halevy, Bornstein, and Sagiv 2008; Hewstone et al. 2002; Kosterman and Feshbach 1989; Struch and Schwartz 1989). However, Brewer (1999) has argued that out-group derogation, or negative evaluation and treatment of an out-group, is likely to occur when individuals view in-groups and out-groups as competing for political power. If Brewer’s argument is correct, then political groups are likely to engage in out-group derogation as they compete in elections, policy battles, and the ideological struggles within parties that often attend party primaries.
Drawing upon the preceding theoretical and empirical considerations, I test three hypotheses relevant to studying inter-group bias between partisan groups, ideological groups, and ideological (partisan) sub-groups within parties (ideologies): first, I hypothesize a positive relationship between social identity and relative evaluations of in-groups and out-groups (inter-group bias); second, I hypothesize a positive relationship between social identity and in-group evaluations (in-group favoritism); third, I hypothesize a negative relationship between social identity and out-group evaluations (out-group derogation). Empirical support for these hypotheses would indicate that social identity plays a key role in shaping whatever polarization might exist among party elites today, and perhaps in the mass public as well. Accordingly, the relevance of ideological, as well as partisan, social identity would be shown to extend beyond political behavior, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, and into the realm of political attitudes as well.

There is one important note that I must make before proceeding further. My objective in this analysis is to draw general conclusions about party elites and how they might differ from the mass public. However, my sample includes delegates from one election year: 2008. Since party nominees play the greatest role in determining who serves as delegates, the characteristics of party delegates will vary somewhat across election years. With respect to the present analysis, John McCain and Barack Obama were unusual nominees in many respects, and their particular characteristics are likely to be reflected in the characteristics, and even ideological social identities, of the 2008 party delegates. As a result, it is possible that many of the conclusions I draw below are more

31 For example, delegates’ ideological extremity seems to vary in response to the ideological characteristics of their party’s nominee; Democratic delegates were exceptionally liberal in 1972, when George McGovern was the Democratic Party nominee, and Republican delegates were exceptionally conservative in 1980, when Ronald Reagan was the Republican Party nominee (Carmines and Stimson 1989).
particular to 2008 party delegates than to party delegates in general. With this note of caution in mind, I consider my empirical findings generalizable to 2008 convention delegates, although I hope and in most cases expect that they apply to delegates in general also. Evaluating the generalizability of these results requires similar analysis of delegates in future election years, and I hope that such studies will take place.

Methodology

To test the hypotheses described above, I analyze data collected in Summer 2010 from an original Internet survey of 231 delegates to the 2008 Democratic and Republican national party conventions. Of these delegates, 125 identify as Democrats, 104 identify as Republicans, and 2 identify as Independents.

Sampling Procedures

Since there is no official, publicly accessible database for identifying and contacting national party convention delegates, sampling potential participants proved to be one of the most significant challenges for my research. To solicit an appropriate number of delegates, I narrowed my search to seven states: California, Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, and Ohio. In addition to their geographic diversity, I selected these states because in each case I was able to locate an official list of both parties’ delegates via state party websites and archived newspaper articles. After

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32 Funding for this survey came from The Ohio State University Department of Political Science’s Randall Ripley Graduate Research Grant.
identifying the delegates from each state, I obtained mailing addresses from Federal Elections Commission (www.fec.gov) records or, if necessary, online address services (e.g. www.411.com). In total, I sent approximately 1,200 delegates\(^33\) invitations to participate in my survey.\(^34\)

To each delegate for whom I obtained a reasonably updated and reliable mailing address, I mailed an initial invitation letter followed two weeks later by a reminder letter. Each letter described my research project, an incentive for considering participation,\(^35\) and directions for taking the survey. Delegates interested in participating were directed to a website hosted by SurveyGizmo.\(^36\) Upon entering the survey website, delegates read a brief welcome page, which was followed by a detailed description of a gift card lottery and then a general description of the survey’s objectives. At that point, willing delegates provided consent to participate in the survey. After several pages of questions, a final

\(^33\) I personally mailed invitation letters to 1,100 delegates. In one state, however, a state party official that I contacted in hopes of obtaining an official delegate list offered to e-mail delegates an electronic version of the invitation letter on my behalf. Given that there were over 100 delegates from that state and party in 2008, and some delegates surely had changed e-mail addresses or did not have one in the first place, I estimate 100 delegates were designated for contact via e-mail in addition to the 1,100 designated for mailed invitations.

\(^34\) Estimating the response rate for my survey is extremely difficult, if not impossible. First, as mentioned in the previous footnote, I do not know precisely how many delegates were targeted for e-mail contact by the aforementioned state party official or how many of those e-mails actually reached the intended delegates. Second, in many cases the delegates that I attempted to contact via mail were unreachable, either because the mailing address I used was incorrect or the delegate had moved. In these cases, the invitation returned to me without having reached the intended recipient. Finally, in at least one case I was informed that the intended recipient had since deceased. Given all of these factors, it is impossible to accurately calculate how many delegates responded out of all those who were successfully contacted with an invitation. With 231 responses and approximately 1,200 delegates designated for contact, though, 20% would be a very conservative estimate of the response rate.

\(^35\) Each recipient had the opportunity to enter his or her name in a lottery to win one of seven gift cards. Gift cards ranged in value from $25 to $100, and they could be used at a major retailer of the winner’s choosing. I randomly selected lottery winners and distributed gift cards in Fall 2010.

\(^36\) I am grateful to The Ohio State University’s Department of Political Science for allowing me access to its SurveyGizmo account to conduct this survey.
page thanked delegates for their participation and more fully informed them of the survey’s research purposes.

Representativeness of the Delegate Sample

To infer general conclusions about 2008 national party convention delegates from the analysis that follows, first I must demonstrate the representativeness of my sample in comparison to the demographic and political characteristics of 2008 delegates as a whole and within the seven states from which I sampled. In Table 3.1 I compare my delegate sample to that of the reputable CBS/New York Times Delegate Poll from 2008.\(^{37}\) Across a wide range of demographic and political characteristics, most percentage differences between samples are quite minimal. In fact, the Republican delegates from my sample differ from delegates in the CBS/New York Times poll by no more than 8% in any category, and by more than 4% in only three of fourteen categories. Democratic delegates differ between samples somewhat more dramatically; in particular, my Democratic delegate sample is substantially more liberal and white than the CBS/New York Times sample.\(^{38}\) For all of the remaining categories, though, percentage differences do not reach 10%.


\(^{38}\) The CBS/New York Times Delegate Poll uses a five-point ideological self-placement scale, whereas I use a seven-point scale. For the purposes of this comparison alone, I code “slightly conservative” and “slightly liberal” delegates from my survey as “moderate.” Elsewhere, I code them as conservatives and liberals, respectively.
The comparability of these samples is impressive in most respects. However, the fact that my Democratic delegate sample is substantially more liberal and white than Democratic delegates as a whole could have important implications for the analysis that follows. In particular, my sample might overestimate ideological social identity among liberal delegates because liberals are so overrepresented among Democratic participants. The underrepresentation of racial minorities in my sample also might skew estimates of ideological social identity among Democratic delegates, since white Democrats are likely to identify more strongly as liberals than African-American Democrats.39

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39 Despite heavily favoring the Democratic Party, approximately one-quarter to one-third of African-Americans have identified as conservatives in recent years. These percentages are only slightly lower than, and sometimes equal to, the percentages of African-Americans identifying as liberals (Lewis 2005).
It is also worthwhile to evaluate the representativeness of my delegate sample in terms of primary candidate preference. If it were the case, for instance, that a majority of the Republican delegates in my sample were pledged to Mike Huckabee or Mitt Romney, clearly they would not accurately represent 2008 Republican delegates as a whole. My survey did not ask delegates to state the candidate to whom they were pledged at the 2008 conventions. However, it did include an open-ended question asking delegates to state which candidate they preferred to win their party’s nomination at the time of the 2008 primaries.\(^{40}\)

In Table 3.2, I detail the percentage of participants preferring various candidates in the 2008 primaries. As expected, most Democratic delegates were supporters of the party nominee who won a majority of all actual delegates, Barack Obama. However, the percentage of Obama supporters is considerably higher among surveyed delegates (61.95\%) than the percentage of actual delegates pledged to Obama at the convention (51.86\%). While this discrepancy may be evidence of a somewhat unrepresentative sample, it is also quite possible that some delegates inaccurately recalled supporting Obama in the primaries because he was a successful candidate for the party nomination and ultimately the presidency.

\(^{40}\) I did not ask the candidate for whom delegates actually voted because in many cases candidates ended or suspended their campaigns before primary voting occurred in the participant’s state (e.g. Mitt Romney suspending his campaign prior to the Republican Party primary in Ohio).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferred Candidates</th>
<th>Preference Frequencies</th>
<th>Supporters’ Mean ISI Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Delegates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barack Obama</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>5.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61.95%</td>
<td>(0.139)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary Clinton</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30.97%</td>
<td>(0.153)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Delegates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John McCain</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48.39%</td>
<td>(0.142)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitt Romney</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25.81%</td>
<td>(0.270)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Huckabee</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.60%</td>
<td>(0.172)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron Paul</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.38%</td>
<td>(0.826)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: 2008 Primary Candidate Preference Among Surveyed Delegates

Column 1 provides the number and percentage of Democratic or Republican participants reporting that they preferred the candidate listed in the corresponding row to win their party’s nomination during the 2008 presidential primaries. Percentages do not sum to 100% because I have excluded candidates preferred by fewer than five participants. These candidates include: Chris Dodd (1), John Edwards (2), Dennis Kucinich (4), Bill Richardson (1), Sam Brownback (1), Rudy Giuliani (3), Duncan Hunter (1), Alan Keyes (1), Tom Tancredo (1), and Fred Thompson (4).

Column 2 provides the mean ideological social identity level of participants reporting that they preferred the candidate listed in the corresponding row to win their party’s nomination during the 2008 presidential primaries. Standard errors are in parentheses.

The percentage of Republicans who reported supporting John McCain in the primaries falls just short of a majority, at 48.39%. The percentage of Republican delegates pledged to McCain was much higher, 72.83%. However, in what was a rather fragmented Republican Party primary, it is very plausible that many delegates preferred another candidate going into the primaries but switched their allegiance to McCain as the
field narrowed, despite their initial reservations about his candidacy. Also, the fact that McCain lost the general election might have influenced delegates’ recollection of candidate preferences.

When using candidate preferences to evaluate representativeness, it is also important to remember that the delegates included in my survey come from only seven states. Therefore, an alternative, or perhaps complementary, method of comparison is to see whether the majority of participants from each state supported the candidate who won that state’s primary. In most states, the majority of surveyed delegates reported preferring the candidate who won his or her state, but the results are much stronger among Republicans. The majority of Republican participants preferred the winning candidate from their state in six of seven cases, a pattern that is particularly impressive given that three different candidates won those primaries. Among Democrats, a majority of surveyed delegates reported preferring Obama in every state but Ohio, where preferences for Obama and Clinton were tied at 50%. In reality, Obama won a majority of delegates in three of those states (Colorado, Georgia, Maryland) and Ohio, while Clinton won a majority of delegates in California and Massachusetts and the two candidates split Missouri’s delegates evenly.

41 Anecdotally, one delegate included in the survey told me in personal correspondence that he was asked to serve as a delegate because the Republican Party had difficulty finding a sufficient number of willing delegates in his state (California). This delegate was not a party regular, let alone a party operative; he was a registered Independent who had supported McCain in the primaries.

42 Republican pledged delegate and surveyed delegate majorities were consistent in California (McCain), Colorado (Romney), Georgia (Huckabee), Maryland (McCain), Massachusetts (Romney), and Ohio (McCain). The only inconsistent case was Missouri, where all delegates were pledged to McCain but a majority of participants from that state reported preferring Romney.
From the results in Tables 3.1 and 3.2, it appears that the Republican delegate sample is more demographically and politically representative of the party’s convention delegates as a whole, as well as delegates from the seven states I sampled, in comparison to the Democratic delegates. Although slightly less than a majority of Republican participants reported preferring McCain in the primaries, demographically they are remarkably similar to 2008 Republican convention delegates as a whole, and in terms of candidate preferences they faithfully represent the views of their states in nearly all cases. Demographically, Democratic participants are mostly similar to Democratic delegates in general except for being considerably more white. However, the surveyed delegates are much more liberal than all Democratic delegates, and they were more favorable to Obama during the primaries than Democratic delegates in general and in the seven states represented in my sample.

On the whole, I judge my participant sample to be reasonably, but imperfectly, representative of 2008 national convention delegates. The Democratic delegates show less evidence of representativeness, thus warranting greater caution when focusing upon them in the following analyses. The Republican delegates are more representative, and it seems quite appropriate to infer general conclusions about 2008 Republican delegates from analysis of these participants.

Finally, in relation to the issue of representativeness, Table 3.2 provides the mean ideological social identity level for participants preferring each of the most successful candidates. These data provide some basis for evaluating how the aforementioned discrepancies in candidate preferences between surveyed and pledged delegates might affect my subsequent evaluations of ideological social identity. It is reassuring, given the
concerns I raise above about the percentage of participants who said they supported Obama, that there is not much difference between the ISI levels of Democratic participants preferring Obama versus Clinton. Respectively, they have mean ISI scores of 5.12 and 5.23. The small difference between these participants’ ISI scores is not particularly surprising, since Obama and Clinton were not very ideologically distinct candidates.

Among Republican participants, McCain supporters have the weakest ideological social identity ($M = 4.91$). This finding is not surprising, either, since McCain was widely perceived to be a more ideologically moderate candidate than his two main opponents, Mitt Romney and Mike Huckabee. Accordingly, supporters of Romney and Huckabee evidence stronger ideological social identities, with average scores of 5.06 and 5.71, respectively. Supporters of Ron Paul, whose libertarian views make him more difficult to classify in traditional ideological terms, average an ISI score of 5.07. The disparity in ISI levels among supporters of various Republican candidates is starker than among supporters of the two main Democratic candidates. This disparity is not very troubling, though, since the Republican portion of my sample is quite representative of 2008 Republican delegates, in general and within the seven states from which I sampled. The evidence from Column 2 of Table 3.2 suggests that the aforementioned sampling discrepancies, particularly among Democratic delegates, should not jeopardize my analysis of ideological social identity and its attitudinal effects. Broadly speaking, the results from my delegate survey should be generalizable to 2008 convention delegates as a whole.
Survey Measures

The delegate survey included a lengthy series of questions appropriate for use in testing each of the aforementioned hypotheses. First, participants located themselves on separate seven-point partisan and ideological self-placement scales. Immediately afterward, participants answered a series of partisan and ideological social identity measures, tailored specifically to their reported partisan and ideological affiliations. To the three social identity measures described in the previous chapter, I added two items adapted directly from Mael and Tetrick’s (1992) IDPG scale. The first item read: “When I talk about [Republicans/ Independents/ Democrats/ political conservatives/ political moderates/ political liberals], I usually say ‘we’ rather than ‘they.’” The second item read: “I’m not interested in what other people think about [Republicans/ Independents/ Democrats/ political conservatives/ political moderates/ political liberals].” As in the previous chapter’s survey, participants indicated their level of agreement with each statement along a seven-point scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” Responses to the “scandal” and “interested” items are reverse-coded so that strong disagreement indicates high social identity.

Of all the combinations of social identity items, only the three with a positive valence – the “success,” “compliment,” and “we/they” items – conform to conventional reliability standards. The Cronbach’s Alpha statistics for these three items are as follows: 0.678 (Republicans), 0.668 (Democrats), 0.817 (conservatives), and 0.771 (liberals). When including one or both of the two items with a negative valence (the “scandal” and “interested” items), at least one group’s social identity scale falls below 0.50 in each instance. It does not appear to be the case, though, that these items perform poorly.
simply because they have a negative valence. The reliability of a scale comprising only the two negative items is just 0.489 for partisan social identity and 0.432 for ideological social identity. Alternatively, one might suspect that the scale has low reliability because it includes an item (scandal) not directly adapted from the IDPG scale, which also performed poorly in the previous chapter’s analysis. However, when excluding the “scandal” item only, the Cronbach’s Alpha statistics for the remaining four items are actually lower (0.481 for PSI and 0.629 for ISI) than they are when excluding only the “interested” item that is directed adapted from the IDPG scale (0.574 for PSI and 0.652 for ISI). It is quite unclear why the negative items contribute so poorly to overall scale reliability; I have tested two plausible explanations, and the results are not helpful in either case. What is clear is that the low reliability of the full scale remains problematic, and once more requires methodological attention.

As is the case in the previous chapter, I would strongly prefer to include a full range of social identity measures and have balanced scales that meet reasonable standards of reliability. However, this is not possible with the available data. In trying to find a practical solution to this problem, my foremost priority is ensuring that I test my hypotheses using scales that can be reasonably and confidently interpreted as coherent measures of ideological and partisan social identity. Therefore, I use the three positively-valenced items described above to construct the social identity scales used in all subsequent analyses. Once more, I use each participant’s average self-placement on the seven-point disagree-agree scales to estimate his or her level of ideological or partisan social identity.
Following the social identity items, participants provided feeling thermometer ratings of numerous political groups, for the purpose of measuring inter-group attitudes. Among the political groups that each participant rated were all three major partisan groups (Republicans, Independents, Democrats), all three major ideological groups (conservatives, moderates, liberals), and all nine combinations of partisan and ideological groups (conservative Republicans, moderate Republicans, liberal Republicans, conservative Independents, moderate Independents, liberal Independents, conservative Democrats, moderate Democrats, liberal Democrats). Knowing each participant’s reported partisan and ideological in-groups, I can use these feeling thermometers to measure inter-group bias, in-group favoritism, and out-group derogation, between partisan groups, ideological groups, and partisan or ideological sub-groups.43

Next, I included a series of questions designed to evaluate the relative primacy of partisan and ideological social identity in-groups. As hypothesized above, I expect most participants to view their partisan in-group as a superordinate category to which ideological sub-groups, including the participant’s ideological in-group, are subordinate. Designing empirical measures to evaluate this hypothesis poses a significant challenge, however; there is no precedent for estimating social identity hierarchies in the partisanship and ideology literatures, and it is exceedingly unlikely that participants would understand and provide accurate responses to a direct question about superordinate and subordinate group identities. A promising alternative comes from Roccas and Brewer (2002), who use “group overlap” measures to map individuals’ subjective

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43 It is worth noting that many Social Identity Theory scholars use feeling thermometers or similar numerical rating scales to measure inter-group bias (e.g. Brewer and Pierce 2005).
representations of the relationship between their multiple social identities. For each combination of relevant identity groups, participants answer a group overlap measure of the form: “How many people who are (members of group x) are also (members of group y)?” This measure was easily adapted for use in the present study; each participant answered six group overlap questions, covering all combinations of partisan and ideological groups for his or her reported in-group identities.\(^{44}\) Response options ranged from 0-10, with five labeled responses: None Are (0), Few Are (2), Half Are (5), Most Are (8), All Are (10).

To determine the relative primacy of partisan and ideological in-groups, I subtracted each participant’s response to the partisan/ideological in-group overlap measure (how many people who are members of the participant’s partisan in-group are also members of the participant’s ideological in-group?) from the ideological/partisan in-group measure (how many people who are members of the participant’s ideological in-group are also members of the participant’s partisan in-group?). A positive (negative) difference between these two group overlap measures would indicate that the participant views his or her partisan (ideological) in-group as superordinate. Why? Because superordinate groups should be seen as more inclusive than subordinate groups; they are large and comprise a variety of sub-groups, whereas sub-groups tend to be smaller and more concentrated within a dominant superordinate group.

For illustrative purposes, consider the relationship between two possible in-group identities: Ohioan and American. All Ohioans are Americans, but not all Americans are

\(^{44}\) For example, a moderate Democrat would answer questions including the following pairings: moderate, Democrat; moderate, Republican; moderate, Independent; Democrat, moderate; Democrat, liberal; Democrat, conservative.
Ohioans; thus, Ohioan is one of many sub-group identities within the superordinate category of American. When presented with the two group overlap measures relevant to these identities, a typical response might be that all Ohioans are Americans (10, or “All Are”) and that few Americans are Ohioans (2, or “Few Are”). Subtracting the latter from the former group overlap measure yields a positive value (+8). In the same way, I expect most participants to view their partisan in-group as more inclusive than their ideological in-group, thus producing a positive number when taking the difference of the two group overlap measures as described above. Such a result would indicate that participants view their partisan in-group as superordinate, as it does for Americans in the illustration above.

Finally, I included in the delegate survey a series of questions measuring important demographic variables such as: age, gender, race/ethnicity, and education. I control for each of these variables in the analyses that follow, where appropriate.

Results

How, if at all, do party elites and the mass public differ in their levels of psychological attachment to ideological and partisan in-groups? I begin my empirical analysis by addressing this fundamental question, and then shift to new areas of analysis not addressed in the previous chapter, including the relationship between individuals’ ideological and partisan social identities and social identity’s role in shaping inter-group attitudes.
Figure 3.1 presents a kernel density plot graphically depicting the distribution of ideological social identity levels among surveyed delegates. To facilitate comparison across ideological groups, I depict these distributions for self-identified liberals and conservatives, separately, as well as for the full sample of delegates.\footnote{I do not specify ISI, PSI, and relative ISI/PSI levels for moderates and Independents because there were too few of these participants in the delegate sample to warrant such analysis. Also, I do not depict the distribution of social identity scores for Democrats and Republicans, because the vast majority of Democratic delegates identify as liberals (86.4\%) and an even greater majority of Republican delegates identify as conservatives (88.5\%). Thus, partisan comparisons would be essentially redundant with ideological comparisons.}
Figure 3.1: Ideological Social Identity Scores of 2008 Convention Delegates (Kernel Density Plot)

**Ideological Social Identity.** It is obvious from Figure 3.1 that ISI levels are substantially higher among delegates than within the nationally representative sample from Chapter 2. Figure 2.3 shows public ISI scores to be highly concentrated toward the middle of the scale, although many scores are higher and the mean score significantly exceeds the scale’s neutral point. Figure 3.1 shows much more dramatic levels of
ideological social identity; scores are clearly skewed toward the high end of the one-to-seven scale, growing densest at about 5.67 and including no scores lower than two.

In fact, a remarkable 79.39% of delegates score above the neutral point on the ISI scale, while 53.95% average at least slight agreement with the ISI statements (a score of five) and 11.84% average at least moderate agreement (a score of six). As shown in Table 3.3, participants’ mean ISI level (\(M = 5.09, SD = 1.07\)) is nearly a full point higher than it is for members of the mass public in Chapter 2 (\(M = 4.21\)), and delegates’ average score significantly exceeds the ISI scale’s neutral point, \(t(227) = 15.46, p = 0.000.\)46 These findings very strongly support my hypothesis that ideological social identity is stronger among party elites than among members of the mass public.

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46 Were I to test an ISI scale composed of the same two measures used in Chapter 2’s analysis, the results would be essentially identical. In fact, delegates’ mean ISI score is the same when using the two- or three-item scales, 5.09.
### Table 3.3: Social Identity Levels Among Delegates

Partisan Social Identity (PSI) and Ideological Social Identity (ISI) scores represent participants' average level of agreement with three statements measuring psychological attachment to a partisan or ideological in-group, respectively. Responses range from 1 (low agreement, or weak social identity) to 7 (high agreement, or strong social identity). For Column 3, I subtract PSI scores from ISI scores to measure relative attachment to ideological, over partisan, in-groups. Higher scores on the ISI-PSI measure represent greater relative attachment to an ideological in-group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Mean PSI</th>
<th>Mean ISI</th>
<th>Mean (ISI-PSI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Delegates (N=231)</td>
<td>5.24***</td>
<td>5.09***</td>
<td>-0.15*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats (N=125)</td>
<td>5.24***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans (N=104)</td>
<td>5.25***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberals (N=102)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.21***</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives (N=87)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.05***</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lib. Democrats (N=101)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Con. Republicans (N=84)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.27**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors for social identity scores are in parentheses. I conduct one-sample mean comparison tests to determine whether scores differ significantly from a neutral position (4 in the case of the PSI and ISI scales, 0 in the case of the relative ISI/PSI measure).

***Significant at .001; **Significant at .01; *Significant at .05; +Significant at .1

However, it is also the case that partisan social identity is much stronger among delegates than among members of the mass public, and delegates’ mean PSI level significantly exceeds their mean ISI level. As seen in Table 3.3, delegates average a score of 5.24 ($SD = 1.02$) on the PSI scale, which is a full point higher than the mass public’s mean PSI score, 4.23. Not surprisingly, the delegates’ PSI score significantly
exceeds that scale’s neutral point, \( t(230) = 18.48, p = 0.000 \). More striking is the fact that the aggregate’s mean PSI score, 5.24, is considerably higher than its mean ISI score, 5.09. Of course, it would not be appropriate to draw conclusions about the relative strength of ideological and partisan social identities at the individual level based on differences detected in the aggregate. I provide appropriate individual-level tests in the next step of this analysis.

**Relative Strength of Ideological and Partisan Social Identities.** To more directly estimate the relative strength of ISI and PSI, in Figure 3.2 I present a kernel density plot depicting the difference between each delegate’s ISI and PSI scores. In this figure, positive scores represent higher relative ISI levels among delegates, negative scores represent higher relative PSI levels, and a neutral score represents identical ISI and PSI scores.
Figure 3.2: Relative Strength of Delegates’ Ideological and Partisan Social Identities (Kernel Density Plot)

Clearly, the scores depicted in Figure 3.2 do not skew dramatically toward either side of the neutral point. However, densities do appear somewhat greater on the negative end of this scale, which represents higher relative PSI scores. Indeed, 50.00% of delegates have higher relative levels of partisan social identity, while 32.02% have higher relative levels of ideological social identity. At –0.15, the mean relative ISI/PSI score
does not heavily favor partisan social identity but it is large enough to be statistically distinguishable from zero, $t(227) = 2.13, p = 0.034$.

Altogether, these findings are quite striking. Party elites, herein represented by national party convention delegates, exhibit much higher levels of ideological and partisan social identity than the mass public does. Indeed, delegates score about a full point higher than the mass public on seven-point ISI and PSI scales, and delegates register more than slight agreement with the social identity statements previously described, on average. In accordance with my hypotheses, then, it appears that ideological, as well as partisan, social identities are particularly strong and relevant for party elites. Given the exceptional political activism and influence of such elites – Layman (1999, p. 93) describes them as presumptive “catalysts for change” in the parties – these results provide encouraging indications for the study of ideological, as well as partisan, social identity. However, it is also important to note that elites differ from the mass public in exhibiting significantly higher levels of partisan, versus ideological, social identity. To summarize, feelings of psychological attachment to ideological and partisan in-groups are common within the mass public but they are exceptionally strong and relevant among influential party elites, and especially so for partisan social identity.

*Variation in Social Identity Levels by Political Groups.* Another difference between the mass public and delegate samples seems evident in the kernel density plots from Figures 3.1 and 3.2. Contrary to my hypothesis and the empirical findings from Chapter 2, it appears that self-identified liberals have higher levels of ideological social identity than self-identified conservatives, and liberal Democrats have higher relative
ideological, versus partisan, social identities than conservative Republicans, in the
delegate sample.

First, with respect to ideological social identity levels, Table 3.3 shows that liberal
delegates have a higher mean ISI score ($M = 5.21$, $SD = 1.04$) than conservatives ($M = 5.05$, $SD = 1.13$). This result contrasts sharply with that of the previous chapter, when
conservatives’ average ISI score was 0.19 higher than liberals’ average ISI score.
Whereas the difference between ideological groups’ ISI scores reaches marginal levels of
statistical significance ($p = 0.059$) in Chapter 2, though, the difference between liberal
and conservative delegates’ ISI scores does not approach even marginal levels of
statistical significance in a one-way ANOVA test, $F(1, 201) = 1.12$, $p = 0.264$.47

Next, with respect to the relative levels of ideological and partisan social identity
among delegates, both of the most common ideological groups within the parties, liberal
Democrats and conservative Republicans, have stronger partisan than ideological social
identities, on average. However, the mean ISI/PSI score for liberal Democrats is barely
lower than zero ($M = -0.009$, $SD = 1.14$), while it is considerably lower for conservative
Republicans ($M = -0.268$, $SD = 0.84$). The difference between liberal Democrats and
conservative Republicans’ relative social identity scores falls short of conventional
significance levels in a one-way ANOVA test, though, $F(1, 197) = 3.25$, $p = 0.073$.

In terms of ideological social identity and the relative strength of ideological,
versus partisan, social identity, there is some evidence to suggest that conservatives and
conservative Republicans are more weakly attached to their ideological in-group than

47 Note that significance levels in Table 3.3 refer to the difference between each social identity score and
the relevant social identity scale’s neutral point. To avoid confusion, Table 3.3 does not also list significant
differences between the PSI, ISI, or relative social identity scores of opposing political groups. Instead, I
describe the significance tests for those differences only in the text.
their counterparts on the political Left. In both cases, though, the differences between these groups are not statistically significant. Still, these findings are quite surprising given my expectation that conservatives would continue exhibiting exceptionally high levels of direct and relative attachment to their ideological in-group. Not only does this hypothesis prove untrue among delegates, but the evidence points in the opposite direction.

One plausible explanation for these unexpected findings is that they are particular to delegates from the 2008 conventions. Most delegates to the Republican convention were supporters of John McCain, and in fact Table 3.2 shows that slightly less than a majority of Republican participants reported preferring McCain during the 2008 primaries. The second column of that table also shows that McCain supporters have a lower ideological social identity level, on average, than supporters of his major competitors. Thus, it could be the case that the Republican delegates from 2008 had weaker ideological social identities than Republican delegates in previous years because the former mostly served on behalf of an unusually moderate candidate at odds with his party’s ideological base.

It is more difficult to gauge how Obama’s nomination might have influenced ISI levels among Democratic delegates. Obama’s candidacy was not particularly ideological and it emphasized heavily his bipartisan appeal. Yet Obama also ran an insurgent campaign against a heavy favorite of the political establishment, Hillary Clinton, and much of the support for his candidacy came from less traditional Democratic groups whose primary loyalties tended more toward the ideological than the partisan. Thus, liberal delegates in 2008 might exhibit stronger ideological social identity than
conservatives because Obama’s delegates were in the Democratic majority. The fact that Table 3.2 shows little difference between the ISI levels of Obama and Clinton supporters argues against this explanation, though. More likely is the explanation that Republican delegates were atypical in 2008, with McCain’s nomination producing a Republican delegation weaker in ideological social identity than in more normal years.

Studying ideological social identity among convention delegates in future election years would help to evaluate the validity of the preceding argument. For the time being, these findings highlight an important limitation of my data that I note above: the data come from a single group of delegates chosen in most cases to represent the 2008 presidential nominees. To the extent that those nominees differ ideologically from more typical ones, the delegates in my survey are also likely to differ ideologically from more typical party delegates.

*Empirical Distinctiveness of the Ideological Social Identity Scale.* A final point of comparison between the elite and mass public samples concerns the empirical distinctiveness of the ideological social identity scale. As in the mass public sample, I find some evidence of a relationship between the ISI and self-placement scales. Again, participants’ mean ISI scores increase as ideological extremity increases. ISI scores are highest among self-described “Very liberal/conservative” participants ($M = 5.79$), somewhat weaker among self-described “Liberal/conservative” participants ($M = 5.05$), and substantially weaker among self-described “Slightly liberal/conservative” participants ($M = 4.34$). This is precisely the pattern evident in the mass public sample, where ISI scores descend in the same order from 4.82, to 4.60, to 3.88, respectively.
Again, these results are consistent with what one would expect if the ISI and self-placement scales were measuring a common concept.

Once more, though, the correlation between ISI and folded self-placement is limited enough to suggest their empirical distinctiveness. Among all delegates, the correlation between scales is modest, at 0.361. Among liberals and conservatives, respectively, the correlation between scales is 0.451 and 0.399. These correlations are somewhat higher than in Chapter 2, and it is also interesting to note that correlations are higher for liberals than for conservatives, which is opposite the pattern from Chapter 2. Thus, some aspects of the relationship between ISI and self-placement scales differ between elite and mass public samples. However, the fundamental conclusion is consistent across analyses: the ISI and self-placement scales appear to measure distinct aspects of a common concept: ideological identification.

**Summary.** The preceding analysis highlights several ways in which party elites, at least in 2008, differ from the mass public with respect to ideological and partisan social identities, while also highlighting one important area of consistency between them.

In accordance with my hypothesis, 2008 national party convention delegates exhibit much higher levels of ideological and partisan social identity than do members of the general public. Presumably, this is because delegates are more politically engaged than the common citizen, thus rendering them more capable of understanding what ideological groups represent and more willing to identify with them.

Although delegates identify quite strongly with ideological and partisan in-groups, the evidence clearly suggests that they identify most strongly with the latter. This is hardly to say that only partisan in-groups are important to delegates; rather, both in-
groups seem to be very important to most delegates, but their primary in-group loyalty lay with the party.

Also, there is indicative but inconclusive evidence that ideological social identity, and its strength in relation to partisan social identity, varies across political groups. Delegates on the political Left have higher mean levels of direct and relative attachment to their ideological in-group than members of the political Right, but in both cases these differences are not statistically significant. I have suggested that the political characteristics of Obama and McCain might be responsible for this finding, but it will take future studies to determine whether my explanation is credible. For the time being, the primary benefit of these findings is to indicate that the causal link between conservatism and ideological social identity found in Chapter 2 is weak, or at least unstable. The empirical relationship therein documented might be particular to that chapter’s participant sample, or perhaps applicable only to the mass public and not party elites.

Finally, an important point of consistency between the delegate and mass public samples is that the ideological social identity and ideological self-placement scales prove in both analyses to measure distinct aspects of ideological identification. While it is true that the two scales vary in the same pattern, with mean ISI scores increasing as ideological extremity increases, the correlation between scales is modest enough to point toward empirical distinctiveness. Among delegates, as with the mass public, the traditional ideological self-placement measure fails to adequately capture feelings of ideological social identity. These results continue to argue, in combination with the
results from Chapter 2, for the integration of both scales in order to create a more conceptually and empirically comprehensive measure of ideological identification.

Relative Primacy of Ideological and Partisan In-Group Identities

As noted above, a critical goal for this analysis is to determine how individuals with strong ideological and partisan social identities tend to structure the relationship between those identities. Is one in-group so essential to an individual’s overall self-concept that it dominates the other in-group in importance and influence? If so, is there a systematic tendency for either ideological in-groups or partisan in-groups to be so dominant? And what about the other, less essential in-group: Do individuals tend to view that in-group as subordinate to, or nested within, the primary (superordinate) in-group, or independent of it? Answering these questions has many important implications for the study of ideological social identity, as well as the study of social identities within political science more generally. Additionally, this analysis provides the appropriate empirical basis for examining inter-group attitudes between ideological sub-groups within parties – or partisan sub-groups within ideologies, if the evidence suggests this to be a more plausible formulation – in the next portion of the analysis.

Because convention delegates exhibit exceptionally high levels of ideological and partisan social identity, much higher than the mass public on both counts, a delegate sample provides an ideal opportunity to study how individuals with strong ideological and partisan social identities represent the relationship between those identities. For reasons described in a previous section, I hypothesize that most delegates view their
partisan in-group as their primary, or superordinate, social identity, encompassing several ideological in-groups that are subordinate to it. Alternatively, participants might view ideological groups as their superordinate in-group, encompassing several partisan in-groups that are subordinate to it.

As described above, I calculate the difference between two group overlap measures in order to determine which in-group participants view as superordinate and which in-group participants view as subordinate. Specifically, I subtract the partisan/ideological group overlap measure (e.g. “How many people who are Democrats are also liberals?”) from the ideological/partisan group overlap measure (e.g. “How many people who are liberals are also Democrats?”). A positive difference would indicate that the partisan in-group is seen as more inclusive than the ideological in-group, or that the former is superordinate and the latter is subordinate.

The results of my analysis indicate that participants do, in fact, tend to view their partisan in-group as more inclusive than their ideological in-group. The mean difference between group overlap measures is positive ($M = 0.62, SD = 0.13$), and this difference is statistically distinct from zero according to a one-sample mean comparison test, $t(223) = 4.75, p = 0.000$. Certainly, not all participants view their partisan in-group as more inclusive than their ideological in-group; 22% of participants have a negative score on the group overlap difference measure. However, viewing the partisan in-group as more inclusive than the ideological in-group is far more common; twice as many participants, 43%, have a positive score on the group overlap difference measure. Thus, the evidence from this analysis strongly supports my hypothesis that participants tend to view partisan
in-groups as a superordinate identity category encompassing several ideological sub-groups, including participants’ ideological in-sub-group.

An additional question included in the delegate survey can be used to validate the results from the group overlap difference measure: “Which one of the following labels best describes you, politically?” Response options included: Conservative, Democrat, Independent, Liberal, Moderate, Republican. To the extent that participants view their partisan in-group as superordinate, I assume they will select a partisan label when forced to choose only one of these six response options. Indeed, a majority of participants ($M = 0.56$, $SD = 0.03$) submitting a valid response to this question selected a partisan label as most appropriate. According to a difference of proportions test, this proportion is significantly higher than the proportion of participants selecting an ideological label as primary ($M = 0.44$, $SD = 0.03$), $z(216) = 2.31$, $p = 0.021$.

These results strongly and consistently support my hypothesis, which states that participants tend to view their partisan in-group as a superordinate identity category encompassing several ideological sub-groups, including their ideological in-group. Substantively, this evidence is important because it indicates that partisan in-group membership typically most defines the self-concept of individuals with strong ideological and partisan social identities.

One implication of this finding is that partisan in-groups will tend to be seen as comprising multiple ideological sub-groups (i.e. liberal Democrats, moderate Democrats, conservative Democrats), each of which an individual is likely to judge within the context of the superordinate partisan in-group. In other words, ideological sub-groups should typically be evaluated in terms of their congruity with the image and purposes of the
partisan in-group. Thus, it is quite probable that individuals who identify strongly with a superordinate partisan in-group will discriminate, in attitude and/or behavior, against ideological out-sub-groups despite sharing the same party. In fact, it is not despite but because of belonging to the same party that inter-group bias should occur between ideological sub-groups; individuals are likely to view their ideological in-sub-group as an appropriate representation of what the partisan superordinate category stands for, while ideological out-sub-groups represent alternative representations of the superordinate category probably viewed as illegitimate or even threatening to an individual’s social identity (see Mummendey and Wenzel 1999).

Next, I analyze inter-group attitudes between ideological sub-groups within parties, as well as between general ideological and partisan groups. This analysis enables me to test whether the inter-sub-group bias described above actually occurs within parties, while also characterizing the nature of political inter-group attitudes and determining the role of social identity in shaping such attitudes.

**Inter-Group Attitudes**

In the analysis that follows, I measure inter-group bias, in-group favoritism, and out-group derogation using feeling thermometer ratings of various partisan and ideological groups. First, to measure inter-group bias, I subtract the participant’s average evaluation of both partisan (ideological) out-groups from the participant’s evaluation of his or her partisan (ideological) in-group. To the extent that participants engage in inter-
group bias, I expect in-group evaluations to exceed average evaluations of both relevant out-groups.\textsuperscript{48}

To measure in-group favoritism and out-group derogation, I begin by calculating each participant’s average feeling thermometer rating of all six partisan and ideological groups, as well as all nine ideological sub-groups within parties.\textsuperscript{49} Then, to create an in-group favoritism measure, I subtract each participant’s average thermometer rating of all groups from his or her rating of the relevant partisan or ideological in-group. Likewise, to create an out-group derogation measure, I subtract each participant’s average thermometer rating of all groups from his or her average rating of both relevant partisan or ideological out-groups. To the extent that participants engage in in-group favoritism and out-group derogation, I expect in-group evaluations to exceed average thermometer ratings and out-group evaluations to fall below average thermometer ratings, respectively.

Measuring in-group favoritism and out-group derogation in relation to average thermometer placements of all groups is appropriate since individuals differ considerably in their use of feeling thermometers; some individuals rate all or most groups highly while others rate all or most groups much lower, and the former tendency is particularly

\textsuperscript{48} In this analysis, I define out-groups as any relevant group other than the participant’s in-group (e.g., liberals and moderates for a conservative participant, or moderate Democrats and conservative Democrats for a liberal Democratic participant). Alternatively, I could define an out-group as the group most clearly opposite the participant’s in-group (e.g., only liberals for a conservative participant, only conservative Democrats for a liberal Democratic participant). I choose the former strategy for two reasons. First, from a conceptual standpoint, it seems most accurate to define an out-group as any relevant group with which the participant does not identify; regardless of whether a group is clearly opposite the participant’s in-group or just distinct from that in-group, then, I find it most appropriate to treat this as an out-group. Second, neither “liberal” nor “conservative” qualify as the opposite of “moderate.” Therefore, if I were to define out-groups as the opposite of a participant’s in-group, moderate participants would have no out-group and would have to be excluded from my analysis. Instead, I define a moderate’s out-groups as liberals and conservatives, thereby allowing me to include moderates in the analysis.

\textsuperscript{49} Average feeling thermometer ratings range from 17.33 to 80.00, with a mean value of 49.85.
common (Knight 1984; Wilcox, Sigelman, and Cook 1989). As Green (1988, p. 774) aptly states: “the problem with the feeling thermometers is that one person’s response of 50 is equivalent in meaning to another person’s response of 75.” Thus, it would be simplistic and perhaps misleading to treat all positive in-group thermometer ratings (those exceeding 50 on the 0-100 scale) as evidence of in-group favoritism, or to treat all negative out-group ratings (those below 50) as evidence of out-group derogation. A more appropriate strategy is to anchor each participant’s in-group or out-group thermometer rating in relation to his or her average thermometer rating of all groups, as I do in the analysis that follows.

Table 3.4 presents data relevant to evaluating inter-group attitudes toward partisan groups, ideological groups, and ideological sub-groups within parties. For each category of inter-group attitudes, I present results for the full sample and for the two most relevant political groups (Democrats and Republicans; liberals and conservatives; liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans).
Table 3.4: Delegates’ Evaluations of Political In-Groups and Out-Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Inter-Group Bias</th>
<th>In-Group Favoritism</th>
<th>Out-Group Derogation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partisan Group Ratings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Delegates (N=211)</td>
<td>39.29***</td>
<td>29.67***</td>
<td>-9.62***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.40)</td>
<td>(1.03)</td>
<td>(0.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats (N=113)</td>
<td>42.94***</td>
<td>31.06***</td>
<td>-11.88***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.71)</td>
<td>(1.28)</td>
<td>(0.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans (N=96)</td>
<td>34.98***</td>
<td>28.09***</td>
<td>-6.89***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.25)</td>
<td>(1.67)</td>
<td>(0.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideological Group Ratings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Delegates (N=211)</td>
<td>42.47***</td>
<td>27.39***</td>
<td>-15.08***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.48)</td>
<td>(1.12)</td>
<td>(0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberals (N=102)</td>
<td>44.30***</td>
<td>29.91***</td>
<td>-14.39***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.92)</td>
<td>(1.50)</td>
<td>(0.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives (N=87)</td>
<td>42.56***</td>
<td>26.80***</td>
<td>-15.76***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.51)</td>
<td>(1.91)</td>
<td>(0.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideological Sub-Group Ratings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Delegates (N=211)</td>
<td>28.44***</td>
<td>32.73***</td>
<td>4.29***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.60)</td>
<td>(1.15)</td>
<td>(0.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lib. Democrats (N=101)</td>
<td>28.73***</td>
<td>33.63***</td>
<td>4.90***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.99)</td>
<td>(1.45)</td>
<td>(1.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Con. Republicans (N=84)</td>
<td>30.86***</td>
<td>34.43***</td>
<td>3.57*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.95)</td>
<td>(2.10)</td>
<td>(1.36)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I calculate Inter-Group Bias by subtracting out-group feeling thermometer ratings from in-group feeling thermometer ratings. I calculate In-Group Favoritism by subtracting a participant’s average feeling thermometer rating of all partisan groups, ideological groups, and ideological sub-groups within parties from his or her rating of the relevant in-group. Finally, I calculate Out-Group Derogation by subtracting a participant’s average feeling thermometer rating of all partisan groups, ideological groups, and ideological sub-groups within parties from his or her average thermometer ratings of both relevant out-groups.

Standard errors for group ratings are in parentheses. I use one-sample mean comparison tests to determine whether group ratings differ significantly from zero.

***Significant at .001; **Significant at .01; *Significant at .05; +Significant at .1

Note: Twenty participants were dropped from this analysis because they did not submit feeling thermometer ratings for all political groups.
Partisan Inter-Group Attitudes. The first three rows of Table 3.4 detail participants’ partisan inter-group attitudes. On average, participants rate their partisan in-group 39.29 points higher than partisan out-groups on the feeling thermometer. In-group favoritism and out-group derogation contribute to partisan inter-group bias; participants rate their partisan in-group 29.67 points higher than the average feeling thermometer target, while rating their partisan out-groups 9.62 points lower than the average target. As evidence of partisan polarization, at least among party elites, these findings are striking. Not only do participants rate partisan groups nearly 40 points apart on the 0-100 feeling thermometer, but they single out partisan opponents for particularly negative ratings. Thus, attitudes toward partisan groups do appear rather polarized, and they are driven by positive in-group evaluations as well as negative out-group evaluations.

It is also interesting to note that partisan inter-group attitudes vary across partisan categories, with Democratic participants ($M = 42.94$, $SD = 18.15$) engaging in significantly higher levels of inter-group bias than their Republican counterparts ($M = 34.98$, $SD = 22.09$), $F(1, 207) = 8.17$, $p = 0.005$. Perhaps more interesting is the fact that most of this difference in inter-group bias can be attributed to higher levels of out-group derogation among Democrats. Democrats ($M = 31.06$, $SD = 13.55$) do score three points higher than Republicans ($M = 28.09$, $SD = 16.40$) on the in-group favoritism scale, but the difference is not significant, $F(1, 207) = 2.05$, $p = 0.154$. On the out-derogation scale, Democrats ($M = -11.88$, $SD = 8.10$) score five points lower than Republicans ($M = -6.89$, $SD = 8.86$), and this difference is statistically significant, $F(1, 207) = 18.03$, $p = 0.000$. In short, partisan inter-group bias is particularly evident among Democrats, and it is primarily attributable to their more negative out-group evaluations.
Ideological Inter-Group Attitudes. Ideological polarization is also evident in the middle rows of Table 3.4. The data show that inter-group bias is even stronger for ideological groups than for partisan groups, with participants rating ideological in-groups 42.47 points higher ($SD = 21.50$) than ideological out-groups, on average. In fact, ideological inter-group bias is significantly greater than partisan inter-group bias among delegates, $t(210) = 2.15, p = 0.033$.

As with partisan groups, ideological inter-group bias is attributable to in-group favoritism and out-group derogation. On average, participants rate their ideological in-group 27.39 points higher than the average thermometer target ($SD = 1.12$), and they rate ideological out-groups 15.08 points lower than the average thermometer target ($SD = 8.56$). Both of these results differ substantially in comparison to partisan inter-group attitudes: in-group favoritism is significantly greater for partisan groups than for ideological groups, $t(210) = 2.04, p = 0.042$, while out-group derogation is significantly greater for ideological groups than for partisan groups, $t(210) = 6.609, p = 0.000$. Thus, it would appear that delegates tend to feel most positively about their partisan in-group and most negatively about their ideological out-groups.

Unlike partisan inter-group attitudes, ideological inter-group attitudes do not vary significantly across political groups. Liberals exhibit higher average levels of inter-group bias and in-group favoritism, while conservatives exhibit a higher average level of out-group derogation. However, in no case do these difference reach conventional, or even marginal, levels of statistical significance. It is worth noting that these findings differ from previous studies of the mass public (Brady and Sniderman 1985) and even party elites (Herrera 1992), each of which find that conservatives dislike liberals more than
lifers dislike conservatives. It is possible that this discrepancy is attributable to my use of a non-representative elite sample, or that it is particular to 2008 convention delegates; it is also possible that patterns of ideological inter-group attitudes have changed in recent years. Further analysis is needed to determine the true cause of these discrepant findings.

To summarize the preceding analysis, party elites are rather polarized along partisan and ideological lines, and particularly along the latter. In-group favoritism and out-group derogation contribute to inter-group bias between partisan as well as ideological groups, with in-group favoritism being more intense for partisan groups and out-group derogation being more intense for ideological groups. Also, while there is some indication that liberals engage in greater inter-group bias than conservatives, differences in inter-group attitudes do not vary significantly across ideological groups in any case.

*Ideological Inter-Sub-Group Attitudes.* The bottom three rows of Table 3.4 detail the final category of inter-group attitudes, participants’ evaluations of ideological sub-groups within their party. Participants do engage in inter-group bias toward ideological sub-groups, rating in-sub-groups 28.44 points higher than out-sub-groups, on average. However, unlike the previous analyses, inter-sub-group bias is attributable to in-group favoritism, alone.

On average, participants rate their ideological in-sub-group 32.73 points higher than the average thermometer target (SD = 16.65); this level of in-group favoritism is significantly higher than ideological in-group favoritism, t(210) = 6.27, p = 0.000, as well as partisan in-group favoritism, t(210) = 2.80, p = 0.006. Clearly, participants are especially positive when evaluating an in-group that fuses their partisan and ideological
social identities. While this finding is not terribly surprising, it is important as an indication that participants do make distinctions between ideological sub-groups within parties, rather than evaluating them equally as members of a shared partisan in-group.

Inter-sub-group attitudes are also distinctive in that they show no evidence of out-group derogation. On average, participants rate ideological opponents within their party 4.29 points more positively than other thermometer targets. This result differs markedly from what I find for partisan and ideological inter-group attitudes, and it indicates that participants tend to treat out-sub-groups differently than other out-groups due to shared party membership. At the same time, participants do not seem to overlook ideological differences between sub-groups; after all, they rate in-sub-group members nearly 30 points higher than out-sub-groups members on the feeling thermometer, on average. Indeed, participants discriminate in their evaluations of ideological sub-groups within their party. However, it seems inappropriate to characterize this finding as evidence of polarization within parties since the inter-sub-group bias is entirely attributable to in-sub-group favoritism and shows no evidence of negative out-sub-group evaluation.

Finally, it is important to note that these findings do not vary significantly across political groups. Conservative Republicans average somewhat higher levels of inter-sub-group bias than do liberal Democrats, owing to greater levels of in-sub-group favoritism and out-sub-group derogation. However, these differences fail to reach statistical significance in any instance.

Summary. The preceding empirical analysis provides valuable perspective on the nature of inter-group attitudes across partisan groups, ideological groups, and ideological sub-groups within parties. Each portion of this analysis yields strong evidence of inter-
group bias, with the mean difference between in-group and out-group thermometer ratings ranging from 28.44 to 42.94 points. However, the nature of inter-group bias varies between different types of political groups. Inter-group bias between partisan and ideological groups is attributable to in-group favoritism and out-group derogation, with the former being particularly strong among partisan groups and the latter being particularly strong among ideological groups. In-group favoritism also contributes to inter-group bias among ideological sub-groups within parties, but out-group derogation does not.

These findings are quite interesting given debates in the SIT literature over the relationship between inter-group bias and out-group derogation. Whereas most SIT studies find that inter-group bias is attributable to in-group favoritism, and not out-group derogation, these findings suggest that out-group derogation is a key component of inter-group bias between partisan and ideological groups. A plausible explanation for the discrepancy comes from Brewer (1999), who suggests that competition for political power might lead to out-group derogation. Since partisan and ideological groups certainly do engage in competitions for political power, these findings provide compelling evidence for Brewer’s argument.

Evidence of out-group derogation also suggests the type of political polarization that has attracted so much debate within the political science literature, as well as in popular political commentary. In addition to favoring their partisan or ideological in-group, participants also tend to discriminate against out-groups through negative evaluation. Certainly, the degree of out-group derogation is not remarkable for its severity or even comparable to levels of in-group favoritism; nonetheless, out-group
derogation reaches statistically significant levels, and it is particularly strong between ideological groups.

This analysis also indicates that participants typically engage in inter-group bias with respect to ideological sub-groups within parties. However, as noted above, inter-sub-group bias is the result of favoritism toward in-sub-groups and not derogation of out-sub-groups. Apparently, the awareness of shared party membership is sufficient to discourage participants from viewing ideological opponents as full-fledged out-group members and engaging in the typical pattern of negative evaluation. In contrast, participants distinguish members of their partisan and ideological in-groups from members of one such in-group, evaluating the former most positively of all. These findings indicate, quite interestingly, that participants can and do distinguish between in-groups and out-groups within larger, superordinate in-group identities. While they still engage in inter-group bias toward ideological sub-groups within parties, the nature of this bias differs from that occurring between broader partisan and ideological groups; whereas in-group favoritism and out-group derogation contribute to inter-group bias between partisan and ideological groups, only in-group favoritism causes inter-group bias between ideological sub-groups within parties.

In addition to providing valuable insights into the degree and nature of political polarization, as measured in terms of attitudes toward political groups, these findings also have important implications for intra-party dynamics. Competition between ideological groups is a frequent source of friction within parties, often taking the form of divisive primary battles that might jeopardize the party’s general election interests. Such was the case in the 2010 midterm Congressional elections, when conservative candidates aligned
with the Tea Party movement defeated incumbents and establishment favorites in several Republican Party primaries. Despite the considerable acrimony of such intra-party rivalries, it would seem from the preceding evidence that individuals with strong attachment to their partisan and ideological in-groups still positively evaluate ideological out-sub-group members from within their party and, by implication, regard them as something other than alien forces. Still, these findings indicate that out-sub-group evaluations are much less positive than in-sub-group evaluations, with likely implications for the behaviors and attitudes of different ideological sub-groups during a general election.

More important than describing the nature and relevance of inter-group attitudes, for the purposes of this dissertation, is examining the relationship between inter-group attitudes and ideological, as well as partisan, social identity. Does psychological attachment to a partisan or ideological in-group cause the inter-group bias detailed above? Or are such attitudes simply the product of ideological or partisan extremity? The SIT literature provides ample theoretical and empirical bases for expecting social identity to shape inter-group attitudes, and evidence to that effect stands to further demonstrate the scholarly significance of the present analysis. Therefore, I devote the final empirical section of this chapter to testing the relationship between ideological, as well as partisan, social identity and inter-group attitudes.
Social Identity and Inter-Group Attitudes

In this section, I test the causal relationship between social identity and inter-group attitudes toward partisan groups, ideological groups, and ideological sub-groups within parties. Specifically, I conduct a series of linear regression analyses using partisan social identity, ideological social identity, and relevant control variables to predict inter-group bias, in-group favoritism, and out-group derogation.

Empirical Measurement. The key independent variables in this section’s regression analyses are partisan and ideological social identity. Once more, I measure social identity using the participant’s average level of agreement with three statements tapping psychological attachment to a partisan or ideological in-group. To isolate these variables’ effects from the effects of partisan and ideological extremity, I also include folded seven-point partisan and ideological self-placement scales in each of my analyses.\(^{50}\) Folded self-placement scales are preferable to the full seven-point scales for these tests because they capture the strength of self-placement, much like the social identity scales capture the strength of psychological attachment to a relevant in-group. Thus, folded self-placement scales are most appropriate for separating the effects of social identity from those of partisan or ideological extremity.

Additionally, I control on two demographic variables in my regression analyses: education and age. These variables are particularly relevant when predicting evaluations of ideological groups. More educated individuals are most likely to comprehend

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\(^{50}\) The folded partisan self-placement scale is coded as follows: 1 (Pure Independent), 2 (Independent-leaning Democrat/Independent-leaning Republican), 3 (Democrat/Republican), 4 (Strong Democrat/Strong Republican). The folded ideological self-placement scale is coded as follows: 1 (Moderate), 2 (Slightly liberal/Slightly conservative), 3 (Liberal/Conservative), 4 (Very liberal/Very conservative).
ideological labels and to think about politics in ideological terms (Converse 1964; Hagner and Pierce 1982; Jacoby 1991, 1995). Likewise, older individuals are more likely to have experience with ideological concepts and to have witnessed ideological divisions within parties over the course of a lifetime.

The theoretical tenets and empirical findings of the SIT literature indicate that individuals with higher levels of social identity will engage in greater levels of inter-group bias. Thus, I expect the relationship between social identity and inter-group bias to be significant and positive in each case. Similarly, I expect social identity to be positively associated with in-group favoritism but negatively associated with out-group derogation. To be sure, the two social identity scales are likely to have varying effects depending on whether I am predicting inter-group attitudes toward partisan groups, ideological groups, or ideological sub-groups within parties. I expect the partisan social identity scale to be significant when predicting partisan inter-group attitudes; the ideological social identity scale to be significant when predicting ideological inter-group attitudes; and both social identity scales to be significant when predicting inter-group attitudes toward ideological sub-groups within parties.

*Empirical Evidence.* Table 3.5 presents results from the first set of linear regression analyses, predicting inter-group attitudes toward partisan groups. As I hypothesize, the partisan social identity scale significantly and positively predicts inter-group bias between partisan groups; in other words, a participant’s evaluation of his or her partisan in-group, relative to the participant’s average evaluation of both partisan out-groups, becomes more favorable as partisan social identity becomes stronger. Partisan social identity also causes partisan in-group favoritism to increase at a statistically
The only aspect of partisan inter-group bias not associated with partisan social identity is out-group derogation. The ideological social identity scale, however, is statistically significant and negatively signed in the derogation model; as ideological social identity becomes stronger, partisan out-group evaluations become less favorable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Partisan Inter-Group Bias</th>
<th>Partisan In-Group Favoritism</th>
<th>Partisan Out-Group Derogation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Social Identity</td>
<td>1.799</td>
<td>0.228</td>
<td>-1.572*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.345)</td>
<td>(1.016)</td>
<td>(0.640)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folded Ideological Self-Place</td>
<td>5.689***</td>
<td>3.356**</td>
<td>-2.333***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.434)</td>
<td>(1.083)</td>
<td>(0.682)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisan Social Identity</td>
<td>4.627***</td>
<td>4.617***</td>
<td>-0.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.379)</td>
<td>(1.042)</td>
<td>(0.656)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folded Party Identification</td>
<td>8.104***</td>
<td>5.370***</td>
<td>-2.734***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.168)</td>
<td>(1.638)</td>
<td>(1.031)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-1.248</td>
<td>-1.010</td>
<td>0.238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.868)</td>
<td>(0.656)</td>
<td>(0.413)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.041</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>0.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.401)</td>
<td>(0.303)</td>
<td>(0.191)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-33.190***</td>
<td>-19.733**</td>
<td>13.456**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10.037)</td>
<td>(7.582)</td>
<td>(4.772)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5: Predictors of Partisan Inter-Group Attitudes

*Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients, standard errors are in parentheses.
***Significant at .001.; **Significant at .01; *Significant at .05; +Significant at .1

The folded partisan and ideological self-placement scales also significantly influence partisan inter-group bias, with effects that are more consistent than those of the
social identity scales in this particular analysis. Both self-placement scales significantly predict inter-group bias, in-group favoritism, and out-group derogation between partisan groups, and all in the expected directions. Clearly, inter-group bias among partisan groups stems from multiple sources, including partisan/ideological extremity as well as partisan/ideological social identity. While the self-placement scales are more consistent in this portion of the analysis, it is impressive that the social identity scales perform so well even when controlling for those more familiar aspects of political identification.

Ideological social identity’s effects on inter-group attitudes prove exceptionally consistent and robust when predicting inter-group attitudes toward ideological groups. As shown in Table 3.6, ISI significantly predicts inter-group bias, in-group favoritism, and out-group derogation among ideological groups, even when controlling on the folded partisan and ideological self-placement scales. Partisan social identity, however, is not significant in any of these analyses. Also, while the folded partisan and ideological self-placement scales significantly predict inter-group bias and in-group favoritism, neither significantly predicts out-group derogation.
A similar pattern of results emerges when predicting inter-group attitudes toward ideological sub-groups within parties, as seen in Table 3.7. Once more, ideological social identity significantly predicts inter-group bias, in-group favoritism, and out-group derogation. Partisan social identity also significantly predicts out-group derogation, although its effects are opposite in direction from those of ideological social identity. Ideological in-group attachments apparently cause out-sub-group evaluations to become
significantly more negative, while partisan in-group attachments provide a counterbalance toward more positive out-sub-group evaluations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Ideological Inter-Sub Group Bias</th>
<th>Ideological In-Sub-Group Favoritism</th>
<th>Ideological Out-Sub-Group Derogation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Social Identity</td>
<td>6.642***</td>
<td>4.224***</td>
<td>-2.419**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.610)</td>
<td>(1.100)</td>
<td>(0.906)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folded Ideological Self-Place.</td>
<td>5.828***</td>
<td>5.508***</td>
<td>-0.320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.716)</td>
<td>(1.172)</td>
<td>(0.966)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisan Social Identity</td>
<td>-3.158+</td>
<td>-0.278</td>
<td>2.881**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.650)</td>
<td>(1.127)</td>
<td>(0.929)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.594)</td>
<td>(1.772)</td>
<td>(1.460)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.880</td>
<td>-0.778</td>
<td>0.102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.039)</td>
<td>(0.710)</td>
<td>(0.585)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.036</td>
<td>-0.076</td>
<td>-0.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.480)</td>
<td>(0.328)</td>
<td>(0.270)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-36.291**</td>
<td>-22.127**</td>
<td>14.164*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(12.010)</td>
<td>(8.206)</td>
<td>(6.760)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| N                         | 209                              | 209                                | 209                                 |
| Adjusted R-Square         | 0.274                            | 0.342                              | 0.061                               |

Table 3.7: Predictors of Attitudes Toward Ideological Sub-Groups Within Parties

*Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients, standard errors are in parentheses.
***Significant at .001.; **Significant at .01; *Significant at .05; +Significant at .1

Presumably, partisan attachment works against ideological attachment when evaluating groups that share the same party but differ on ideology. To the extent that an individual has strong partisan and ideological social identities, then, his or her evaluation of ideological out-sub-groups is likely to be characterized by conflicting influences.
toward favoritism and derogation. Often, these influences may cancel each other out; when one social identity is stronger than the other, though, the balance might tip toward more negative (stronger ISI) or positive (stronger PSI) evaluations of ideological out-sub-groups.

The folded party identification scale also significantly predicts inter-group bias, in-group favoritism, and out-group derogation, toward ideological sub-groups within parties. Moreover, the directions of these effects mirror those of ideological social identity. The folded ideological self-placement scale, however, only significantly predicts inter-group bias and in-group favoritism, and not out-group derogation.

The sources of inter-group bias again prove to be several, this time with respect to ideological groups and ideological sub-groups within parties. However, in these tests, ideological social identity is an exceptionally consistent and robust predictor of inter-group attitudes. These results are quite impressive and, in combination with the previous chapter’s demonstration of ideological social identity’s behavioral significance, they demonstrate ideological social identity’s attitudinal significance with respect to relevant inter-group attitudes including inter-group bias, in-group favoritism, and out-group derogation.

Discussion

The analyses presented in this chapter indicate that party elites, even more so than the mass public, often have strong ideological social identities. Stated differently, elites are especially likely to view ideological in-groups as an extension of self-identity. The
Social Identity Theory literature and this dissertation’s empirical analysis therefore predict that ideological social identity should significantly influence the political behaviors and attitudes of these disproportionately influential political actors. In this sense, the present analysis further and more expansively demonstrates the practical and scholarly importance of studying ideological social identity.

To make practical this unique study of ideological social identity among party elites, I conducted an original survey of delegates to the 2008 national party conventions. Political scientists commonly view delegates as a reasonable and rather accessible approximation of political elites, in general, or more precisely party elites. Conceptually, then, my use of a delegate sample is quite appropriate for this analysis. Empirically, my characterization of elites is credible also. In Table 3.1, I compare the demographic and political characteristics of my delegate sample with those of the 2008 CBS/New York Times Delegate Poll, which is among the most sophisticated and well-respected delegate surveys available. The comparability of the delegate samples affirms my survey’s representativeness in most cases and provides a reasonable basis for generalizing this chapter’s conclusions to 2008 convention delegates, as a whole, although more so for Republicans.

I also describe participants’ candidate preferences in the 2008 primaries in Table 3.2, and compare the preferences of participants from each state to the 2008 primary results from that state. In most cases, a state’s majority preference is consistent between surveyed and pledged delegates, but more so on the Republican side. In fact, the Democratic delegates I surveyed are less representative of Democratic delegates as a whole and less representative of their states’ convention delegations, being somewhat
more liberal and pro-Obama as well as considerably more white. Thus, my analysis of Democratic delegates must be interpreted with some caution, particularly with respect to the ideological social identity levels that figure to be higher among more liberal and white participants.

My empirical analysis of the delegate survey data shows ideological social identity to be common among party elites in 2008, and much stronger on average than it is for members of the mass public. In fact, the average ISI level among delegates significantly exceeds the seven-point ISI scale’s neutral point, and it is a full point higher than that of the nationally representative participant sample from Chapter 2. Delegates’ average partisan social identity level also is one point higher than that of the mass public sample from Chapter 2, and the delegates’ PSI scores significantly exceed their ISI scores, on average. Thus, according to this analysis, ideological social identity is particularly strong among party elites but it is not as strong as partisan social identity. Based on this and subsequent analysis, it is apparent that partisan in-groups are more central to elites’ self-concept than ideological in-groups. Nonetheless, delegates seem to identify strongly with both groups, and much more so than the mass public.

Another major difference between party elites and the mass public, according to my analysis, is that, among the former, social identity levels do not vary significantly across political groups. In Chapter 2, I find that self-identified conservatives have somewhat higher ISI levels than self-described liberals, and conservative Republicans have significantly greater attachment to their ideological in-group than their partisan in-group. Among 2008 convention delegates, conservatives actually average lower ISI scores than liberals, and conservative Republicans have a stronger relative attachment to
their partisan, over ideological, in-group than do liberal Democrats. Of course, it is importan
In addition to making comparisons with the mass public, I pursue two additional lines of empirical inquiry unique to this analysis. First, I capitalize upon the exceptional characteristics of the delegate sample to determine whether ideological or partisan in-groups are most essential to self-definition for individuals with strong attachment to both identity groups. Indeed, the Social Identity Theory literature establishes that an individual’s overall social identity typically comprises multiple constituent social identities. Moreover, individuals vary in their subjective representations of the relationship between identity groups, sometimes viewing them as co-equal and sometimes viewing them as superordinate and subordinate.

Empirical analysis supports my hypothesis that participants tend to view their partisan in-group as a superordinate category encompassing several ideological sub-groups. Participants perceive partisan in-groups as particularly inclusive, whereas they perceive ideological in-groups to be more exclusive; this finding is consistent with a view of ideological groups as nested within partisan groups, much like an exclusive in-group such as Ohioans would be nested within a more inclusive in-group such as Americans. Also, participants are significantly more likely to select a partisan in-group as their primary political label, as should be the case if they view the partisan in-group as superordinate. Together, these findings are entirely consistent with the hypothesis that participants’ primary psychological attachment is to a partisan in-group, whereas ideological in-group attachments are typically important but subordinate. Thus, ideological in-groups and out-groups are best characterized as sub-groups operating within the overarching context of a partisan superordinate category.
Next, my analysis of inter-group attitudes demonstrates that inter-group bias pervades delegates’ attitudes toward partisan groups, ideological groups, and ideological sub-groups within parties. In each comparison category, participants rate in-groups significantly more positively than they rate relevant out-groups. The nature of inter-group bias varies somewhat between comparison categories, however. Inter-group bias comprises in-group favoritism and out-group derogation with respect to partisan and ideological inter-group attitudes. However, out-group derogation does not occur between ideological sub-groups within a partisan superordinate category; inter-group bias certainly occurs between ideological sub-groups, but it is attributable to in-group favoritism and not out-group derogation.

These results are interesting for three principal reasons. First, they suggest that partisan and ideological polarization, of which there is considerable evidence in the inter-group bias scores, stems from negative out-group evaluations as well as positive in-group evaluations. This finding is consistent with the argument from some scholars and pundits that partisan and ideological groups are bitterly divided today. Of course, these data reflect the inter-group attitudes of party elites from a particular election year; a more representative sample is necessary to draw more general conclusions about the nature of political attitudes and polarization in American politics.

Second, these findings are interesting because they conflict with the preponderance of SIT studies showing inter-group bias to be the product of in-group favoritism and not out-group derogation. Brewer (1999), however, argues that political competition represents one of the few conditions likely to bring about out-group derogation. Indeed, my analysis of ideological and partisan inter-group bias seems to
provide unique support for Brewer’s argument. If that argument is accurate, the fact that out-derogation does not occur between ideological sub-groups within parties would seem to suggest that participants do not perceive a high level of political competition between the sub-groups, or at least not enough competition to warrant negative evaluation.

Finally, and related to the last point, my analysis of inter-group attitudes is interesting because it indicates that participants respond differently to out-group members if only they are known to be in-group members on another dimension. In contrast to their negative evaluation of general partisan or ideological out-groups, participants favorably evaluate ideological out-groups within the same partisan in-group. This finding is somewhat surprising given the intense bitterness of many intra-party ideological battles, but consistent with works in the SIT literature suggesting that shared superordinate categorization reduces inter-group discrimination (Gaertner and Dovidio 2000). To put it in more explicitly political terms, partisan ire often turns toward alleged ideological apostates (e.g. Democrats and Joe Lieberman, Republicans and John McCain) and becomes so intense as to seem greater than that directed toward members of the partisan and ideological opposition. However, my analysis suggests that evaluations of out-sub-group members tend to be positive, albeit much less positive than evaluations of in-sub-group members.

My analysis also indicates that social identity is a principal source of the inter-group attitudes just described, at least when a social identity is relevant to the groups being evaluated. In the case of partisan inter-group attitudes, partisan social identity significantly and positively predicts inter-group bias and in-group favoritism. Whereas partisan social identity does not significantly predict out-group derogation, though,
ideological social identity is significant. The results are more clear-cut when predicting ideological inter-group attitudes; ideological social identity is significant and correctly signed for each measure of inter-group attitudes, while partisan social identity is not significant in any model.

Ideological and partisan social identity both influence evaluations of ideological sub-groups within parties. Ideological social identity is significant and correctly signed in models predicting inter-group bias, in-group favoritism, and out-group derogation toward ideological sub-groups. Meanwhile, partisan social identity is marginally significant in the inter-group bias model, not significant in the in-group favoritism model, and significant in the out-group derogation model. Partisan social identity is positively signed in the out-group derogation model, meaning that stronger attachment to a partisan in-group is associated with more positive evaluations of opposing sub-groups within a participant’s party.

This last finding is quite interesting, but not surprising since it makes sense for participants who identify strongly with a partisan in-group to positively evaluate all sub-groups within their party. To the extent that participants also identify strongly with an ideological in-group, however, they tend to more negatively evaluate ideological out-sub-groups. Thus, the effects of both social identities apparently counterbalance one another when evaluating ideological out-sub-groups, and an imbalance in the strength of these identities is likely to tip evaluations in the direction associated with the stronger identity.

The empirical analyses described above do much to demonstrate the attitudinal significance of ideological, as well as partisan, social identity. The results demonstrate that ideological and partisan social identities play a causal role in shaping participants’
attitudes toward political in-groups and out-groups. The empirical link between social identity and inter-group attitudes is important because those attitudes are likely to influence political behavior and intra-party dynamics.

Taken together, the empirical results from this and the previous chapter provide striking evidence regarding the political relevance of ideological social identity, as well as the relevance of social identities in general. Ideological social identity is common in the general public and even more robust among party elites, at least in 2008; it shapes political attitudes toward a wide range of political in-groups and out-groups; and it contributes significantly to key aspects of mass political behavior including vote choice in party primaries and general elections. With the attitudinal and behavioral significance of ideological social identity therefore well-established, in the next chapter I turn to estimating developments in the prevalence as well as attitudinal and behavioral significance of ideological social identity over the past quarter-century, using American National Election Studies data from 1984 through 2008.
CHAPTER 4: IDEOLOGICAL SOCIAL IDENTITY IN THE 1984-2008 AMERICAN NATIONAL ELECTION STUDIES

Introduction

The preceding analyses indicate that ideological social identity (ISI) is widespread in the American public and particularly common among party elites. Also, evidence from Chapters 2 and 3 shows that ISI significantly influences important political behaviors and attitudes, including vote choice and inter-group evaluations. In this chapter, I analyze American National Election Studies (ANES) data from 1984-2008 in order to estimate the American public’s levels of ideological social identity over the past quarter-century, and to gauge ISI’s effects on vote choice over that time. Additionally, this analysis affords valuable opportunities to more rigorously test ISI’s behavioral and attitudinal significance when controlling on relevant demographic and policy preference variables not available in the previous analyses.

The availability of policy preference measures, many appearing consistently throughout the 1984-2008 ANES datasets, also allows me to test the relationship between ISI and ideological constraint. I have suggested earlier in this dissertation that psychological attachment to ideological in-groups might facilitate ideologically consistent thinking and behavior by providing psychological incentives for attention and adherence to behavioral cues from other members of an ideological in-group. If this were
the case, then ISI would help to make ideological identification a more practical guide for political behavior than most studies of ideological comprehension suggest it could be. I test the ISI-constraint relationship in hopes of providing unique perspective on the viability and significance of this important proposition.

Hypotheses

In this analysis, I test a series of hypotheses relevant to evaluating the strength and political significance of ideological social identity over the past quarter-century. My first empirical objective is to validate findings from previous chapters concerning the ISI scale’s empirical distinctiveness. I expect to find that the ISI and self-placement scales consistently capture distinct aspects of ideological identification across the 1984-2008 ANES time series.

My second empirical objective in this analysis is to estimate variation in the mass public’s ISI levels over time. There is ample reason to believe that ISI could have become more prevalent in recent years. First, ideological sorting within the parties (Abramowitz 2010; Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Fiorina 2006; Levendusky 2009) has made it increasingly practical and attractive for party leaders and supporters to frame political differences in ideological terms, promoting ideological in-groups and denigrating ideological out-groups, across and within parties. Second, and related to the first point, many political figures closely associated with ideological rhetoric and symbolism have risen to the peak of political prominence since the 1980s, starting with President Ronald Reagan and continuing to the present day with figures such as Sarah
Palin. Together, these developments seem likely to have increased the salience and psychological significance of ideological identification. What is more, the American public’s capacity to think in ideological terms has increased over time; although still far from ideally informed, the public has become increasingly familiar with ideological concepts and able to comprehend ideology’s political implications in recent decades (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Bennett 1995; Hetherington 2001; Layman 2001). All of these factors combine to suggest that the American public’s average level of ideological social identity might have increased since 1984, and I hypothesize this to be the case.

In addition to testing for variation in ISI levels within the mass public between 1984 and 2008, I also explore variation in ISI levels across competing political groups. As is the case in Chapter 2, I expect that self-identified conservatives will tend to have higher levels of ideological social identity than liberals. I see no reason to hypothesize variation in this pattern over time, though. I hypothesize that, across the 1984-2008 time period, conservatives consistently have higher levels of ideological social identity than liberals.

My third empirical objective is to test the behavioral significance of ISI in the 1984-2008 ANES datasets. The reasons for doing so are twofold. First, this analysis is designed to check the validity of my previous conclusions about ISI’s relevance to vote choice. Specifically, I propose and find in Chapter 2 an interaction between ideological social identity and ideological self-placement, whereby the latter’s effect on vote choice

51 Indeed, Levine et al. (1997) attribute the rise in ideological conflict, at least among elites but also with important consequences for the mass public, to President Reagan’s more ideological rhetoric and policies.
in presidential and U.S. House elections is limited to instances in which ISI is at least moderate in strength. In this chapter, I test the interaction effect of ISI and ideological self-placement on vote choice in the 1984-2008 presidential elections. This analysis represents a valuable opportunity to validate my previous conclusions in distinct and nationally representative datasets that also contain several relevant policy preference controls not available in the data from previous chapters.

Additionally, I test ISI’s effect on vote choice in order to determine whether ISI’s behavioral relevance has changed over time. It is quite plausible that ideological differences were not salient enough to shape vote choice until recent years, and thus irrelevant to such behavior in the 1980s or even 1990s. I do not see any clear reason to propose that ISI’s effects were so limited in the early years herein analyzed, and so I do not propose specific variations in significance across election years. However, it is plausible that ISI’s behavioral relevance might have evolved over time, only recently becoming significant in explaining vote choice as ideological differences became more salient and ISI levels perhaps grew stronger throughout the mass public. Lacking clear motivation to propose a change in ISI’s significance at any particular point, I expect consistent behavioral effects across election years. Specifically, I hypothesize that ideological self-placement’s effect on vote choice in the 1984-2008 presidential elections is limited to instances in which ideological social identity is at least moderate in strength.

Finally, for reasons addressed briefly at the beginning of this chapter, I hypothesize a positive relationship between ideological social identity and ideological constraint. My primary theoretical motivation for proposing this hypothesis is Self-Categorization Theory, or SCT (Oakes et al. 1994; Turner 1985; Turner et al. 1987),
which predicts, in part, that individuals will seek out and adhere to in-group behavioral cues for the purpose of maintaining their sense of membership in a valued social ingroup. To the extent that individuals have strong ideological social identities, then, SCT predicts that they will find it increasingly important to seek out and follow behavioral cues obtained from other ideological in-group members, such as political leaders and media figures. Since many of those cues are likely to be endorsements of ideologically consistent policies or applicable principles coming from politically sophisticated sources, I expect that individuals who have strong ideological social identities will also hold more consistent, or ideologically constrained, political views even if they are lacking in independent means of ideological comprehension.

Indeed, much of the theoretical and empirical literature on ideology stresses the importance of elite cues in shaping conceptions of “ideological packages” (Converse 1964; Downs 1957; see also Carmines and Stimson 1989, Kinder 1998). “[To] the extent that multiple idea-elements of a belief system are socially diffused from such creative sources [as political elites], they tend to be diffused in ‘packages,’ which consumers come to see as natural wholes, for they are presented in such terms,” Converse argues (p. 212). Party elites cues are critical not just for the development of ideological constraint, but also for processing ideological content of all kinds. According to Jost, Federico, and Napier (2009, p. 317): “The main factor governing the mass acquisition of ideological content seems to be attention to and comprehension of information flowing from political elites.” Therefore, party elites provide a very plausible, albeit not always necessary, source of cues for ideologically consistent thinking and behavior. Such cues are likely to influence individuals with strong ideological social identities, because they help to
communicate in-group norms that must be upheld in order to maintain stable in-group membership.

This perspective is particularly interesting and important because previous studies of ideological constraint have tended to focus upon its relationship to political sophistication (e.g. Converse 1964). However, there is much evidence to suggest that the American public, in general, is incapable of such ideologically sophisticated thinking and behavior (Campbell et al. 1960; Levitin and Miller 1979; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; Luttbeg and Gant 1985). In fact, such findings have fueled scholarly pessimism about the plausibility of widespread ideological constraint and, in turn, ideology’s credibility as a meaningful source of political identity and behavioral guidance.

I contend that ideology’s relevance is not so dependent upon ideological sophistication, and in fact it can serve a practical role in informing political decisions. In doing so, I am hardly alone among ideology scholars. Levitin and Miller (1979) and Luttbeg and Gant (1985), for example, both find evidence of limited ideological sophistication in the mass public and yet maintain that ideology can and does serve as a relevant and important political influence. In fact, Luttbeg and Gant find that ideological sophisticates and non-sophisticates do not differ significantly in their ability to engage in issue voting, provided non-sophisticates at least make an attempt at ideological placement. Based on such evidence, many scholars have concluded that ideology can be quite meaningful and influential despite the public’s lack of ideological sophistication. Feldman (1988, p. 478), for one, concludes: “It is therefore possible for people to utilize ideological labels without a working knowledge of the logic of a political ideology.” Likewise, Jost (2006, p. 654) says: “although ordinary people by no means pass the
strictest tests imaginable for ideological sophistication, most of them do think, feel, and behave in ideologically meaningful and interpretable terms.”

To the extent that individuals exhibit ideological constraint, I argue that in many cases they do so not because they are political sophisticates bound by well-understood ideological principles but because they are individuals whose membership within an ideological in-group is psychologically valuable and could be jeopardized by ignoring or disagreeing with that group on important matters of public policy. Because ideological in-group cues are likely to come from political sophisticates whose views tend toward ideological constraint, less sophisticated in-group members can appear to have higher levels of ideological constraint simply because they are obeying in-group leaders’ cues.

Methodology

To test the hypotheses described above, I analyze American National Election Studies datasets from 1984, 1988, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, and 2008.52 ANES datasets are ideal for the purposes of this analysis because they use nationally representative respondent samples, measure a wide range of relevant political and demographic variables, and consistently measure numerous policy preferences across years by using identical, or nearly identical, questions and response options.

52 All data used in this chapter were obtained from the American National Election Studies website (www.electionstudies.org).
For all of their advantages, the ANES have one major limitation relevant to testing the preceding hypotheses: they do not include a direct measure of ideological social identity, or any other social identity for that matter. Of course, the absence of such variables is not surprising; as previously noted, this dissertation represents the first theoretical and empirical treatment of ideological social identity. The ideal method for measuring ISI is to use an adapted version of Mael and Tetrick’s (1992) IDPG scale, as I do in the original surveys described in Chapters 2 and 3. Such measures are not available in the ANES or in any other datasets that extend into previous decades. Thus, the most sensible analytical strategy – as well as this chapter’s greatest methodological challenge – is to identify a reasonably approximate measure of ideological social identity that can be tracked and tested across recent ANES datasets.

Feeling thermometers represent the most practical basis for approximating ideological social identity levels over recent decades. Since 1964, the ANES have included measures in each quadrennial survey asking respondents to rate ideological groups (liberals and conservatives, but not moderates) on an imagined “feeling thermometer” ranging from 0 (coldest feelings) to 100 (warmest feelings). Such affective evaluations are conceptually similar to the psychological attachments that social identity measures attempt to capture. Indeed, it stands to reason that affective evaluations of an ideological in-group and psychological attachment to that group should vary systematically; as in-group membership becomes more central to an individual’s self-
concept, it becomes more important that he or she positively evaluate the in-group in order to positively evaluate the self.

Evidence from Chapter 3 supports the preceding argument; the ISI scales significantly and positively predict measures of ideological inter-group bias and in-group favoritism, both of which derive from feeling thermometer ratings. In contrast, ideological self-placement, the other measure of respondent ideology consistent across much of the ANES time series, is conceptually and empirically distinct from ISI. Conceptually, psychological attachment to an ideological in-group is not a logical prerequisite for ideological extremity, and ideological centrism does not preclude strong attachment. Empirically, evidence from Chapters 2 and 3, including correlations and summaries of ISI levels across self-placement levels, demonstrate that there is no clear systematic relationship between ideological self-placement and ideological social identity.

To construct an ANES-based ideological social identity measure, I begin by classifying each respondent as a conservative, liberal, or moderate, based on his or her response to the ideological self-placement scale. Conservatives are those respondents who locate themselves at any of the three conservative positions on the self-placement scale, while liberals are those respondents who locate themselves at any of the three liberal positions on the self-placement scale. Moderates are those respondents who locate themselves at the neutral point on the self-placement scale, report that they do not know their ideological position, or report that they have not thought much about ideology and therefore cannot answer.
Next, I determine each respondent’s thermometer rating of the ideological group with which he or she reports identifying. For example, a self-identified liberal’s ISI measure at this point would represent his or her thermometer rating of the group “liberals,” as would a self-identified conservative’s rating of the group “conservatives.” Moderates, on the other hand, must be excluded from analysis at this point because the ANES datasets do not include a feeling thermometer for “moderates,” or any variation thereof. Omitting moderates from my analysis is regrettable, particularly because it excludes so many respondents as to make the samples that I analyze less than representative of the mass public. However, the ANES, as well as other available time series data, offer no other consistent ideology measures aside from the self-placement scale. To conduct longitudinal analysis of ideological social identity, then, I must exclude moderates from analysis due to the lack of a moderate feeling thermometer. Doing so limits the generalizability of my empirical findings, to the point that they must be treated as an indicative rather than conclusive analysis of the mass public.

The final step in constructing my ANES-based measure of ideological social identity is to subtract from the in-group thermometer rating each respondent’s average

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53 The 1984-2000 ANES do include questions asking respondents whether or not they feel close to liberals and conservatives, as groups. This is an attractive measure for studying ideological social identity, but it has not appeared in the ANES over the past decade and again it does not include moderates as a target.

54 Alternatively, it would be possible for me to simply assign moderate the lowest score (0) on the ISI scale in order to include them in the analysis, since they do not identify as liberals or conservatives and so they should not have any liberal or conservative social identity. However, the ISI scale measures levels of social identification with a respondent’s ideological in-group. Theoretically, I believe it would be inappropriate to treat moderates as having no social identity when I cannot measure their feelings about their ideological in-group, moderates. Perhaps most importantly, from an empirical standpoint, the results from Chapter 2 indicate that it is inaccurate to treat moderates as lacking ideological social identity. On average, moderate participants score just below the midpoint of the ISI scale, at 3.91, in that analysis. Lacking any means of evaluating moderates’ feelings about their ideological in-group, the optimal, albeit unfortunate, solution is to exclude them from analysis.
rating of political figures and groups appearing as feeling thermometer targets in each of the 1984-2008 ANES datasets. As in the previous chapter, I do not use respondents’ raw ideological in-group rating because individuals vary in their use of feeling thermometers (Green 1988; Knight 1984; Wilcox et al. 1989). For example, one respondent might rate all groups at 50, on average, while another might rate all groups at 70, on average. If both of these respondents were to rate their ideological in-group at 70, the raw numbers would indicate that they have evaluated the group equally positively. However, by subtracting off the respondents’ average thermometer rating, it becomes clear that the second respondent rates his or her in-group at the same point as the average target, while the first respondent rates the in-group much more positively (twenty points higher).

Each of the 1984-2008 ANES includes an abundance of feeling thermometers, pertaining to a wide range of domestic and international figures and groups. Some of these figures and groups are clearly political in nature (e.g. Barack Obama, Republicans),

An alternative measurement strategy would be to subtract respondents’ thermometer rating of an ideological (partisan) out-group from their thermometer rating of an ideological (partisan) in-group, as I do when measuring inter-group bias in Chapter 3. I subtract respondents’ average thermometer rating of political figures and groups from their in-group thermometer rating instead, because this measure is more analogous to the way in which I directly measure ideological social identity in the surveys from Chapters 2 and 3. The direct ISI measures reference only the participant’s ideological or partisan in-group, and do not reference out-groups. If I were to use the inter-group bias measure in this analysis, I would be measuring ideological social identity as the difference between evaluations of in-groups and out-groups. Such a measurement strategy is not consistent with my formulation of the direct ISI measures.

Also, on more theoretical grounds, I do not believe identification with an in-group necessarily implies distance from relevant out-groups. The in-group is central to the process of identification; if an individual does not perceive himself or herself to be a member of that group in any way, then identification with the group is non-existent. However, identification does not necessarily imply certain feelings of closeness to, or distance from, an out-group. For example, an African-American who identifies strongly with his or her racial group might just as well feel indifferent or hostile toward whites or other racial groups. In this example, the individual’s level of identification with African-Americans is not theoretically or logically dependent upon feelings of closeness toward racial out-groups, but it is dependent upon feelings of closeness toward his or her racial in-group. In the same way, I conceptualize ideological in-group identification, in the form of self-placement or social identity, as dependent upon feelings about the ideological in-group, and not necessarily dependent upon feelings about ideological out-groups.
while others are broader in scope (e.g. Catholics, gays and lesbians). I find it most appropriate to calculate each respondent’s average rating of explicitly political figures and groups for use in the ISI measure, since I am subtracting that average rating from respondents’ ratings of another explicitly political group, either liberals or conservatives. Also, to provide a consistent range of thermometer targets, I use only ratings of political figures and groups included in each of the 1984-2008 ANES: liberals, conservatives, Democrats, Republicans, and that year’s Democratic presidential nominee, Republican presidential nominee, Democratic vice presidential nominee, and Republican vice presidential nominee.

The ANES-based ISI scales that I use in this analysis capture the extent to which respondents rate their ideological in-group above or below other political figures and groups, on average. Positive scores indicate that respondents rate the ideological in-group above the average political target, while negative scores indicate that respondents rate the ideological in-group below the average political target.

**Dependent Variables**

To test the behavioral and attitudinal effects of ideological social identity over the 1984-2008 period, I also code two dependent variables in each dataset measuring vote choice and ideological constraint.

The ANES datasets contain many measures of vote choice, including respondents’ reported votes for President, U.S. Senator, U.S. House, and other offices. To avoid presenting an unwieldy volume of analysis, I focus exclusively upon predicting
vote choice in presidential elections. For each dataset, I code the presidential vote choice variable one for a Democratic Party vote, zero for a Republican Party vote, and missing otherwise.\footnote{In 1992, 18.0\% of ANES respondents reported voting for Independent candidate Ross Perot. This is the only year that I analyze in which a third-party candidate received a large proportion of the presidential vote. While I would certainly prefer not to exclude the Perot voters from the 1992 vote choice models, doing so would require different methods of coding and analysis that would be inconsistent with all of the other vote choice models. Also, I see no theoretical reason to believe that including the Perot voters would lead to substantively different conclusions in comparison to those I obtain from models using the two-party vote dependent variable.}

The second, and most complex, dependent variable measures ideological constraint, or the consistency with which the respondent adheres to a specific set of ideological principles. Each ANES dataset contains numerous measures of policy preferences that could be used to capture levels of ideological constraint. I use three criteria to select variables from among these many options. First, the variables have to encompass each of the major policy dimensions salient in American politics during the 1984-2008 period, including fiscal, social welfare, social/moral, national defense, and racial issues.\footnote{Including a full range of relevant issue dimensions is consistent with Luskin’s (1987) criterion that political belief systems must be conceptualized as wide-ranging.} Omitting or over-representing any major policy dimension would jeopardize the comprehensiveness and balance of the ideological constraint measure.

Second, the selected policy variables have to be measured consistently across each of the seven datasets. This way, variation in the relationship between ISI and ideological constraint cannot be attributed to the use of different policy variables in different datasets. Fortunately, the ANES include several policy variables measured consistently over much of the 1984-2008 time series. However, many other policy variables are not measured consistently across datasets because they are uniquely relevant.
to a particular election or set of elections. For example, opinions on diplomacy versus military intervention represent perhaps the most relevant national defense/foreign policy issue of the 2004 presidential election (Erikson and Tedin 2007), given recent controversies over the Iraq War at that time, but this variable cannot be found in any other ANES dataset. Other issues appear in a limited number of datasets because they are relatively new topics of political debate; for example, only the 2004 and 2008 ANES measure opinions about gay marriage. Thus, restricting the ideological constraint index to include only policies measured consistently across datasets necessitates excluding some variables that are exceptionally relevant to particular elections. While doing so is unfortunate, it does represent a necessary and reasonable cost relative to the benefits of using an ideological constraint measure that is directly comparable across datasets.

The third and final criterion for the ideological constraint measure is that reasonably clear ideological and/or partisan divisions must characterize each policy included in it. If, on the other hand, the ideological and/or partisan implications of a policy are unclear, or if there is great consensus on a particular policy, a variable measuring preferences on that issue is likely to be a poor indicator of ideological constraint. For example, each of the 1984-2008 ANES includes a question asking whether respondents believe women and men should have an equal role in society or if a woman’s place is in the home. The dynamics of this issue have changed considerably over time, but in recent years American society has reached somewhat of a consensus in support of at least the principle of gender equality.58 Also, the partisan and ideological

58 In the 2008 ANES, only 1.8% of respondents said that a woman’s place is in the home, and 65.7% said that men and women should have equal roles.
implications of this issue are quite unclear; whereas resistance to women’s equality traditionally has been associated with the political Right, such views are not particularly salient and clear in those circles today. In fact, one of the most popular conservative figures, particularly among the social conservatives often viewed as most resistant to gender equality, is a female politician, Sarah Palin. Thus, I would argue that some issues, such as women’s role, are too ideologically ambiguous to warrant inclusion in the ideological constraint measure.

In accordance with the three criteria delineated above, I use five policy preferences to measure ideological constraint in each dataset: government spending and services, healthcare, abortion, defense spending, and government aid to African-Americans. Respectively, these issues encompass each of the five major policy dimensions listed above: fiscal, social welfare, social/moral, national defense, and racial policy. Also, each ANES dataset from 1984-2008 measures preferences on these five policies, using identical or nearly identical question wording and response options. Finally, ideological/partisan divisions on each issue are relatively clear. Conservatives should prefer or lean toward preferring reduced government spending, private healthcare, highly restricted or no legal access to abortion, increased defense spending, and self-reliance among African-Americans; liberals should prefer or lean toward preferring increased government spending, government provision of healthcare, access to legal abortion in all or most cases, decreased defense spending, and government aid to African-Americans.

Only 2.3% of conservatives said a woman’s place is in the home, versus 0.5% of liberals. In terms of party identification, only 1.8% of Republicans and 1.7% of Democrats said that a woman’s place is in the home.
To operationalize ideological constraint, I begin by coding respondents’ expressed preference on each policy as liberal, conservative, or neutral. Any non-neutral response favoring one of the liberal preferences designated above is coded \(-1\), while any non-neutral response favoring one of the conservative preferences designated above is coded \(+1\). A neutral response, including selecting the middle value on a policy scale or providing a “don’t know” response, is coded as zero. I sum recoded responses to all five policies to create an eleven-point scale ranging from \(-5\) (liberal preference on each issue) to \(+5\) (conservative preference on each issue). Finally, since the ideological social identity scale ranges from weakest to strongest and does not distinguish between ideologies, I also code the constraint variable to range from lowest to highest constraint, regardless of ideology. Specifically, I fold the initial eleven-point constraint measure to create a six-point index, ranging from zero (no ideological constraint) to five (ideological constraint across all five issues).

*Independent Variables*

As in tests from previous chapters, I include a series of independent variables in each of my predictive models. Among these variables are demographic and political variables familiar from previous analyses, as well as several policy preferences that are new to this analysis.

The first, and most important, variable is the approximate ANES measure of ideological social identity described above. To test the interaction effect of ISI and ideological self-placement in the presidential vote choice models, I interact the ISI scale
with the ideological self-placement scale. The ANES measure self-placement essentially in the same way that I measured it in the two previous chapters, with respondents placing themselves at one of seven points on an ideological continuum ranging from “very liberal” to “very conservative,” with “moderate/middle-of-the-road” in the middle. The constraint models also include ideological self-placement, but as an independent predictor and not part of an interaction variable because my objective in these models is to determine whether ISI makes an independent and significant contribution to ideological constraint.

The second set of political predictors measures party identification. First, I include in each model a standard seven-point party identification variable, ranging from “Strong Democrat” to “Strong Republican,” with pure independents at the neutral point. Second, I include a measure of partisan social identity calculated in the same manner as the ideological social identity measure previously described; I subtract each respondent’s average feeling thermometer rating of eight political figures and groups included as targets in each of the 1984-2008 ANES from the thermometer rating of the partisan group with which the respondent identifies in the aforementioned party identification variable.

Third, I include in the vote choice models the five policy preference variables described above. Preferences on government spending and services, healthcare, abortion, defense spending, and government aid to African-Americans, could quite plausibly motivate vote choice in a presidential election, and so they merit inclusion in these models. Moreover, including them in the vote choice models is valuable because such policy predictors are not available for use in empirical models from the previous chapters. Therefore, the present analysis in some ways represents a more rigorous test of ISI’s
relevance to vote choice than what is provided in previous chapters. In other ways, of course, it is less rigorous; the ANES do not include direct measures of ideological social identity, and they do not allow for measuring ISI among moderate respondents.

The final set of predictors included in the empirical models is demographic in nature. As in previous analyses, I control on relevant demographic predictors including age, education, gender, and membership in a racial/ethnic minority group. Age is coded continuously from respondents’ lowest to highest ages; education is coded one for respondents with eleven or fewer years of education, and then continuously until seventeen years, or a professional degree; gender is a dummy variable coded one for female respondents and zero for male respondents; minority is a dummy variable coded one for non-white respondents and zero for white respondents.

Results

In order to properly evaluate the aforementioned hypotheses, first it is necessary to examine the validity of the ANES-based ideological social identity measure. Indeed, the credibility of this analysis largely depends upon this ISI scale’s credibility as a reasonable approximation of the more direct ISI scales used in previous chapters.

Validity and Empirical Distinctiveness of the ANES-Based ISI Scale

The ANES-based ISI scale is a credible, albeit imperfect, measure of ideological social identity. The first indication of its plausibility comes from the convention delegate survey featured in Chapter 3. Unlike the TESS data from Chapter 2, the delegate data
include feeling thermometers that can be used to create an ideological in-group favoritism variable essentially identical to the ANES-based ISI scale. Among 2008 national party convention delegates, the correlation between ideological in-group favoritism and ideological social identity, as measured directly by the adapted IDPG scale, is 0.519. While far from perfect, this correlation is quite strong – in fact, it is much stronger than the correlation between the direct ISI scale and the folded ideological self-placement scale (0.361) among the same delegates.

The correlation between ISI and ideological self-placement provides another opportunity to evaluate the empirical similarity of the direct and ANES-based ISI scales, as well as an opportunity to evaluate the latter’s distinctiveness from ideological self-placement. The correlation between the 2008 ANES-based ISI measure and the folded ideological self-placement scale, 0.392, is not much greater than the aforementioned correlation between ISI and folded self-placement in the delegate survey, 0.361. However, this correlation is higher than in the TESS survey from Chapter 2, where it is 0.286. While the difference between correlations is noteworthy, it hardly seems quantitatively or qualitatively distinct enough to jeopardize the validity of the ANES-based ISI scale.\footnote{The correlation between ISI and self-placement scales varies across datasets, but not dramatically so. Correlations from the 1984-2004 datasets are as follows: 0.294 (1984); 0.271 (1988); 0.301 (1992); 0.404 (1996); 0.386 (2000); 0.438 (2004).}

Also reassuring is the fact that the ANES-based ISI scale and the folded self-placement scale are so modestly correlated that they clearly represent distinct empirical measures. This finding is consistent with findings from Chapters 2 and 3 indicating that the self-placement scale does not adequately capture the social identity component of
ideological identification. Once more, then, there is good reason to believe that integrating the two scales can provide an exceptionally comprehensive measure of ideological identification.

A final method for evaluating the validity and empirical distinctiveness of the ANES-based ISI scale is to compare mean ISI values at different levels of ideological extremity across datasets. In the full representative sample from Chapter 2, self-identified “slightly conservative” or “slightly liberal” respondents have an average score of 3.88 on the 1 (low) to 7 (high) ISI scale; “conservative” and “liberal” respondents score 4.60, on average; and “very conservative” or “very liberal” respondents score 4.82, on average. In comparison, the average ANES-based ISI score for “slightly conservative” or “slightly liberal” respondents in 2008 is 7.23 (meaning that respondents rate their ideological in-group 7.23 points higher than the average political figure or group, on a 0-100 feeling thermometer); “conservative” or “liberal” respondents score 19.64, on average; and “very conservative” or “very liberal” respondents score 25.05, on average. The pattern of results is similar across the 1984-2008 datasets: ISI scores increase as ideological extremity increases, on average, accelerating particularly between the “slightly conservative/slightly liberal” and “conservative/liberal” points on the self-placement scale. Once more, these results, in combination with the correlations described above, indicate that ISI and self-placement measure distinct aspects of a common concept: ideological identification.

Of course, it is impossible to definitively compare the direct and approximate ISI scales in the available data. Only the delegate survey includes both types of ISI scales – and in fact the correlation between scales in that dataset is rather high – but that survey,
unlike the TESS and ANES datasets, is not based on a representative respondent sample. Even comparing results from the representative datasets is difficult, since the TESS survey data were collected two years after those of the 2008 ANES survey. Considering these difficulties, a definitive assessment of the ANES-based ISI scale’s validity is impractical. Those validity tests that are practical, however, indicate an empirical similarity between its performance and that of the direct ISI measure used in previous chapters. In combination with the conceptual similarity of these measures, one based on affective evaluation and the other based on psychological attachment, this evidence suggests that the ANES-based measure is a credible, albeit indirect, method of estimating ideological social identity. Therefore, I find it reasonable to test my hypotheses using this approximate measure from the 1984-2008 ANES.

Variation in Social Identity Levels, 1984-2008

Table 4.1 lists mean social identity scores from the 1984-2008 ANES datasets. The top row of this table clearly indicates that ideological social identity levels have increased over the 1984-2008 time period. The average ISI score in 2008, 15.20, is nearly one-third higher than the average ISI score in 1984, 11.51. In fact, from 1984 to 1996, ISI levels increased with every election year and each time by a greater amount. Due in large part to the fact that many respondents who would typically identify as moderates seem to have taken an ideological side,61 ISI levels dropped to 8.55 in 2000.

61 The 2000 ANES was distinctive in that approximately half of respondents were interviewed by phone instead of in-person. Phone respondents were asked about ideological self-placement using a branching format, much like that used for the standard party identification measure, which seems to have resulted in
However, ISI levels surged to a new high of 18.03 in 2004. While the 2008 level, 15.20, is lower than in 2004, it still represents the second highest mean score in the time series. Altogether, these results strongly support my hypothesis that ISI levels have increased over the past quarter-century. The average ISI score at the end of the time series is substantially higher than at its beginning. Also, and perhaps most impressively, in all but two instances ISI levels have risen considerably with each new election year.

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Table 4.1: Social Identity Levels in the 1984-2008 ANES

Entries are the mean approximated social identity levels for a given election year. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

Ideological (partisan) social identity scores represent the difference between respondents' feeling thermometer rating of their ideological (partisan) in-group and their average thermometer rating of eight other political figures and groups. Positive scores represent higher relative in-group ratings.

Relative social identity levels represent the difference between respondents' ideological social identity and partisan social identity scores. Positive scores represent higher relative rating of the ideological, over partisan, in-group.

many respondents calling themselves liberals or conservatives when they typically would have placed themselves at a moderate position on the ideological continuum if asked in person.
Table 4.1 also tracks variation in partisan social identity levels across the 1984-2008 period. PSI levels follow a much less consistent pattern than ISI levels. The average PSI score in 2008, 14.42, is essentially identical to what it was in 1984, 14.49. In the intervening period, PSI levels spiked more than five points to 19.79 in 1988 before falling gradually to 15.29 in 2000, surging back to 18.15 in 2004, and then dropping sharply to 14.42 in 2008. This inconsistent pattern of results, combined with essentially no absolute change in value between 1984 and 2008, indicates that partisan social identity levels have neither increased nor decreased over the past quarter-century, whereas ideological social identity levels clearly have increased.

In terms of the relative strength of ideological and partisan social identity, it is interesting to note that the average ISI score in 2008 exceeds the average PSI score for the first time. Could it be the case that ideological in-group attachments have become stronger than partisan in-group attachments in recent years? Appropriately evaluating the relative strength of ideological and partisan social identity requires comparing ISI and PSI scores at the individual, rather than aggregate, level. To do this, I calculate individual-level differences in ISI and PSI scores, subtracting the latter from the former for each respondent so that positive scores indicate greater relative attachment to an ideological, over partisan, in-group.

As shown in the third row of Table 4.1, individual-level ISI scores do very slightly exceed ISI scores in the 2008 ANES, on average. However, the 2008 mean, 0.05, is the only positive one, with 2004 showing the smallest PSI advantage ($M = -1.00$). Prior to 2004, relative attachment to partisan in-groups is much stronger. PSI scores exceed ISI scores, at the individual level, by 3.46 points in 1984, 8.35 points in 1988,
3.17 points in 1992, 2.44 points in 1996, and 6.59 points in 2000. While the year-to-year trends in the early datasets do not follow any clear pattern, there is some evidence of a move toward parity in ideological and partisan social identities since 2000. Whereas relative attachment to partisan, over ideological, in-groups never falls below 2.44 points prior to 2000, and reaches as high as 8.35 during that time, over the past decade this advantage has receded and, at least in the most recent dataset, it has disappeared.

Of course, additional data are needed in order to more clearly establish a longitudinal change in social identity trends. Still, the 2004 and 2008 means, combined with higher aggregate levels of ISI than PSI in 2008, suggest ideological social identity’s growing strength in the general public, both absolutely and relative to partisan social identity. Given that party identification traditionally has been regarded as Americans’ primary political attachment (Campbell et al. 1960; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008), this finding is quite striking and potentially significant for scholars’ understanding of ideology’s political relevance.

Variation in Social Identity Levels by Political Groups, 1984-2008

In addition to testing for over-time variation in social identity levels in the full ANES samples, in this section I test for variation across ideological and partisan groups between 1984 and 2008. In Chapter 2, I find limited evidence that conservatives have particularly strong ideological social identities, and strong evidence that conservative Republicans have greater relative attachment to ideological, over partisan, in-groups. In the elite sample from Chapter 3, I find the opposite pattern; liberal delegates average
higher ISI scores than conservatives, and liberal Democrats have stronger relative attachment to ideological, over partisan, in-groups than conservative Republicans, although the differences are not statistically significant in either case. Testing for variation in social identity levels across political groups in the 1984-2008 ANES datasets therefore provides valuable opportunities to clarify findings from the previous chapters and identify potential changes in social identity patterns among competing political groups in recent election years.

Table 4.2 details variation in social identity levels across political groups in the 1984-2008 ANES. First in terms of ideological social identity, the difference between liberals and conservatives’ ISI levels is weak and inconsistent. Conservatives have higher ISI scores in four of seven election years, but their advantage is statistically significant only twice (1988, 1996) and marginally significant once (2008), according to one-way ANOVA analysis. Liberals have higher ISI scores than conservatives in three election years, but never by a significant margin. This evidence provides only weak support for my hypothesis concerning variation in ISI across political groups; liberals and conservatives differ significantly in only two years, although in both cases conservatives exhibit stronger ideological social identity. Also, the difference between liberal and conservative ISI scores does not appear to vary in any systematic pattern over time.

---

62 In 1988, conservatives’ mean ISI score is 13.53 ($SD = 17.29$) and liberals’ mean ISI score is 8.95 ($SD = 19.55$), $F(1, 742) = 10.699, p = 0.001$. In 1996, conservatives’ mean ISI score is 16.20 ($SD = 17.29$) and liberals’ mean ISI score is 10.96 ($SD = 13.67$), $F(1, 769) = 18.797, p = 0.000$. Finally, in 2008, conservatives’ mean ISI score is 15.91 ($SD = 17.00$) and liberals’ mean ISI score is 14.04 ($SD = 16.71$), $F(1, 1166) = 3.378, p = 0.066$. 

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189
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<td>-5.65***</td>
<td>-4.27**</td>
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Table 4.2: Social Identity Levels by Ideological and Partisan Groups, 1984-2008

Entries are mean social identity levels for a given election year and political group. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

One-way ANOVAs are used to test for significant differences between political groups' social identity levels.

***Significant at .001; **Significant at .01; *Significant at .05; +Significant at .1

Note: Table 4.2 does not include social identity levels for moderate and Independent respondents because the 1984-2008 ANES do not measure feeling thermometer ratings of moderates and, in most datasets, Independents.

The middle rows of Table 4.2 detail variation in Democrats and Republicans’ partisan social identity levels between 1984 and 2008. It is clear from these results that...
partisan social identity levels tend to be higher among Democrats than among Republicans. In fact, Democrats exhibit higher PSI scores than Republicans in five of the seven election years (1988, 1992, 2000, 2004, 2008), and in each case the difference is statistically significant. Republicans do score higher than Democrats on PSI in 1984 and 1996, but only in the first dataset does the difference reach conventional levels of statistical significance. Taken together with the preceding results, there is weak evidence that ideological in-group attachments are stronger on the political Right and strong evidence that partisan in-group attachments are stronger on the political Left. Also, like ideological social identity, partisan social identity levels do not vary in any systematic pattern over time.

In the last row of Table 4.2, I compare ISI and PSI levels directly over time, for liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans. Again in this analysis I calculate relative social identity levels by subtracting each respondent’s PSI score from his or her ISI score, so that a higher score indicates stronger relative attachment to an ideological, over partisan, in-group.

In six of the seven election years, including each of the last six, conservative Republicans exhibit higher relative attachment to their ideological in-group than do liberal Democrats. Moreover, in five of these six elections, excluding only 2004, the differences are statistically significant. Only once, in 1984, do liberal Democrats exhibit greater relative attachment to their ideological in-group than conservative Republicans, but the difference is not significant. As is the case with ideological and partisan social identity levels, separately, relative social identity levels do not vary systematically over time.
To be clear, conservative Republicans do not always have stronger attachment to their ideological in-group in an absolute sense; conservative Republicans’ PSI levels exceed their ISI levels in 1984, 1988, 2000, and 2004. In 1984 and 1988, conservative Republicans’ greater relative attachment to party, over ideology, is statistically significant according to one-sample mean comparison tests. In 2000 and 2004, though, this is not the case. Conservative Republicans’ greater relative attachment to conservatives is statistically significant only in 2008. This last finding provides some validation for the results from Chapter 2, because the 2008 dataset is most temporally proximate to when I collected the TESS survey data, showing the same result, in 2010. Thus, there is some reason to believe that ideological in-group attachment is exceptionally strong on the political Right in recent years. However, there is no clear evidence to suggest that this is generally the case, since the significant finding of greater ideological in-group attachment among conservative Republicans is exclusive to the 2008 ANES.

Liberal Democrats, on the other hand, consistently prove more attached to their partisan, over ideological, in-group. Liberal Democrats exhibit greater relative attachment to Democrats, over liberals, in each of the 1984-2008 datasets, and in five of the seven election years (1988, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2008) their PSI scores significantly exceed their ISI scores.

The results from this section provide valuable insights regarding ideological social identity, as well as partisan social identity and the relative strength of both identities, over the 1984-2008 period. Clearly, ideological social identity is not exclusive to certain political groups, and, contrary to my hypothesis stating otherwise, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that ideological social identity is exceptionally strong
among conservatives. However, competing political groups do seem to differ in their levels of relative attachment to ideological and partisan in-groups, with the former being relatively stronger on the political Right and the latter being relatively stronger on the political Left.

To more comprehensively evaluate ISI’s relevance to individuals in general, recently and in previous election years, in the remainder of this chapter I examine the relationship between ideological, as well as partisan, social identity, and important aspects of political behavior and attitudes. Specifically, I test the interaction effect of ideological social identity and ideological self-placement on presidential vote choice in the next section, before turning to ISI’s effect on ideological constraint in the concluding portion of the empirical analysis.

_Ideological Social Identity and Presidential Vote Choice, 1984-2008_

To further evaluate the behavioral effects of ideological social identity, I analyze a series of logistic regression models predicting presidential vote choice in the 1984-2008 ANES. The dependent variable in each model is the respondent’s reported vote choice in that year’s presidential election. This variable is coded one for a Democratic Party vote, zero for a Republican Party vote, and missing otherwise. The key independent variable in each model is the interaction of ideological social identity and ideological self-placement. As is the case with the vote choice models from Chapter 2, I expect to find evidence of an interaction whereby self-placement’s effect on vote choice is limited to instances in which ISI is at least moderate in strength. In other words, ideological
location should only influence vote choice insofar as the respondent feels at least moderate psychological attachment to his or her ideological in-group. To the extent that a respondent is psychologically detached from, and indifferent toward, his or her ideological in-group, he or she should feel unconstrained by the in-group and its behavioral cues.

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N               | 686     | 562     | 321     | 606     | 807     | 449     | 793     |

Table 4.3: Predictors of Presidential Vote Choice, 1984-2008

Note: Entries are logistic regression coefficients, standard errors are in parentheses.
***Significant at .001; **Significant at .01; *Significant at .05; +Significant at .1

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While it is hardly surprising that the policy preference variables are significant predictors in many cases, their performance has important implications for testing the interaction effect of ideological social identity and ideological self-placement. Tests from Chapter 2 demonstrate a significant interaction effect, but in that analysis policy preference variables are unavailable for use as controls. Since at least some policy preferences are significant in each of the models shown in Table 4.3, and those policies are relevant to ideological social identity and ideological self-placement, it is quite possible that controlling on policy preferences will lead to evaluations of the interaction effect that differ from previous analyses.

As in previous analyses, graphs are most appropriate for interpreting the interaction effect of ideological social identity and ideological self-placement in these models because both lower-order variables are continuous. Figures 4.1 – 4.7 plot the marginal effect of ideological self-placement on presidential vote choice across levels of ideological social identity. The solid line in each figure represents the marginal effect of ideological self-placement on vote choice in a given presidential election. Self-placement’s effect on vote choice is statistically significant at any point on the ideological social identity scale that the 95% confidence intervals do not include a value of zero.

For ease of interpretation, and to facilitate comparison across election years, the ANES-based ISI scale in each of the vote choice models has been normalized to range from 0 to 100. A score of 0 represents the lowest ideological in-group rating, relative to a respondent’s average thermometer rating of political targets, provided in that year’s dataset, and 100 represents the highest relative in-group rating in that year’s dataset.
Figure 4.1: Predicting Vote Choice in the 1984 U.S. Presidential Election
Figure 4.2: Predicting Vote Choice in the 1988 U.S. Presidential Election
Figure 4.3: Predicting Vote Choice in the 1992 U.S. Presidential Election
Figure 4.4: Predicting Vote Choice in the 1996 U.S. Presidential Election
Figure 4.5: Predicting Vote Choice in the 2000 U.S. Presidential Election
Figure 4.6: Predicting Vote Choice in the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election
The results from Figures 4.1 – 4.7 provide robust support for the hypothesized interaction effect. In each of the seven election years tested, the marginal effect of ideological self-placement on presidential vote choice is not significant when ideological social identity is weak. The marginal effect becomes significant only when ISI is at least moderate in strength, beginning at approximately 38 to 50 on the normalized ISI scale in each election year. Moreover, the marginal effect of self-placement continues to be significant throughout the highest levels of the ISI scale in every election year, except in 2008 when self-placement is no longer significant once ISI scores reach approximately
85. It is unclear to me why 2008 is exceptional in this way. What is more remarkable than its discrepancy, though, is the interaction effect’s otherwise almost perfectly consistent performance across datasets spanning the past quarter-century. Indeed, self-placement’s effect on vote choice is not independent of ISI; when respondents feel psychologically detached from an ideological in-group, their location on the ideological spectrum is statistically irrelevant to voting behavior.

The interaction effect of ideological social identity and ideological self-placement on presidential vote choice is remarkably consistent and strong across the 1984-2008 ANES datasets. Indeed, as previously hypothesized and empirically demonstrated in Chapter 2, self-placement’s effect on vote choice is limited to instances in which ISI is at least moderate in strength. Once ISI reaches moderate levels, self-placement’s effect becomes significant and remains so throughout the remainder of the ISI scale, save for the most recent election year and at ISI’s very highest values. These results are even more impressive because, unlike Chapter 2, I have controlled for several relevant policy preferences in each vote choice model.

The present analysis more clearly establishes the hypothesized interaction effect of ideological social identity and ideological self-placement, by demonstrating its generalizability across election years and its empirical robustness even when including a rigorous battery of relevant control variables in the presidential vote choice models. Once more, it appears that integrating ideological social identity and ideological self-placement provides an exceptionally comprehensive measure of ideological identification capable of more precisely estimating its behavioral effects than more standard and limited ideology measures.
The final empirical objective for this analysis is to evaluate the relationship between ideological social identity and ideological constraint. For reasons delineated above, I hypothesize a positive relationship between ideological social identity and ideological constraint. To evaluate this hypothesis in the present as well as in recent election years, I test a series of linear regression models predicting respondents’ levels of ideological constraint. The dependent variable in each model is an index representing the number of ideologically consistent positions that a respondent takes on the issues of government spending and services, healthcare, abortion, defense spending, and government aid to African-Americans. Each variable was initially coded –1 for a liberal policy preference, +1 for a conservative policy preference, and 0 for a neutral response. I summed responses to all five issues to create an index ranging from –5 (all liberal preferences) to +5 (all conservative preferences), and then folded it to create a six-point index ranging from 0 (no ideological consistency) to 5 (complete ideological consistency).

My primary empirical objective in these models is to test the effect of ideological social identity on ideological constraint. To do so properly, I must also control for ideological self-placement. For this analysis, a folded measure of ideological self-placement. For this analysis, a folded measure of ideological self-

63 An ordered probit model would seem most appropriate when predicting an ordinal dependent variable with six possible outcomes. However, ordered probit and linear regression models yield extremely similar results with no difference in substantive conclusions for this analysis. Linear regression models are considerably more intuitive than ordered probit models, and therefore I only report and analyze results from the former.

64 Ideological constraint is low in the 1984-2008 ANES data, although it does increase rather steadily with time. Mean scores on the 0-6 constraint variable are as follows: 1.64 (1984), 1.63 (1988), 1.80 (1992), 1.87 (1996), 1.62 (2000), 1.95 (2004), 2.03 (2008). The percentage of respondents scoring at the top two levels of ideological constraint (scores of four or five) are as follows: 8.9% (1984), 8.9% (1988), 11.9% (1992), 14.8% (1996), 9.2% (2000), 15.8% (2004), 18.8% (2008).
placement is appropriate because the ISI scale, as well as the dependent variable, ranges from least to most extreme and makes no distinctions based on ideology. I also include in each model a folded party identification scale and a partisan social identity measure constructed in the same manner as the ideological social identity measure. Finally, I control for several demographic variables, including age, education, gender, and minority status. Of course, I do not include any of the policy preference variables as independent predictors in the constraint model, since the dependent variable comprises responses for the same policy preferences.

Table 4.4 presents the results of the ideological constraint models. The ideological social identity scale performs remarkably well in this analysis. In fact, it is the only variable to reach conventional levels of statistical significance in each model. These results are quite impressive given the rigorous battery of political and demographic controls included in each model, including the folded ideological self-placement scale. The self-placement variable also performs quite well in these tests, emerging as significant and positively signed in all but the 1988 and 1992 models. The party variables, on the other hand, predict quite poorly; party identification is significantly only in 1992, and partisan social identity is significant only in 1996 and 2008.
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Table 4.4: Predictors of Ideological Constraint Levels, 1984-2008

*Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients, standard errors are in parentheses.
***Significant at .001; **Significant at .01; *Significant at .05; +Significant at .1

Ideological constraint ranges from 0 (no constraint) to 5 (complete constraint). To construct this index, I coded preferences on five issues (government spending and services, healthcare, abortion, defense spending, and government aid to African-Americans) as liberal (-1) or conservative (+1) and summed preferences for each respondent to create an index ranging from −5 to +5. Then, I folded the 11-point scale into a six-point scale ranging from lowest to highest constraint.

The only other consistent predictor of ideological constraint is the respondent’s education level. In fact, the education variable is significant and positively signed in all
but the 2000 constraint model. This finding is quite interesting because it supports the traditional perspective that ideological constraint is primarily attributable to sophistication levels, for which education is a common proxy (e.g. Box-Steffensmeier and de Boef 2001; Zaller 1992).

However, in combination with the other findings, this analysis demonstrates that sophistication is not the only pathway, or even necessarily the most reliable pathway, to ideological constraint. Even when controlling on education, respondents who have more favorable affective evaluations of their ideological in-group also have higher levels of ideological constraint. The reason for this relationship, as I argue with reference to the tenets of Social Identity Theory, is that individuals who feel strong attachment to their ideological in-group are likely to seek out and follow cues from other in-group members, including sophisticated leadership figures, in order to maintain in-group membership and avoid disagreements that might threaten the stability of their self-concept.

Of course, this analysis does not prove my argument to be correct; undoubtedly, some analysts would reverse the causal arrow and argue that ideological constraint motivates increasingly positive evaluations of ideological in-groups. Further research is needed in order to definitively disentangle the ISI-constraint relationship. For the time being, though, this analysis provides a compelling basis for conducting further investigations into the sources of ideological constraint and the process by which ideological identification becomes meaningful and behaviorally consequential. Indeed, ideological in-group attachment contributes positively to ideological constraint, and it has done so for many years. I would argue that mine is a uniquely credible explanation of ideological constraint for many individuals, given the American public’s general lack of
ideological sophistication and this dissertation’s finding that ideological social identity is relatively common in the mass public. Again, this analysis certainly does not settle the debate over ideological constraint; however, it does provide a novel and empirically sound interpretation of constraint that might help scholars to better understand the nature of ideology’s relevance to political thinking and behavior.

Discussion

The preceding empirical analyses fulfill three objectives critical to a comprehensive evaluation of ideological social identity and its political significance. First, by using the 1984-2008 American National Election Studies datasets, I am able to track variation in the American public’s average level of ideological social identity over the past quarter-century. Second, using such robust, high-quality datasets provides a valuable opportunity to validate and refine conclusions reached in previous chapters about ISI’s empirical distinctiveness, variation across political groups, and behavioral significance. Finally, the ANES include consistent measures of diverse and relevant policy preferences that enable me to test the relationship between ISI and ideological constraint, a relationship of considerable importance to the study of ISI and to enduring debates in the political science literature regarding the political relevance of ideological identification.

As noted earlier, the empirical value of this analysis rests largely upon the validity of its ideological social identity measure. Unlike the original surveys I use in Chapters 2 and 3, the ANES do not include any direct measures of ideological social identity or other
measures designed to capture psychological attachment to an ideological in-group. Among the limited number of ideology measures repeated across the 1984-2008 ANES time series, ideological group feeling thermometers come closest to approximating feelings of ideological social identity, insofar as they capture affective evaluations of those groups. By subtracting respondents’ average thermometer rating of numerous political figures and groups from their rating of the ideological in-group, I create a reasonable approximation of ideological social identity that can be tested across ANES datasets. In fact, the correlation between the direct and approximate measures of ISI in Chapter 3’s delegate survey is reasonably high, at 0.519. The ANES-based ISI scale also performs similarly to the direct ISI scale in terms of its correlation with ideological self-placement and the distribution of mean ISI scores across different levels of ideological extremity.

Undoubtedly, a more direct ISI measure would be optimal for conducting the present analysis; however, a direct measure is not available in datasets from previous decades and the ANES-based ISI scale is conceptually and empirically similar enough to serve credibly in testing my hypotheses. It is important to note once again, though, that the ANES do not include a moderate feeling thermometer, and so moderates must be excluded from this analysis. A large percentage of respondents identify as moderates in most ANES datasets, and so excluding them means undermining the representativeness of my samples. Therefore, due caution is in order when interpreting the results of this analysis; although derived from a representative sample, my data include only self-described liberals and conservatives and the results may not be generalizable to the American public, as a whole.
Regarding my core empirical objective in this analysis, the public’s average level of ideological social identity has increased quite clearly, and in most cases consistently, over the past quarter century. The average ISI score increases by nearly a third across the time series, from 11.51 in 1984 to 15.20 in 2008. Between 1984 and 1996, ISI levels rise each year and by increasingly large margins. ISI levels plummet to 8.55 in 2000, likely due in part to the methodological idiosyncrasies of that year’s ANES, before rebounding to a new high of 18.03 in 2004. The 2008 level, 15.20, represents a drop from the previous election year, but it is still the second-highest ISI level in the time series. Taken together, these results provide strong evidence that ideological social identity has grown stronger, and quite steadily so, in the mass public since 1984.

Ideological social identity has also grown stronger in relation to partisan social identity in recent years. Whereas the former regularly exceeds the latter by wide margins until 2000, in 2004 that margin is only one point and in 2008 ISI levels actually exceed PSI levels very slightly ($M = 0.05$) for the average respondent. Also, at the aggregate level, the average ISI score ($M = 15.20$) is considerably higher than the average PSI score ($M = 14.42$) in 2008. To be sure, I do not contend that ideology has overtaken, or is in the process of overtaking, party in terms of its political significance. In fact, ideological social identity is not significantly stronger than partisan social identity at the individual level in any ANES dataset since 1984. However, I do suggest that these findings provide yet another reason for scholars to seriously consider ideology’s credibility as one of the most significant and salient factors guiding political thought and behavior. To the extent that ideology qualifies for such a lofty position, it becomes all the more important for scholars to explore how and why something so abstract and complex as ideology can
exert such influence in the mass public. Clearly, I would argue, on theoretical and empirical grounds, that ideological social identity must be a major part of such analysis.

In addition to analyzing over-time variation in ISI levels among the general public, I also test for potential differences in social identity levels among competing political groups between 1984 and 2008. Consistent with the evidence from Chapter 2, I find that conservatives score higher on the ISI scale than liberals, on average. However, the difference between conservative and liberal ISI scores is statistically significant only twice, with conservatives having stronger ideological social identity than liberals in both years. Although there is some tendency for conservatives to have stronger ISI than liberals, clearly this is not a general phenomenon and it is not robust in the most recent datasets.

In terms of partisan social identity, Democrats score significantly higher on the PSI scale than Republicans in all but two election years, including each of the last three. Republicans have significantly higher PSI scores in one election year, but it is the most distant one in the time series, 1984.

My analysis of relative social identity levels further indicates that ideological in-group attachment is particularly strong on the political Right while partisan in-group attachment is particularly strong on the political Left. Conservative Republicans have greater relative attachment to their ideological, over partisan, in-group than liberal Democrats in five of seven election years. In the two years that liberal Democrats have higher relative ISI levels than conservative Republicans, the difference between groups is not statistically significant. Again, this is not to say that conservative Republicans consistently favor ideological over partisan in-groups, only that they are more inclined to
do so than liberal Democrats. Indeed, conservative Republicans average higher ISI than PSI levels in only three election years (1992, 1996, 2008). The relative strength of ideological, versus partisan, social identity has increased in recent years, though, and this trend is uniquely evident among conservative Republicans. In fact, 2008 is the only election year in which conservative Republicans exhibit significantly higher relative attachment to their ideological in-group while liberal Democrats exhibit significantly higher relative attachment to their partisan in-group.

To further evaluate ideological social identity’s political significance, I also test the interaction effect of ideological social identity and ideological self-placement on presidential vote choice in the 1984-2008 ANES. The results from these tests are quite impressive. Consistent with most vote choice models from Chapter 2, the marginal effect of self-placement on vote choice is significant only insofar as ISI is at least moderately strong. In all seven models, self-placement does not become significant until ISI reaches moderate levels, approximately between 38 and 50 on the normalized 0-100 ISI scale. Moreover, self-placement continues to significantly influence vote choice across the remainder of the ISI scale in six of seven vote choice models. The only exception is the 2008 model, in which self-placement ceases to be significant at the ISI scale’s highest values.

The results from the presidential vote choice models are remarkably consistent across election years, and in comparison to what I find in Chapter 2. What is more, the interaction effect persists even when controlling on several policy preferences not available in the previous analyses. These findings strongly suggest that ideological social identity conditions the effects of ideological self-placement on presidential vote choice.
In doing so, these results further indicate that integrating the self-placement and social identity scales provides a uniquely comprehensive ideological identification measure more capable of precisely estimating ideology’s behavioral effects than ideological self-placement alone. ISI therefore seems to play a critical role in explaining ideological identification and political behavior. With this in mind, political scientists would be wise to include ideological social identity measures in future surveys and empirical analyses, so as to comprehensively capture the nature and political significance of ideological identity.

Finally, ideological social identity is an exceptionally consistent, significant predictor of ideological constraint. Traditional treatments of this topic have focused upon sophistication’s role in causing ideological constraint, and in fact education is a significant predictor in all but one of seven constraint models. However, ISI proves to be an even more consistent predictor of ideological constraint; alone among the many variables included in the constraint models, ideological social identity is statistically significant across all seven election years. These results follow clearly from the theoretical expectations of Self-Categorization Theory. According to SCT, individuals who socially identify with a group will seek out and follow in-group behavioral cues in order to avoid instances of dissonance that might cause them to reconsider their in-group status. In terms of ideological social identity, then, ideological constraint should follow naturally from listening to, and obeying the directives of, visible figures associated with an ideological in-group. Since such figures might often include sophisticates capable of understanding and applying abstract ideological principles to specific policy debates, many individuals with strong ISI should evidence ideological constraint essentially
regardless of their ability to comprehend and apply ideological principles independently. The preceding analysis is consistent with such an argument, and it provides a compelling basis for conducting future research investigating the relationship between ideological constraint and ideological social identity.

The empirical analysis herein presented further demonstrates that ideological social identity is a credible concept with important implications for political behavior and political science scholarship. First, it shows that the strength of ideological social identity in the general public is substantial and seems to be growing in strength both absolutely and in relation to partisan social identity. Moreover, there is some indication that ideological social identity, at least in relative terms, is particularly strong among individuals on the political Right, whereas partisan social identity is particularly strong among individuals on the political Left.

Second, this analysis supports with remarkable consistency my hypothesis that ideological social identity conditions the effects of ideological self-identification on vote choice in presidential elections. When ideological social identity is weak, ideological self-placement has no apparent effect on vote decisions; when ideological social identity is moderate to very strong, ideological self-placement significantly influences vote choice.

Finally, the ideological constraint models provide novel and consistent evidence that ideological social identity, as well as but independent from education/sophistication, motivates increased ideological constraint. This last finding perhaps has the most wide-ranging scholarly implications, since it affords an alternative perspective for understanding how ideological identification might function as a meaningful guide for
political behavior despite the public’s general inability to properly comprehend ideological abstractions. To the extent that individuals psychologically value membership in an ideological in-group and follow behavioral cues in order to maintain a stable social identity, they should obtain the information necessary to act in an ideologically consistent manner even if they are not adept at understanding and applying ideological abstractions. Thus, it might be possible to reconcile the public’s lack of ideological sophistication with the tendency for ideological identification to significantly predict myriad political behaviors and attitudes. In essence, it could be that many individuals indeed lack a sophisticated understanding of ideological concepts, but they know their ideological in-group, receive cues from other in-group members, and have the motivation to follow those cues. As a result, they may act as if guided by ideological constraint. Again, this analysis does not prove the preceding argument to be true, but it does provide original and compelling evidence recommending further consideration of ideological social identity and its political significance.

Several principal points from the preceding analysis warrant particular emphasis in concluding this chapter. First, I have demonstrated that it is possible to estimate ideological social identity and its effects on political attitudes and behaviors using existing ANES measures that are also common in other datasets: feeling thermometer ratings of ideological groups. Although these measures can only approximate ideological social identity, they are theoretically credible and empirically impressive. The ANES-based ISI measure is also empirically distinct from ideological self-placement, and ISI can be tested separately or in combination with self-placement to predict important aspects of political attitudes and behaviors. In particular, I have shown that ISI is a
remarkably consistent and powerful predictor of ideological constraint levels, independent of ideological self-placement and numerous other political and demographic controls. In that sense, measuring and testing ISI provides added value to the empirical analysis of political attitudes beyond what existing measures can capture. Also, interacting ideological social identity with ideological self-placement facilitates a more nuanced and precise evaluation of the latter variable’s electoral significance, showing that its effects are dependent upon the strength of ISI.

This analysis therefore indicates quite strongly the added value of accounting for ideological social identity and its relationship to standard ideology measures, even in existing datasets not designed for the purpose of conducting such tests. As I discuss in the concluding chapter that follows, I hope that direct ISI measures will be added to the ANES time series and other prominent political science surveys in the coming years. In the event that such measures are not added to these datasets, however, it is valuable to know that credible approximations can be constructed from future surveys and used to evaluate ideological social identity and its effects over time.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Introduction

For many years, political scientists have struggled to understand the nature and political significance of ideological identification. I have argued in this dissertation that scholars’ traditional conceptualization of ideological identification fails to account for feelings of psychological attachment to an ideological in-group, and that doing so should facilitate a more robust understanding of ideology’s relevance to political thinking and behavior. The theoretical motivation for this argument comes from Social Identity Theory.

According to Social Identity Theory (SIT) and its variants, categorization within a salient social group typically causes individuals to view that group as an extension of self-identity, and therefore to behave in ways that solidify their in-group status and promote group interests, including following in-group behavioral cues and engaging in inter-group bias. SIT is one of the most influential theories of group identification and inter-group relations in the social sciences, and in recent years it has become increasingly prominent in the political science literature. Yet, prior to this dissertation, political scientists have never capitalized upon the rich theoretical and empirical insights of Social
Identity Theory to address enduring controversies about the nature and political significance of ideological identification.

My analysis strongly suggests the credibility of studying ideology as a social identity, and the scholarly value of extending this line of research into future studies. Specifically, the evidence herein presented indicates that ideological social identity (ISI) represents a widespread and distinct dimension of ideological identification in comparison to the traditional ideological self-placement scale. Integrating the ISI and self-placement scales into a comprehensive ideological identification measure more precisely identifies the process by which ideology influences vote choice. Moreover, ISI significantly influences many key political attitudes, including political inter-group evaluations and levels of ideological constraint.

Below, I review the empirical results presented in this dissertation and discuss their likely contributions to the political science literature. Additionally, I discuss how future studies might extend this initial analysis of ideological social identity to provide valuable perspective on ideological identification, political identity, and political attitudes and behaviors.

Summary of Empirical Results

Across this dissertation’s three empirical chapters, I test a number of hypotheses designed to evaluate ideological social identity and its relevance to political attitudes and behaviors. In this section, I review major findings from my analysis and their likely contributions to political science scholarship.
As the first theoretical and empirical treatment of ideological social identity, my first objective in this analysis is to test whether ISI represents a distinct aspect of ideological identification that existing ideology measures do not adequately capture. To the extent that ISI is redundant with existing measures, particularly the standard ideological self-placement scale, its conceptual credibility would be greatly undermined and its empirical value would be discredited. If, however, ISI represents a distinct dimension of ideological identification, then it is reasonable in subsequent analyses to examine ISI levels and ISI’s effects on political attitudes and behaviors.

I measure ideological social identity in Chapters 2 and 3 using an adapted version of Mael and Tetrick’s Identification with a Psychological Group (IDPG) scale. The IDPG scale is prominent in the social science literature, as well as in studies of partisan social identity, and it has been shown in previous studies to provide an empirically valid measure of social identity. I use an adapted subset of measures from the IDPG scale asking participants to report their level of agreement with statements tapping psychological attachment to their previously reported ideological in-group (or their partisan in-group, when measuring partisan social identity). Then, I calculate each participant’s average level of agreement with these statements to measure his or her ideological (partisan) social identity.\(^65\)

\(^65\) I describe in greater detail in Chapters 2 and 3 the performance of the ISI and PSI scales. My analysis indicates that the scales reach conventional standards of reliability, but only after excluding one item included in the survey experiment from Chapter 2 and two items included in the survey from Chapter 3. As I note in those chapters, excluding any items from the social identity scales is regrettable, but it is necessary in order to credibly test the effects of ideological social identity. Also, it is important to note that empirical results differ minimally when using the more reliable scales versus the scales including all available items.
My analyses indicate that the ISI and self-placement scales represent distinct dimensions of a common concept: ideological identification. The two scales exhibit very similar patterns of variation, as would be expected from measures of a common concept. In the nationally representative sample from Chapter 2 and the convention delegate sample from Chapter 3, mean ISI levels increase as the extremity of self-placement also increases. In other words, the most liberal and conservative participants also exhibit the highest mean level of ideological social identity. Yet the two scales are clearly distinct. The correlation between ISI and folded self-placement scales (in each case ranging from weakest to strongest ideological identification) is only 0.283 in the nationally representative sample from Chapter 2, and somewhat higher among party elites in Chapter 3, at 0.361. I also test the correlation between folded self-placement and an approximated ISI scale in Chapter 4, using in-group feeling thermometer ratings from the 1984-2008 American National Election Studies (ANES), and find that they range from 0.271 to 0.438.

Across diverse samples and even across time, the correlation between ideological self-placement and ideological social identity scales hardly even approaches 0.5 at any point. Were it the case that ISI merely represents a different way of measuring ideological extremity, as some skeptics of this research might expect, certainly the correlations between these scales would be much higher. At the same time, if it were the case that the two scales measure entirely distinct concepts, the correlations would be close to zero. Neither of these results occurs at any point in my analysis. Therefore, I conclude that ideological social identity represents a distinct dimension of ideological identification not adequately captured by the ideological self-placement scale. This is not
to say that ISI is a *more* credible measure than self-placement, or that it should replace
the self-placement scale in future ideology research. Instead, I argue that both
dimensions of ideological identification are important, and future studies should use them
complementarily rather than treating self-placement as a sufficiently comprehensive
ideology measure.

*Ideological Social Identity Levels*

Perhaps the most critical objective in this analysis is to demonstrate that feelings
of psychological attachment to an ideological in-group exist in the general public, and
that they are even widespread. My analysis strongly indicates that this is the case. In
Chapter 2, I find that the average ISI level among a nationally representative participant
sample is 4.21 on a scale ranging from one (weakest social identity) to seven (strongest
social identity). This sample mean is significantly higher than the ISI scale’s neutral
point. Indeed, 42% of participants score above the neutral point, and 29% of participants
score at five or higher on the ISI scale. Thus, I conclude that feelings of psychological
attachment to an ideological in-group exist in the general public, and in fact they are
fairly common.

Ideological social identity is even stronger and more widespread among party
elites, according to my analysis of convention delegates in Chapter 3. Delegates’ mean
ISI level is nearly a full point higher than that of the mass public, at 5.09 on the seven-
point ISI scale. Again, this mean score significantly exceeds the ISI scale’s neutral point.
Also, an impressive 79% of delegates score above the ISI scale’s neutral point, and 54%
have a score of five or higher. Of course, it is not surprising that party elites have stronger psychological attachment to their ideological in-group than do members of the mass public; elites tend to be more politically sophisticated and therefore more likely to understand ideological concepts and identify strongly with an ideological group. Given the exceptional political influence of party elites, however, these findings are quite striking and potentially important for understanding elite opinion and behavior. More so than the average citizen, party elites are likely to identify psychologically with an ideological in-group and, the SIT literature would suggest, act in accordance with in-group norms.

In Chapter 4, I examine variation in ideological social identity levels over time. Because the ANES do not measure ideological social identity directly, I construct an approximate ISI measure by subtracting respondents’ average feeling thermometer rating of eight political figures and groups measured consistently across the 1984-2008 ANES from their ideological in-group thermometer rating. The ANES-based ISI measure thus captures how favorably respondents rate their ideological in-group, in comparison to the average political target. In this analysis, I find that respondents rate their ideological in-group 15.20 points higher on the feeling thermometer than the average political target in the most recent ANES, and no lower than 8.55 in any other year. While it is not possible to directly compare ANES-based ISI scores to those obtained from direct ISI measures included in the surveys from Chapters 2 and 3, it is reasonable to conclude that respondents typically express an exceptional level of affective, if not necessarily psychological, attachment to their ideological in-group.
Over time, relative in-group thermometer ratings have increased considerably and in a mostly consistent pattern. The mean ISI score in 2008, 15.20, is nearly one-third higher than in 1984, when it was 11.51. Between 1984 and 1996, mean ISI scores increase with each year and each time by a larger amount. After a sharp, seemingly aberrant drop in 2000, ISI levels rebound to a new high of 18.03 in 2004 before sliding downward but to the second-highest level in the time series in 2008. It is clear from these data that ISI levels have increased markedly over the past quarter-century, and in a mostly linear fashion. Of course, due caution is in order since this analysis does not use a direct ISI measure and the absence of a moderate feeling thermometer necessitates excluding moderate respondents. Nonetheless, these results do provide strong indicative evidence that ideological social identity has become stronger in the American public since 1984, and increasingly so across successive election years.

Relative Strength of Ideological and Partisan Social Identities

In addition to directly examining ideological social identity levels among the mass public and party elites, I also analyze the relative strength of ideological and partisan social identities. I do so for two primary reasons: first, to determine whether participants provide different responses to ISI and PSI measures, the alternative being that the two are redundant; second, to determine whether, and how commonly, participants feel a stronger sense of psychological attachment to their ideological, versus partisan, in-groups. To measure the relative strength of ISI and PSI, I simply subtract each participant’s score on the latter from his or her score on the former. Thus, positive
relative social identity levels indicate stronger relative attachment to an ideological, over partisan, in-group, while negative scores indicate stronger relative attachment to a partisan, over ideological, in-group.

The empirical results from Chapter 2 show that, among a representative sample of the mass public, 44% of participants score identically on the ISI and PSI scales. In fact, the mean relative social identity score is –0.01, meaning that, on average, participants’ ISI and PSI scores do not differ. However, it is also the case that a substantial proportion of participants, 29%, score positively on this scale. In other words, more than a quarter of the mass public has a stronger psychological attachment to an ideological, versus partisan, in-group. Clearly, many participants – a majority, in fact – score differently on the ISI and PSI scales, and many have higher ISI than PSI scores. Although ISI and PSI scores do not differ significantly, on average, it is far from uncommon for participants to identify more strongly with their ideological, versus partisan, in-group.

Among convention delegates, in Chapter 3, the average relative social identity score is not much different from the mass public, at –0.15. However, this score is statistically distinguishable from zero, meaning that delegates, on average, do identify more strongly with their partisan, versus ideological, in-group. The percentage of delegates scoring identically on the ISI and PSI scales is substantially smaller than in Chapter 2, at 18%. However, 32% of delegates exhibit stronger relative attachment to their ideological in-group, slightly more than the percentage for the mass public. Thus, party elites seem to differ more than the mass public in their relative social identity levels, and on average elites tend toward stronger partisan in-group attachment. Yet stronger relative attachment to an ideological in-group again is far from uncommon, and
even higher than among members of the mass public, with nearly a third of delegates scoring higher on the ISI scale.

My analysis from Chapter 4 indicates that relative social identity levels have varied considerably over time. Across the 1984 through 2008 ANES, partisan social identity levels almost always exceed ideological social identity levels for the average respondent. However, the relative PSI advantage is much more pronounced in the earlier years. Individual-level PSI scores exceed ISI scores by between 2.44 and 8.35 points from 1984 through 2000. In the last two elections, however, the PSI advantage has all but disappeared. The average relative social identity score in 2004 is only −1.00 and in the most recent dataset, 2008, the average respondent actually scores 0.05 higher on the ISI scale. In the aggregate, average ISI levels actually exceed average PSI levels in 2008 by 0.88 points, and fall only 0.12 points shy in 2004. Finally, it should be noted that, whereas ISI levels increase clearly and rather consistently over the 1984-2008 period, PSI levels in 2008 are virtually identical to what they were in 1984 (14.42 and 14.49, respectively).

Together, these results suggest that the strength of ideological social identity has grown, relative to partisan social identity, in recent years. This is not to say that psychological attachment to an ideological in-group is stronger or more common than psychological attachment to a partisan in-group, among all or most Americans; the difference between scores is small in recent years, and it is essentially zero in the representative sample from Chapter 2. However, given the political science literature’s longstanding emphasis on party as Americans’ primary political attachment, these findings are quite striking. Indeed, they suggest that ideology represents a comparable
source of political attachment that has only grown over recent years, while attachment to partisan in-groups has shown no clear trend of increasing or decreasing.

Variation in Social Identity Levels by Political Groups

I also test for variation in social identity levels between relevant political groups. Across empirical analyses from Chapters 2-4, I find weak support for my hypothesis that ideological social identity is strongest among conservatives, but robust support for my hypothesis that relative ideological in-group attachment is strongest on the political Right.

In Chapter 2, self-identified conservatives from a representative mass public sample score higher on the ISI scale than self-identified liberals, with means of 4.44 and 4.25, respectively. This difference is only marginally significant, but ideological social identity does significantly predict ISI levels in linear regression analysis, with ISI increasing as conservative self-identification increases. In terms of the relative social identity measure, conservative Republicans actually exhibit higher ISI than PSI levels, with scores of 4.62 and 4.40, respectively. In this case, the difference between scores reaches conventional levels of statistical significance. Thus, among participants on the ideological and partisan Right, psychological attachment to an ideological in-group is stronger than psychological attachment to a partisan in-group. Liberal Democrats, on the other hand, score higher on the PSI than ISI scale, with respective means of 4.46 and 4.33, and this difference is marginally significant. Given the marginal difference between conservatives and liberals’ ISI scores, and conservative Republicans’
distinctiveness with respect to ISI versus PSI levels, I regard this as indicative but certainly not conclusive evidence that psychological attachment to an ideological in-group is uniquely strong on the political Right.

A different pattern of results emerges among convention delegates in Chapter 3. There, self-identified liberals actually score higher ($M = 5.22$) than self-identified conservatives ($M = 5.05$) on the ISI scale. This is only an indicative difference, though, since it does not even approach marginal levels of statistical significance. With respect to relative social identity levels, both liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans evidence stronger relative attachment to their partisan, versus ideological, in-group. Liberal Democrats do average a higher relative attachment to their ideological in-group ($M = -0.01$) than conservative Republicans ($M = -0.27$), though, and the difference between groups is marginally significant.

Although delegates on the political Left do not differ significantly from delegates on the political Right in their absolute or relative ISI levels, these findings do cast some doubt on my hypothesis that the latter exhibits stronger ideological in-group attachment than the former. While I am inclined to give more weight to the results from Chapter 2, since they come from a representative sample of the mass public, I do take from these results that my hypothesis, if it is true of the mass public, may not be generalizable across political actors. Also, I should note that these results from Chapter 3 might be skewed by the presence of an exceptionally liberal sample of Democratic convention delegates. Whereas the Republican delegates in my sample are quite representative of 2008 Republican delegates as a whole, demographically and politically, the Democratic delegates in my sample are quite a bit more liberal, as well as demographically more
white, than 2008 Democratic delegates as a whole. Therefore, it is possible that these findings from Chapter 3 are attributable in part to a somewhat unrepresentative delegate sample on the Democratic side.

Chapter 4 provides a valuable opportunity to validate Chapter 2’s assessment of variation in ISI and relative social identity levels across political groups, in the mass public. First in terms of the former, conservatives exhibit higher ISI levels than liberals in four of the seven ANES datasets, with only two of these differences reaching statistical significance (1988 and 1996) and one reaching marginal significance (2008). Liberals have higher ISI scores than conservatives in 1984, 1992, and 2000, but at no time are the differences even marginally significant. This evidence suggests some tendency for conservatives to have stronger ideological social identities than liberals, but only to a limited extent since the differences between ideological groups are rarely significant and sometimes favor liberals.

As in Chapter 2, analysis of the relative social identity measure provides stronger evidence for the hypothesized differences between political groups. In five of the seven election years tested (including 2008), conservative Republicans are more relatively attached to their ideological in-group than liberal Democrats are. Moreover, these differences are statistically significant in each case, whereas they are not significant in the two election years that Democrats have a higher relative ideological in-group attachment. These results support my hypothesis concerning the exceptional strength of ideological in-group attachments on the political Right, but they suggest that those differences are clearest and most stable in terms of relative ISI levels. Also, it is important to note that Democrats have higher partisan social identity scores than Republicans in six of the
seven election years, including each of the last six. The Democratic PSI advantage is statistically significant in all but one of the last six election years, and marginally significant in 1996.

Together with the results from Chapters 2 and 3, I find it most reasonable to conclude that there is some tendency for individuals on the political Right to have stronger ideological social identities than individuals on the political Left, but this relationship is not generalizable to party elites and it is most clearly evident when testing the relative strength of ideological, versus partisan, social identity. Therefore, support for my hypothesis is best described as indicative but quite conditional and limited.

*Variation in Social Identity Levels by Electoral Context*

I also test for variation in social identity levels across electoral contexts. Drawing upon insights from the SIT literature, I hypothesize that ISI levels are strongest in contexts explicitly raising the salience of ideological considerations. I argue that party primaries represent just such a context, and that evidence supporting my hypothesis would indicate ISI’s exceptional relevance in primary, versus general election, contexts. To test this hypothesis, I include in my original survey experiment from Chapter 2 an experimental manipulation whereby participants were randomly assigned to read about a hypothetical party primary between two ideologically distinct candidates, a hypothetical general election between a Republican and a Democratic candidate, or no election scenario at all (the control condition). If my hypothesis were correct, ISI levels would be exceptionally high among participants in the party primary condition.
As expected, I find that participants assigned to the party primary condition report significantly higher levels of ideological social identity than participants assigned to the control condition. However, contrary to my hypothesis, ISI levels are essentially identical for participants assigned to the party primary and general election conditions. In fact, when regressing ISI scores on the election condition variables and other relevant covariates, both treatment group variables are statistically significant and positively signed, and they have nearly the same coefficient. This evidence suggests that exposure to electoral competition in general, whether a party primary or general election, raises ideological social identity levels, at least in the short-term.

A more surprising pattern of results emerges when predicting partisan social identity levels and relative social identity levels (ISI – PSI). Assignment to the party primary condition leads to a significant increase in PSI levels, while assignment to the general election has no significant effect on PSI levels. Meanwhile, assignment to the general election condition leads to a significant increase in the relative strength of ideological, over partisan, social identity, while assignment to the party primary condition has no significant effect on relative social identity levels. Judging by these results, it would appear that party primaries uniquely stimulate feelings of psychological attachment to a partisan in-group, while general elections uniquely stimulate feelings of greater relative attachment to an ideological, over partisan, in-group.

These results are quite surprising, and contrary to the pattern that I expected to find. Yet they are also encouraging for the study of ideological social identity, because they suggest that ISI’s relevance is not limited to party primaries and contexts explicitly raising ideological considerations. Instead, general elections also stimulate feelings of
ideological social identity, and even increase their relative strength in comparison to partisan social identity. Presumably, ideological distinctions are so implicitly relevant to inter-party competition that general elections strengthen ideological social identity even when ideology is not made explicitly salient. ISI therefore appears more broadly relevant than I had anticipated, and it responds to implicit as well as explicit invocations of ideological distinctions.

*Variation in Social Identity Levels by Question Ordering*

The original survey experiment from Chapter 2 includes a second experimental manipulation, testing for potential variation in ideological social identity levels when measuring ISI before and after PSI. This manipulation is valuable from a methodological standpoint because it is possible that participants would answer the ideological social identity measures differently when able, versus unable, to compare their responses with those from the partisan social identity measures. For instance, it could be that participants inflate their reported ISI levels after answering PSI measures, because they regard partisan and ideological identities as essentially redundant; whereas they might normally report low levels of ideological in-group attachment, in isolation, those levels might rise if the participant had just reported high levels of attachment to a partisan in-group that he or she perceives as very similar.

The variable representing social identity question order is only a marginally significant predictor of ideological social identity. Its positive coefficient suggests, albeit quite weakly, that participants report higher ISI levels when answering ISI measures first.
Since this result falls short of conventional significance levels, though, evidence of a question order effect is not strong. Question order also has no significant effect on reported partisan social identity levels, but it does significantly influence relative social identity levels. Participants answering ISI before PSI measures report stronger relative attachment to an ideological, versus partisan, in-group.

While this analysis suggests that question ordering might have some effect on reported ideological social identity levels, the evidence is rather weak and inconsistent. As a practical matter, these results are not strong enough to necessitate randomly manipulating ISI and PSI measures in subsequent analyses; to do so seems prudent, but perhaps overly cautious.

Relative Primacy of Ideological and Partisan Social Identities

The results described above indicate that many individuals feel a strong sense of psychological attachment to their ideological in-group, and their level of attachment varies across political groups, electoral contexts, and election years. What is not clear to this point in the analysis is how individuals perceive the relationship between their ideological and partisan social identities. Clearly, many individuals have multiple social identities that influence their political thinking and behavior, and sometimes these identities may provide conflicting cues. Therefore, it is important to understand which social identity, if any, tends to be most central to the individual self-concept and how the other social identity is evaluated in relation to it. After all, it could be that both social identities are equally influential, or that one social identity is primary (superordinate) and
the other social identity tends to be seen as nested within it (subordinate). Illuminating the hierarchy of ideological and partisan social identities is important for gauging their relative influence, and for gaining perspective on political phenomena such as the dynamics of intra-party or even intra-ideology competition.

Since party elites seem particularly likely to have strong ideological and partisan in-group attachments, and I find this to be the case in Chapter 3, I use the convention delegate survey to analyze the relationship between multiple politically-based social identities. This survey includes a battery of questions measuring perceived in-group composition. Specifically, I ask delegates to report their perception of ideological group distributions within their partisan in-group, as well as partisan group distributions within their ideological in-group. My expectation is that partisan groups tend to be seen as representing inclusive superordinate categories that encompass multiple, more exclusive ideological sub-groups. Indeed, my analysis indicates that delegates tend to view partisan groups as particularly inclusive, and ideological groups as particularly exclusive. In other words, ideological groups are more likely to be seen as contained within a single party, while partisan groups are more likely to be seen as including a relatively broad distribution of ideological groups. Validating these results is my finding that most participants, when asked to identify the one political label that fits them best, select a partisan label.

These findings provide important perspective on perceptions of the relationship between ideological and partisan social identities. Partisan in-groups typically represent the primary, or superordinate, in-group attachment for individuals with multiple politically-based social identities. Ideological in-groups are important, but they are
viewed more as sub-groups competing for influence within parties than as primary in-groups in their own right. Therefore, ideological groups are most likely to be evaluated in the context of their congruity with the image and goals of the superordinate partisan in-group. Ideological sub-groups should be judged more positively when they are seen as appropriately representing what the partisan in-group stands for, and judged negatively when they are seen as misrepresenting the larger, more primary in-group. In fact, I have analyzed delegates’ attitudes toward ideological sub-groups within parties, as well as attitudes toward broader partisan and ideological groups, and I discuss my findings next.

**Ideological Social Identity and Inter-Group Attitudes**

In Chapter 3, I test ideological social identity’s effects on an important set of political attitudes: inter-group evaluations. The Social Identity Theory literature devotes extensive attention to the role of social identities in shaping inter-group bias and more active forms of discrimination favoring in-groups and disfavoring out-groups. In the political context, such instances of bias or even discrimination have important implications for understanding the nature of political competition and partisans or ideologues’ willingness to cooperate with political opponents. My analysis of inter-group attitudes aims to describe the prevalence of inter-group bias and social identity’s role in shaping it. To do so, I analyze convention delegates’ feeling thermometer ratings of partisan groups, ideological groups, and ideological sub-groups within parties (since the analysis described just above indicates that ideological in-groups tend to be seen as nested within, or subordinate to, partisan in-groups). I measure inter-group bias as the
difference between participants’ ratings of relevant in-groups and out-groups. Then I decompose inter-group bias into two categories: in-group favoritism (participants’ relative rating of an in-group in comparison to the average political figure or group) and out-group derogation (participants’ relative rating of out-groups in comparison to the average political figure or group), to better understand the precise nature of inter-group bias.

My analysis indicates that participants engage in substantial levels of inter-group bias, particularly between ideological groups. Participants rate ideological in-groups and out-groups 42.5 points apart on feeling thermometers, on average, and this difference is significantly higher than the 39.3 points separating partisan in-groups and out-groups. Inter-group bias is also evident between ideological sub-groups within parties, with in-sub-group and out-sub-group ratings differing by an average of 28.4 points.

The nature of inter-group bias differs between political groups, however. Ideological and partisan inter-group bias comprises significant levels of in-group favoritism and out-group derogation, meaning that participants favor their in-group not just because they like it but also because they dislike their opponents. However, inter-group bias comprises only in-group favoritism for ideological sub-groups within parties; participants show particular favorability toward members of the same ideological and partisan in-groups, but they do not seem hostile toward ideological opponents within their party. This finding is somewhat surprising given the intense divisions often accompanying ideologically-charged intra-party contests such as the 2010 Republican Party primaries in which candidates identified with the Tea Party aggressively challenged several candidates more aligned with the party establishment. It would seem from these
results that, no matter how bitter such divisions may be, parties typically overcome ideological differences in time because their disparate ideological factions all share the same superordinate in-group identity: party.

It is also worth noting that inter-group bias differs somewhat between political groups. Democratic participants engage in significantly higher levels of partisan inter-group bias than do Republican participants, primarily because the former evidence greater out-group derogation than the latter. Contrary to previous findings in the political science literature (Brady and Sniderman 1985; Herrera 1992), I do not find that ideological inter-group bias differs significantly between liberals and conservatives. Inter-sub-group bias also does not differ significantly between liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans. I find this result somewhat surprising given that the Republican Party is more ideologically homogeneous than the Democratic Party (Levitin and Miller 1979), and most prominent examples of bitter ideological division within parties, such as the 2010 Tea Party challenges and conservative resistance to John McCain’s 2008 presidential candidacy, have occurred within the Republican Party.

Most importantly, I find clear evidence in Chapter 4 that social identity shapes levels of inter-group bias. To test the causal influence of social identity, I regress each of the inter-group bias measures on ideological social identity, partisan social identity, ideological self-placement, party identification, and relevant demographic variables. As expected, ISI significantly predicts ideological inter-group bias, in-group favoritism, and out-group derogation, and all in the expected directions. In other words, as ideological social identity becomes stronger, participants become more relatively and absolutely
favorable toward their ideological in-group and more negative toward their ideological out-groups.

Ideological social identity has the same significant effects when predicting bias toward ideological sub-groups within parties. As ISI becomes stronger, relative and absolute evaluations of ideological in-sub-groups become more favorable and evaluations of ideological out-sub-groups become more negative. Partisan social identity is significant only in the out-sub-group derogation model, and it is positively signed. This finding helps to explain why out-group derogation does not occur between ideological sub-groups; ISI significantly lowers out-sub-group evaluations but PSI reverses its effect by significantly raising out-sub-group evaluations.

These results attest to the attitudinal significance of ideological social identity. ISI plays a significant role in shaping attitudes toward ideological groups and ideological sub-groups within parties, causing higher levels of inter-group bias in both cases. Of course, further analysis is needed to determine the extent to which discriminatory attitudes lead to discriminatory behavior toward political in-group and out-group members. Based upon the SIT literature that motivates this portion of my analysis, there is ample reason to believe that such behavior would occur.

*Ideological Social Identity and Ideological Constraint*

In Chapter 4, I test ideological social identity’s effect on another, and perhaps even more important, attitudinal outcome: ideological constraint. Ideological constraint is a particularly prominent and controversial topic in the political science literature, as I
discuss in earlier chapters. Whereas previous studies focus primarily on sophistication’s contribution to constraint levels, I draw upon the theoretical and empirical insights of the SIT literature in arguing that psychological attachment to an ideological in-group should lead individuals to seek out and follow cues from other in-group members concerning policy preferences and political behavior. As a result, even individuals who are not sophisticated at understanding and applying ideological abstractions might think and act in ideologically consistent ways. Evidence supporting this argument could help to explain ideology’s power in predicting myriad political attitudes and behaviors despite the public’s general lack of ideological sophistication.

I test ideological social identity’s effects on ideological constraint using a constraint variable comprising policy preferences on five issues measured consistently across the 1984-2008 ANES datasets: government spending and services, healthcare, abortion, defense spending, and government aid to African-Americans. The resulting dependent variable, used in each of my linear regression models, measures the consistency with which respondents prefer ideologically consistent policies across all five issues, and it ranges from zero (no constraint) to five (complete constraint).

My analysis strongly indicates that ideological constraint increases as ideological social identity becomes stronger. The ISI variable reaches conventional significance levels in each of the seven constraint models, and its coefficient is positive in each case. These results are particularly impressive because ISI’s effects prove significant even when controlling for ideological self-placement, education, and a number of relevant political and demographic factors. Also, ISI is the only variable to reach conventional significance levels in all seven years. Education is significant and positively signed in six
of seven years, a finding that largely supports the traditional interpretation of ideological constraint as a function of sophistication. However, ISI’s performance suggests that it functions as an alternative, and I would argue more accessible, pathway to increased ideological constraint.

Rather than invalidating the sophistication hypothesis, these results recommend expanding political scientists’ conception of the factors shaping ideological constraint. Also, they recommend reconsidering widespread conclusions about ideology’s credibility as a meaningful source of political thinking. In fact, my analysis suggests that psychological attachment to an ideological in-group can lead to higher levels of constraint, independent of an individual’s capacity to comprehend and apply abstract ideological principles. Because this capacity is quite lacking in the general public, ideological social identity might very well represent a more credible route to ideologically consistent thinking and behavior. At a minimum, these results further suggest that ISI plays an important role in shaping political attitudes and policy preferences, and has done so for many years.

_Ideological Social Identity and Vote Choice_

In addition to shaping political attitudes, my analysis also indicates that ideological social identity plays a critical role in shaping one of the most central aspects of political behavior: vote choice. In Chapters 2 and 4, I test the interaction effect of ideological social identity and ideological self-placement on vote choice, in a series of hypothetical and actual elections. In nearly all cases, the evidence supports my
hypothesis that self-placement’s effect on vote choice is limited to instances in which ISI is at least moderate in strength. I interpret these findings as an affirmation that the integration of both scales creates an exceptionally comprehensive measure of ideological identification capable of more precisely capturing ideology’s behavioral effects than the standard self-placement scale alone.

First, in Chapter 2, I test the interaction effect of ideological social identity and ideological self-placement on vote choice in three hypothetical elections (my survey experiment’s general election, Democratic Party primary, and Republican Party primary) and two actual elections (the 2008 presidential and U.S. House elections). Control variables for these tests include party identification, partisan social identity, several demographic variables, and, where appropriate, variables representing experimental manipulations of the order in which stimulus candidates were presented to participants.

In four of the five vote choice models, the marginal effect of self-placement is significant only when ISI is at least moderate in strength. In these elections, the marginal effect of self-placement continues to be significant through the maximum level of ISI, except for at its highest level in the 2008 U.S. House vote choice model. These findings are almost entirely consistent with my hypothesis that ideological self-placement influences vote choice only insofar as participants feel at least somewhat psychologically attached to their ideological in-group. To the extent that they feel detached from, or indifferent toward, their ideological in-group, participants seem unconstrained by the logical or social dictates of ideological identity. This argument is not very different from that proposed by Greene (2004) in the context of partisan social identity. He writes: “as partisan social identification increases, defection from party may seem more
psychologically difficult, if indeed partisan group belonging does contribute to one’s self-esteem, as is implied by social identity theory” (p. 148). In the same way, it seems that ideological social identity makes ideological defection psychologically difficult.

Indeed, self-placement’s effect on vote choice also becomes increasingly powerful as ideological social identity becomes stronger. Participants’ predicted probability of voting for the ideologically appropriate candidate in the experimental general election and 2008 presidential election increases as they move from moderate to strong levels of ideological social identity, thereby suggesting that ISI not only conditions, but also intensifies, the behavioral effects of ideological self-placement. In this way, ISI contributes to a more precise measure of ideology’s behavioral significance in comparison to tests that exclusively rely upon self-placement.

I extend this analysis in Chapter 4 by testing the interaction effect of ideological social identity and ideological self-placement on vote choice in the 1984-2008 presidential elections. ANES data are in some ways advantageous and in other ways disadvantageous for testing the interaction effect. On the one hand, the ANES are valuable because they enable me to control on the five policy preferences discussed above, all of which are relevant to presidential vote choice and therefore useful in providing a more robust test of my hypothesis. Additionally, I control on the same political and demographic variables used in Chapter 2. On the other hand, the ANES are disadvantageous for this analysis because they do not include the direct measures of ideological, as well as partisan, social identity available for use in Chapter 2’s vote choice models. I use an approximate measure of ISI in this analysis, calculated as the difference
between each respondent’s in-group feeling thermometer rating and his or her average rating of eight political figures and groups included in each of the 1984-2008 ANES.

The results from Chapter 4 are remarkably robust and consistent. In each of the seven vote choice models, the marginal effect of ideological self-placement is not significant when ideological social identity is weak. Once ISI becomes moderate in strength, approximately between 38 and 50 on the normalized 0-100 ISI scale, the marginal effect of self-placement becomes significant in each model. Moreover, in six of seven models, the marginal effect of self-placement continues to be significant through ISI’s highest values. The only exception is 2008, when self-placement ceases to be significant at about 85 on the normalized ISI scale.

These results strongly suggest that the interaction effect found in Chapter 2 is not particular to the most recent election year or the representative sample from my TESS survey experiment. Across election years, electoral contexts, and participant samples, ideological social identity conditions ideological self-placement’s effect on vote choice. When ISI is weak, individuals apparently feel rather free to violate in-group norms by voting for an ideological opponent. If, however, participants feel at least moderately attached to their ideological in-group, they are likely to support an ideologically congruent candidate, and increasingly so as ISI becomes stronger.

Taking the results from Chapters 2 and 4 together, there is strong and quite consistent evidence that accounting for ideological social identity provides a more precise measure of ideology’s behavioral significance than that provided by the ideological self-placement scale alone. Indeed, my analysis demonstrates the conceptual and empirical value of developing more robust conceptualizations and measurements of ideological
identification capable of capturing feelings of psychological attachment to an ideological in-group. To do otherwise is to risk drawing simplistic and limited conclusions about ideology’s meaning and behavioral effects.

Summary

The preceding discussion details this dissertation’s many theoretical and empirical contributions to ideology and political behavior research. In particular, my analysis provides robust evidence that ideological social identity represents a distinct dimension of ideological identification not adequately captured by the political science literature’s standard measure of that concept, ideological self-placement. In fact, it is quite common for members of the American public, and particularly party elites, to have strong feelings of psychological attachment to an ideological in-group, and many individuals are more strongly attached to their ideological in-group than their partisan in-group. Moreover, ideological social identity plays a critical role in shaping important political attitudes and behaviors, including political inter-group bias, ideological constraint, and – in interaction with ideological self-placement – vote choice. The range and importance of these findings argues strongly for treating ideological social identity as a credible concept worthy of extensive analysis in future research. It is to the prospects and objectives for future research that I turn in the next, and final, section of this dissertation.
Prospects for Future Research

In this section, I consider opportunities for future research on ideological social identity. I begin by discussing limitations of this dissertation that could be addressed in future studies, and then discuss broader objectives requiring more expansive analysis in subsequent research.

Limitations of the Dissertation

Notwithstanding its theoretical and empirical contributions, undoubtedly this dissertation has its shortcomings, and they warrant attention in future research. First, the ideological and partisan social identity measures that I introduce and test in Chapters 2 and 3 comprise only two and three items, respectively. As I discuss in each of those chapters, my original surveys included three and five items, respectively. However, it was necessary for me to exclude some items in order to establish reliable scales capable of credibly testing ideological and partisan social identity in subsequent analyses. In future analysis, it would be valuable to expand the range of social identity items and to create balanced scales that are also reliable. In particular, it would be ideal to adapt all of Mael and Tetrick’s (1992) ten-item IDPG scale for use in data collection and to create from that the most expansive and robust social identity measures possible.

Second, I believe that my approximate ISI scale in Chapter 4 represents the most credible measure available from ANES data. Nonetheless, it is possible that a more credible measure could be constructed from those datasets, or from other longitudinal datasets available for the same or a similar period. Although I made my best efforts to
fully explore such options, it is possible that I overlooked other credible measures. To the extent that it is possible to construct more credible measures for a longitudinal study of ideological social identity, these opportunities should be pursued and implemented in future studies.

Third, more could be done to test variation in social identity levels across electoral contexts. My analysis in Chapter 2 relies upon an experimental manipulation of electoral contexts; specifically, I randomly assigned participants to read about a general election explicitly raising the salience of partisan considerations or a party primary explicitly raising the salience of ideological considerations. A more direct and valid method would be to conduct cross-sectional, or better yet multi-wave, surveys measuring ideological social identity during a nationally salient party primary and a nationally salient general election. If it were the case that ideological social identity levels vary in accordance with electoral contexts, this method of analysis would be the most precise and appropriate means of detecting such variation.

Finally, I have tested the attitudinal effects of ideological social identity in terms of inter-group evaluations and ideological constraint, and its behavioral effects in terms of vote choice. Each of these dependent variables is quite politically relevant, but there are many more attitudinal and behavioral outcomes that could be tested in relation to ideological social identity levels, including political activism, presidential approval, and votes on ballot measures or views on specific policies. Future studies would do well to expand the range of dependent variables to test ISI’s political significance more fully.

Addressing the limitations listed above would contribute to more robust analysis of ideological social identity and its political significance beyond what I present in this
dissertation. There are also many broader objectives that could be useful in expanding the study of ideological social identity in future research, and I discuss several of them below.

Future Research Objectives

I have attempted to construct a uniquely comprehensive measure of ideological identification by interacting ideological social identity with ideological self-placement. However, I concede that using such a measure is not terribly practical for the purposes of data collection. While the ideological self-placement scale only requires asking respondents to answer one question, or two questions when using a branching format, my ideological social identity measures require at least two to three survey items. Also, as noted above, I think it would be useful to include even more measures of social identity in future surveys. While such an extensive battery of survey measures is ideal from an analytical standpoint, they may too numerous, and therefore inefficient, to merit regular inclusion in political surveys, and particularly general surveys designed to facilitate analysis of much more than ideological social identity.

Facilitating future analysis of ideological social identity likely will require the development of an efficient and robust ideological identification measure that is widely attractive to survey researchers. Ideally, such a measure could be constructed from only one or two survey items. In future research, I hope to develop and test a comprehensive ideology measure efficiently capturing respondents’ degree of ideological extremity and feelings of psychological attachment to an ideological in-group. Doing so is likely to
prove quite challenging, but if successful it could help to promote more widespread study of ideological social identity and a needed transition from scholars’ reliance upon the conceptually and empirically limited ideological self-placement scale.

Whether using a more efficient and comprehensive ideology measure, or something very similar to what I use in this dissertation, it would be valuable in future research to analyze the stability of ideological social identity over time. In this analysis, I have treated ISI as a relatively stable individual-level variable. However, it is certainly possible that ISI levels fluctuate over time, due to random response patterns or because ISI levels are highly susceptible to environmental influences. Including ISI measures in a panel study would enable researchers to gauge its stability, or lack thereof, over time. If ISI levels were relatively consistent over time, evidence to that effect would support treating ideological social identity as a stable individual-level variable. If, on the other hand, ISI levels vary considerably over time, evidence to that effect might undercut my conclusions about ISI’s psychological, attitudinal, and behavioral significance, while also providing opportunities to analyze potential causes for such instability.

Another important objective for future research is to identify likely sources of ideological in-group behavioral cues. The Social Identity Theory literature suggests that psychological attachment to an in-group motivates individuals to seek out and follow cues from other in-group members in order to ascertain group norms and maintain a stable sense of social identity. Applying this principle to the present analysis, I have argued that individuals who have a strong sense of ideological social identity are likely to think and act with greater ideological consistency than those who do not, because the former are following cues from other in-group members, and not necessarily because
they are independently comprehending and applying abstract ideological principles. Indeed, I find in Chapter 4 that ISI levels significantly and positively predict ideological constraint, independent of education, ideological self-placement, and many other relevant controls, in all of the 1984-2008 ANES datasets.

For this explanation to be accurate, however, it is necessary for ideological in-group cues to be widely accessible to the mass public. Party elites provide one plausible source of such cues, but media outlets are perhaps even more plausible. In particular, “new media” sources such as political talk radio, cable news channels, and blogs, are increasingly prominent and they seem exceptionally favorable to describing political competition in ideological terms. Among the influential media personalities and outlets providing ideologically-charged political content are conservative ones such as Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Glenn Beck, and Bill O’Reilly, and liberal ones such as Rachel Maddow, Keith Olbermann, Jon Stewart, and the DailyKos.

A content analysis of such media sources would be helpful in verifying their transmission of frequent ideological in-group cues. If new media do indeed represent reliable sources of ideological in-group cues, survey research would be useful in examining whether consumers of such content tend to have stronger ideological social identities and behave with greater ideological consistency than non-consumers. Also, research could establish whether consumers of these media sources then transmit such cues to other ideological in-group members within their interpersonal networks. By documenting the sources, effects, and transmission patterns of ideological in-group cues, future research could help to more firmly establish ideological social identity’s credibility and its contribution to ideological consistency in the mass public.
Finally, there are many social groups that provide credible and politically relevant sources of social identity, including groups based on race or ethnicity, gender, age, geography, socioeconomic status, religion, policy preferences, and so on. It is important for political scientists to continue, or in some cases begin, studying the prevalence and political effects of each of these social identities. To comprehensively assess social identity’s function and significance in the political context, however, requires an even more ambitious long-term goal. Specifically, I argue that future studies in the political science literature should aim to document patterns of interrelationship between social identities, much like I do in Chapter 3 for ideological and partisan social identities.

Which groups typically constitute superordinate identity in-groups, and what tend to be the sub-groups competing for influence within them? How do patterns of interrelationship between social identities vary between political and social groups? How do individuals tend to weigh their various social identities when making political decisions, particularly in those instances where in-group cues conflict? Do individuals typically resolve such conflicts by ignoring differences, rationalizing differences, or explicitly acknowledging the dominance of their superordinate in-group?

It is vitally important that scholars confront these questions in future research, in order to comprehensively evaluate social identity’s role in shaping political attitudes and behaviors. It has already been shown, in this dissertation and in many previous studies, that Social Identity Theory is relevant and valuable to the study of political science. In fact, this analysis indicates that SIT may be entirely applicable to political identities that are seemingly too complex or abstract to command feelings of psychological attachment. Going forward, political scientists would be wise to consider more expansively the range
of politically relevant social identities, the structural interrelationship between multiple in-group loyalties, and the ways in which social identities interact to shape the political decisions of a social people. Insofar as this dissertation proves constructive in pursuing such ends, and in clarifying ideology’s role as a meaningful source of political identity, it will represent a valuable contribution to the existing political science literature and a promising foundation for future scholarly advancements.


APPENDIX A: SURVEY EXPERIMENT STIMULI

General Election Stimulus

Suppose an election is being held to determine your state’s next U.S. Senator, and you are a voter in this election. Two candidates, one Democrat (Republican) and one Republican (Democrat), are competing to become U.S. Senator.

Bill Reese is the Democratic (Republican) candidate in this race. Reese’s campaign has focused on a number of issues where he says Republicans (Democrats) have led the nation astray recently by ignoring alternative political views. In order to succeed now and in the future, Reese says the nation must begin to look to Democrats (Republicans) for new ideas. A win by Reese would increase Democrats’ (Republicans’) power in the U.S. government, and many people would view it as an indication that voters, at the state and national level, are shifting in favor of Democrats’ (Republicans’) positions on the most important issues of the day.

Peter Keaton is the Republican (Democratic) candidate in this race. Keaton’s campaign says it is the policies supported by Democrats (Republicans) that have led the nation astray from its core principles in recent years. Keaton says that Republicans (Democrats) must be given the opportunity to lead once again if the nation is to succeed today and in the years to come. Keaton’s victory in this election would strengthen Republicans’ (Democrats’) ability to shape U.S. government policy, while also proving, in
the eyes of many, that the people now favor the Republican (Democratic) Party’s approach to resolving the many important challenges faced by voters in this state and throughout the nation.

*Question*: If you were a voter in this election, how would you vote?

1) I would vote for Bill Reese.
2) I would vote for Peter Keaton.

**Party Primary Stimulus**

Suppose a Republican (Democratic) Party primary is being held in your state to determine the Republican (Democratic) nominee for an upcoming U.S. Senate race, and you are a voter in this primary. Two candidates are competing to become the Republican (Democratic) Party’s nominee.

Bill Reese is viewed as the ideological moderate in this race. Reese’s campaign has focused on a number of issues where he says conservative Republicans (liberal Democrats) have led the party astray recently by ignoring alternative ideological views. In order to succeed now and in the future, Reese says the party must begin to reach out to moderate and liberal Republicans (conservative Democrats) for new ideas. A win by Reese would increase moderates’ power in the state party, and many people would view it as an indication that the Republican (Democratic) Party, at the state and national level, is shifting in favor of ideological moderates’ positions on the most important issues of the day.

Peter Keaton is viewed as the ideological conservative (liberal) in this race. Keaton’s campaign says it is the policies supported by moderate and liberal Republicans
(conservative Democrats) that have led the party astray from its conservative (liberal) principles in recent years. Keaton says that conservative Republicans (liberal Democrats) must be given the opportunity to lead once again if the party is to win this and other upcoming elections. Keaton’s victory in this primary would strengthen conservatives’ (liberals’) ability to shape party policy, while also proving, in the eyes of many, that the Republican (Democratic) Party now favors an ideologically conservative (liberal) approach to resolving the many important challenges faced by voters in this state and throughout the nation.

Question: If you were a voter in this election, how would you vote?

1) I would vote for Bill Reese.

2) I would vote for Peter Keaton.
APPENDIX B: VARIABLES FROM 1984-2008 ANES ANALYSIS

Sample Weights: None (1984, 1988); v92700 (1992); v960005 (1996); v000002a (2000); v040102 (2004); v080102 (2008).


Healthcare: v841058 (1984); v880318 (1988); v923716 (1992); v960479 (1996); v000614 (2000); v043150 (2004); v083119, v083124x (2008).


Party Identification: v840866 (1984); 1988 (v880274); v923634 (1992); v960420 (1996); v000523 (2000); v043116 (2004); v083098x (2008).


Age: v840429 (1984); v880414 (1988); v923903 (1992); v960605 (1996); v000908 (2000); v043250 (2004); v083215x (2008).

Gender: v840707 (1984); v880413 (1988); v924201 (1992); v960066 (1996); v001029 (2000); v041109a (2004); v083311 (2008).

Education: v840431 (1984); v880419 (1988); v923905 (1992); v960607 (1996); v000910 (2000); v043252 (2004); v083217 (2008).

1984 Feeling Thermometers: v840764 (Conservatives); v840770 (Liberals); v840759 (Republicans); v840758 (Democrats); v840750 (Ronald Reagan); v840751 (Walter Mondale); v840756 (George H.W. Bush); v840757 (Geraldine Ferraro).

1988 Feeling Thermometers: v880609 (Conservatives); v880616 (Liberals); v880165 (Republicans); v880164 (Democrats); v880592 (George H.W. Bush); v880593 (Michael Dukakis); v880160 (Dan Quayle); v880159 (Lloyd Bentsen).

1992 Feeling Thermometers: v925319 (Conservatives); v925326 (Liberals); v923318 (Republicans); v923317 (Democrats); v923305 (George H.W. Bush); v923306 (Bill Clinton); v923308 (Dan Quayle); v923309 (Al Gore).

1996 Feeling Thermometers: v961031 (Conservatives); v961032 (Liberals); v960293 (Republicans); v960292 (Democrats); v960273 (Bob Dole); v960272 (Bill Clinton); v960276 (Jack Kemp); v960275 (Al Gore).

2000 Feeling Thermometers: v001310 (Conservatives); v001311 (Liberals); v000370 (Republicans); v000369 (Democrats); v000361 (George W. Bush); v000360 (Al Gore); v000367 (Dick Cheney); v000366 (Joe Lieberman).

2004 Feeling Thermometers: v045069 (Conservatives); v045062 (Liberals); v043050 (Republicans); v043049 (Democrats); v043038 (George W. Bush); v043039 (John Kerry); v043041 (Dick Cheney); v043042 (John Edwards).

2008 Feeling Thermometers: v085064q (Conservatives); v085064g (Liberals); v083044b (Republicans); v083044a (Democrats); v085063c (John McCain); v085063b (Barack Obama); v085063u (Sarah Palin); v085063t (Joe Biden).