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# *Value Conflict and Volatility in Party Identification*

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Are some people more prone to instabilities in partisanship due to the ways they rank and organize their core values? We investigate the mechanisms of partisan volatility, considering whether instabilities reflect value conflict and ambivalence. Our expectation is that when the basic values of the American ethos come into conflict in elite discourse, citizens have difficulty reconciling their own value arrangement with that of elites, resulting in greater partisan volatility. To this end, we use several heteroscedastic regression and ordered probit models to explore whether the conflict of competing values explains the response variance and instability of individual-level partisanship and ideology over time. To construct measures of value conflict, we rely on data from the 1992, 1994 and 1996 American National Election Studies. We find that, while instabilities in partisan identification reflect low information for some, the competition of core values generates volatility in partisan affiliations for others. In deliberating the value tradeoffs of politics, people may be of two minds even about central beliefs such as party identification.

A paradox of partisanship lies in perceptions of its stability. On one hand, partisanship is an enduring attribute, among the most central and most stable beliefs people hold about politics. But on the other hand, party identification is not impervious to change, and may be movable in the face of an evolving political context. How can partisanship be so stable, yet still be influenced by political events? While the roots of partisan stability can be traced to political socialization and the reinforcement of its use in politics, the mechanisms of the changeability of partisanship remain comparatively elusive. Here, we investigate whether the volatility of partisanship reflects the conflict of competing core principles.

Core values are the currency of politics, influencing how individuals structure their political priorities as well as how elites frame political discourse. Both encompassing and enduring, these principles define the kinds of outcomes people seek from government and society. When raised singly, political values such as humanitarianism, egalitarianism, moral traditionalism and limited government can inform policy preferences. But when multiple and competing values are raised in political discourse, their utility in informing preferences is curtailed. We suggest that the occurrence of this value conflict will vary across individuals, dependent on how they rank and organize their values. For those who structure their values in a way that echoes that of political elites, values can have direct application to political choices. But for those who organize core values in ways contrary to that of conventional political discourse, politics will produce a chronic conflict between competing values, resulting in volatility in partisan choice.

Investigating volatility in party identification is important for several reasons. First, the potential for competing values to promote partisan volatility informs the stability of beliefs, and correspondingly, assessments of citizen competence. In contrast to cases where instabilities in opinion reflect uncertainty or measurement error, finding core values to be a source of partisan instabilities explains opinion instability as thoughtful and deliberative. Value conflict can induce ambivalence, where citizens deliberate competing value

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preferences but have difficulty resolving the conflict. If value conflict generates ambivalence within partisan preferences, this has particular significance. Previous research identifies ambivalence in opinions towards specific presidential candidates and policy issues.[1] In the case of ambivalence in partisanship, the consequences are not confined to a few issues but relevant to a wide range of political choices. For while individuals do occasionally face policy decisions on the issues posed in ballot initiatives, they are called on much more frequently, and consequentially, to make partisan-based choices.

A second motivation for investigating the mechanisms of partisan instability lies in the centrality of partisan opinions in political decision making. Partisanship is one of the most useful weapons individuals hold in simplifying a complicated political environment. Party identification is a ready heuristic, highly accessible and applicable to numerous political situations.[2] Thus, knowing what weakens partisan stability informs the ways people process and evaluate political information. In addition, identifying values as a source of partisan volatility may provide a partial answer to how a traditionally stable force like partisanship might evolve over time or move in response to current events.

Finally, considering the influence of value conflict on attitudinal instabilities also extends our understanding of the importance of values and the consequences of value conflict. For elites, the competition of rival values is central to how political issues are framed, and the allocation of contested values can define politics itself.[3] For individuals, value conflict may prove more disruptive than defining. If individuals organize their value priorities in a way that amplifies the conflict between competing principles, then the utility of values informing preferences may be limited. Given the centrality of values in how people think about politics, this type of internalized value conflict may diminish the utility of core principles in determining choice.

We begin by reviewing the nature and stability of partisanship, motivating a mechanism of partisan volatility with the potential to capture both its remarkable steadiness as well as its potential fluctuations in the face of a changing political environment. Next, we discuss value conflict and ambivalence, and the consequences of conflicts between core principles. We then develop a theory based on the gaps between elite organization of politics and the public's own value organization to show why value conflict should lead to volatility in partisan beliefs. We also consider the consequences of information and value conflict on the stability of ideology as a corollary. To construct measures of value conflict, we rely

[1] R. Michael Alvarez and John Brehm, *Hard Choices, Easy Answers: Values, Information, and American Public Opinion* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002); Stanley Feldman and John Zaller, 'The Political Culture of Ambivalence: Ideological Responses to the Welfare State', *American Journal of Political Science*, 36 (1992), 268–307; Howard Lavine, 'The Electoral Consequences of Ambivalence Toward Presidential Candidates', *American Journal of Political Science*, 45 (2001), 915–29; Michael F. Meffert, Michael Guge and Milton Lodge, 'Good, Bad, and Ambivalent: The Consequences of Multidimensional Political Attitudes', in Willem E. Saris and Paul Sniderman, eds, *Studies in Public Opinion: Attitudes, Nonattitudes, Measurement Error, and Change* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 63–92; Marco R. Steenbergen and Paul R. Brewer, 'The Not-So Ambivalent Public: Policy Attitudes in the Political Culture of Ambivalence', in Saris and Sniderman, eds, *Studies in Public Opinion*, pp. 93–132.

[2] Robert Huckfeldt, Jeffrey Levine, William Morgan and John Sprague, 'Accessibility and the Political Utility of Partisan and Ideological Orientations', *American Journal of Political Science*, 43 (1999), 888–911; Milton Lodge and Ruth Hamill, 'A Partisan Schema for Political Information Processing', *American Political Science Review*, 80 (1986), 505–19; Wendy M. Rahn, 'The Role of Partisan Stereotypes in Information Processing about Political Candidates', *American Journal of Political Science*, 37 (1993), 472–96.

[3] Paul R. Brewer, 'Value Words and Lizard Brains: Do Citizens Deliberate About Appeals to Their Core Values?' *Political Psychology*, 22 (2001), 45–64; David Easton, *The Political System* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953).

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on data from the 1992, 1994 and 1996 American National Election Studies. These value-conflict measures are then used in several heteroscedastic regression and ordered probit models to explore the degree to which value conflict explains response variance and instabilities in partisanship and ideology over time. We find that, while instabilities in partisan identification reflect low information for some, many others are sophisticated enough to recognize the value trade-offs inherent in politics and, in deliberating the value alternatives raised in partisan dialogue, end up confused about party identification.

## THE (IN)STABILITY OF PARTISANSHIP

Party identification has traditionally been regarded as extraordinarily stable – individuals inherit a party identification at an early point, and this identification serves as a touchstone for relating to the political world.[4] Because of its roots, both psychological and social, partisanship is often seen as immovable in the face of outside pressures. And compared to other political opinions such as presidential evaluations and issue preferences, partisanship is much more stable.[5] Even so, increasingly, survey evidence highlights the presence of partisan instabilities within individuals. At the individual level, party identification has been shown to be unstable over both the short term and the long term. As panel studies from the American National Election Studies (ANES) show, a majority of individuals polled moved at least one step on a seven-point scale of partisanship across panel waves in a single election as well as across three-wave biennial studies.[6]

Disagreements remain as to the degree to which these observed partisan instabilities can be explained by factors such as measurement error and question wording.[7] Other evidence suggests partisanship is influenced by the nature of the times and the electoral context. At the individual level, party identification has been shown to be responsive to campaign effects, assessments of party policy positions and factors such as the economy.[8] And at

[4] Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York: Wiley, 1960); Warren E. Miller and J. Merrill Shanks, *The New American Voter* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).

[5] Christopher Achen, 'Mass Political Attitudes and the Survey Response', *American Political Science Review*, 69 (1975), 1218–31; Philip E. Converse and Gregory B. Markus, 'Plus Ça Change: The New CPS Election Study Panel', *American Political Science Review*, 73 (1979), 32–49.

[6] Richard A. Brody and Lawrence S. Rothenberg, 'The Instability of Partisanship: An Analysis of the 1980 Presidential Election', *British Journal of Political Science*, 18 (1988), 445–65; Tom W. Rice and Tracey A. Hilton, 'Partisanship Over Time: A Comparison of United States Panel Data', *Political Research Quarterly*, 49 (1996), 191–201.

[7] Paul R. Abramson and Charles W. Ostrom Jr, 'Macropartisanship: An Empirical Reassessment', *American Political Science Review*, 85 (1991), 181–92; Robert S. Erikson, Michael B. MacKuen and James A. Stimson, 'What Moves Macropartisanship? A Response to Green, Palmquist, and Schickler', *American Political Science Review*, 92 (1998), 901–12; Donald Philip Green and Bradley Palmquist, 'Of Artifacts and Partisan Instability', *American Journal of Political Science*, 34 (1990), 872–901; Donald Philip Green, Bradley Palmquist and Eric Schickler, 'Macropartisanship: A Replication and Critique', *American Political Science Review*, 92 (1998), 883–99; Donald Philip Green, Bradley Palmquist and Eric Shickler, *Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and the Social Identities of Voters* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002); Warren E. Miller, 'Party Identification, Realignment, and Party Voting: Back to the Basics', *American Political Science Review*, 85 (1991), 557–68.

[8] Morris P. Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981); Charles H. Franklin and John E. Jackson, 'The Dynamics of Party Identification', *American Political Science Review*, 77 (1983), 957–73; Susan E. Howell, 'Short-term Forces and Changing Partisanship', *Political Behavior*, 3 (1981), 163–80.

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the aggregate level, movements in partisanship appear collectively rational and responsive to the dynamics of contemporary events.[9]

Given the potential for the electoral environment to influence partisan dynamics, we look to identify the conditions in which partisan responses are most movable. Appraisals of party performance and evaluations of issue positions help explain why partisanship may be unstable in an evolving electoral context, but not why partisanship may also retain its steady character. We investigate the theoretical mechanisms of partisan instability, looking for the underlying factors that help explain both the steady and changeable nature of party identification. Our starting point is a set of beliefs both central to politics and persistent across election cycles – core values.

## VALUE CONFLICT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Rooted in American political culture, core values are guiding dispositions that inform the kinds of outcomes people seek from society. These principles define individuals' political and economic priorities, including values such as moral traditionalism and the humanitarian desire to help others. Like ideology, core values carry meaning beyond specific scenarios, and thus serve as a way to structure political beliefs and priorities. But unlike ideology, which tends to be meaningful for only the politically sophisticated, values inform political preferences across individuals, regardless of political sophistication.[10] Because of their centrality, generalizability and utility across individuals, values are strong influences on people's perceptions of the political world and the kinds of political decisions they make, including tolerance judgements, candidate evaluations and policy preferences.[11]

To apply values to political questions, citizens rely on value hierarchies – rankings of value preferences that can vary significantly across individuals.[12] When the weight of the evidence falls to one side of the argument, choice is relatively easy – the elector selects the alternative closest to his or her preferred values. When competing sides both find support, values cannot be easily translated into choice. If value preferences are not fully hierarchical, electors may find the values underlying competing sides of the debate equally

[9] Dee Allsop and Herbert Weisberg, 'Measuring Change in Party Identification in an Election Campaign', *American Journal of Political Science*, 32 (1998), 996–1017; Michael B. MacKuen, Robert S. Erikson and James A. Stimson, 'Macropartisanship', *American Political Science Review*, 83 (1989), 1125–42.

[10] Paul Goren, 'Core Principles and Policy Reasoning in Mass Publics: A Test of Two Theories', *British Journal of Political Science*, 31 (2001), 159–77.

[11] Stanley Feldman, 'Structure and Consistency in Public Opinion: The Role of Core Beliefs and Values', *American Journal of Political Science*, 36 (1988), 268–307; Stanley Feldman and Marco R. Steenbergen, 'The Humanitarian Foundation of Public Support for Social Welfare', *American Journal of Political Science*, 45 (2001), 658–77; Donald R. Kinder and Lynn M. Sanders, *Divided By Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996); Herbert McClosky and John Zaller, *The American Ethos: Public Attitudes Toward Capitalism and Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984); Mark Peffley, Pia Knigge and Jon Hurwitz, 'A Multiple Values Model of Political Tolerance', *Political Research Quarterly*, 54 (2001), 379–406; Paul M. Sniderman and Thomas Piazza, *The Scar of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[12] William G. Jacoby, 'Core Values and Political Attitudes', in Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox, eds, *Understanding Public Opinion* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2001), pp. 177–202; Milton Rokeach, *The Nature of Human Values* (New York: Free Press, 1973); Shalom H. Schwartz, 'Value Priorities and Behavior: Applying the Theory of Integrated Value Systems', in James M. Olson, Clive Seligman and Mark P. Zanna, eds, *The Psychology of Values: The Ontario Symposium* (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996), pp. 1–24.

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attractive (or equally repugnant). In simultaneously supporting competing values, the decision-making process becomes much more difficult.

Beginning with Converse,[13] researchers have seen stable, crystallized beliefs as common only to a minority, with inconsistent opinions and response instabilities prevalent among the majority. Successive research identifies a middle ground between attitude certainty and uncertainty, where instabilities in opinions reflect indecision rather than indifference. If citizens appreciate the sides of the argument but cannot reconcile their competing interests, ambivalence results. The consequences of ambivalence include attitude instability and inconsistency, manifested in instability in opinions over time, less predictable survey responses, moderation in attitudes and delays in the formation of electoral choice.[14]

With ambivalence, the elements in conflict may include discordant emotional reactions, competition among recalled considerations, inconsistent perceptions or beliefs, conflicting assessments of candidate traits or opposing cognitive and affective orientations.[15] In the particular case of value conflict, evidence of influence has been surprisingly limited, however. Among policy issues, only a small subset of issues, including abortion and euthanasia, reveal evidence of value-driven ambivalence, while many other policy opinions prove resistant to the destabilizing effects of value conflict.[16] To explain how the competing values of politics may erode the stability of partisan preferences, we next discuss the connections between core values and partisanship.

## A THEORY OF PARTISAN VOLATILITY

While seeing why knotty issues, such as abortion or euthanasia, may fall across fault lines of competing core principles is straightforward, it is less apparent how value conflict may similarly underlie central opinions such as partisanship and ideology. To explain the mechanism by which this occurs, we first develop the route by which people might inherit competing value priorities and then explain how internalized value conflict leads to partisan instabilities.

The roots of citizens' value structures are found in the American political culture or ethos, the shared norms and beliefs about politics that define the basic starting points of political debate. While one's value attachments are initially shaped through political socialization, elites play an important role in influencing how citizens rely on these core

[13] Philip E. Converse, 'The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics', in David Apter, ed., *Ideology and Discontent* (New York: Free Press, 1964), pp. 206–61.

[14] Alvarez and Brehm, *Hard Choices, Easy Answers*; Lavine, 'The Electoral Consequences of Ambivalence Toward Presidential Candidates'; Meffert, Guge and Lodge, 'Good, Bad, and Ambivalent'.

[15] Ambivalence that results from competing values differs from other forms of ambivalence in that measures of core values do not reflect considerations recalled from memory. Given that our survey measures are value scales, we cannot conclusively show ambivalence. We can test whether value conflict increases the volatility of partisanship, in terms of the response variance and over-time variability of partisan preferences. See Lavine, 'The Electoral Consequences of Ambivalence Toward Presidential Candidates'; Howard Lavine, Cynthia J. Thomsen, Mark P. Zanna and Eugene Borgida, 'On the Primacy of Affect in the Determination of Attitudes and Behavior: The Moderating Influence of Affective-Cognitive Ambivalence', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 34 (1998), 398–421; Meffert, Guge and Lodge, 'Good, Bad, and Ambivalent'.

[16] R. Michael Alvarez and John Brehm, 'American Ambivalence Towards Abortion Policy: Development of a Heteroskedastic Probit Model of Competing Values', *American Journal of Political Science*, 39 (1995), 1055–82; R. Michael Alvarez and John Brehm, 'Are Americans Ambivalent Towards Racial Policies?' *American Journal of Political Science*, 41 (1997), 345–74; Alvarez and Brehm, *Hard Choices, Easy Answers*; Steenbergen and Brewer, 'The Not-So Ambivalent Public'.

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principles.[17] By using interpretations of core values to justify their policy positions, political elites connect contemporary partisan and policy debate to citizens' core principles.

We argue that competing values will produce volatility in partisan opinions specifically when individuals endorse values that cross the fault lines of partisan dialogue. We focus on four values common to political decision making: egalitarianism, limited government, moral traditionalism and humanitarianism. The first, egalitarianism, represents an individual's support for ideas of equality. This includes a commitment to the equality of all people, as well as support for equal access to the political process.[18] The second, limited government, refers to the degree to which an individual supports government intervention, particularly in the economic sphere. While big government is often seen to interfere with the free enterprise system, most Americans also believe at some level that government needs to intervene in the economy.[19] Taken broadly, this core value relates to values of individual liberty and freedom from government interference.[20] Thirdly, moral traditionalism considers what role government should assume in cultivating the moral life of its citizens, a core principle that is influenced heavily by religious beliefs. The fourth core value, humanitarianism, is related to compassionate willingness to extend assistance to others in unfortunate circumstances. Humanitarianism is closely related to questions of whether people who are suffering deserve to be helped.[21]

Research on core values shows that people tend to organize related values together in sets.[22] One such organizational system in politics is ideology. While values and ideology are independent concepts,[23] values can be generally organized along a left-to-right dimension of ideology, where certain values will tend to be supported in liberal arguments, while other values will tend to be the principles underlying conservative dialogue.[24] At one end of the ideology dimension, we would expect a liberal to score high on a scale of egalitarianism as well as humanitarianism, while holding lower support for the principles of moral traditionalism and limited government. Conversely, we would expect a conservative to support limited government and moral traditionalism, but not the liberal values of humanitarianism and egalitarianism. The reasons for treating these values as conflicting have historical roots in the American ethos, and the ways values align with ideological rhetoric. Historically, liberals emphasize democratic values, particularly equality, while conservatives emphasize capitalistic values, such as limited government, as well as moral traditionalism.[25]

[17] Dennis Chong, *Rational Lives: Norms and Values in Politics and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); McClosky and Zaller, *The American Ethos.*

[18] McClosky and Zaller, *The American Ethos*.

[19] Donald J. Devine, *The Political Culture of the United States* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1972); Feldman, 'Structure and Consistency in Public Opinion'; Seymour Martin Lipset, *The First New Nation* (New York: Norton, 1979); Robert Y. Shapiro and John M. Gilroy, 'The Polls: Regulation, Part 1', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 48 (1984), 531–42.

[20] Gregory B. Markus, 'American Individualism Reconsidered', in James H. Kuklinski, ed., *Citizens and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 401–32.

[21] Feldman and Steenbergen, 'The Humanitarian Foundation of Public Support for Social Welfare'.

[22] Schwartz, 'Value Priorities and Behavior'.

[23] Jennifer L. Hochschild, *What's Fair? American Beliefs about Distributive Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

[24] John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[25] See McClosky and Zaller, *The American Ethos.* Our theory assumes that citizens recognize the traditional values espoused by the parties. Clearly, if citizens did not associate limited government with Republicans and

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For political elites, we expect that values will align with ideology in consistent and predictable ways. But for the less politically sophisticated, this same ideological ordering of values should be less common. While the mass public understands and uses values, ideology remains much less understood by the masses.[26] If citizens tend not to be ideologically adept, it seems unlikely that ideology will structure the value priorities for most. The result is a disjuncture between the ideological constraint of elite values and the limited ideological literacy of the public. Faced with elite rhetoric along ideological lines, citizens may internalize values from both ends of the ideological spectrum.

In addition, because ideological constraint is social, and not logical, citizens need not be irrational if they organize core values in a way inconsistent with ideology.[27] The nature of political rhetoric may limit voters' ability to organize values along ideological lines. For while political elites from the right and the left each historically favour certain values, the difference between liberals and conservatives tends to be one of emphasis, as neither side completely rejects the values of the other. Conservatives may use humanitarian language to project a more compassionate political stance, while liberals may invoke more traditionally conservative language about reining in big government. While history and reputation connect value priorities to ideological sides, the value language of elites can obscure these connections for voters.[28]

This lack of connection between ideology and value organization reveals how citizens may have value priorities inconsistent with those of political elites. By what mechanism does this produce partisan instability? We expect that value conflict will disrupt partisan stability when an elector's personal value organization is non-ideological. Our expectation is predicated upon on assumption that we explicitly acknowledge. We assume that the two major parties in American politics are closely aligned with the ideological spectrum. That is, supporting the Democratic party implies a liberal ideology, while supporting the Republicans implies a conservative ideology. Research on Congress has demonstrated that the voting patterns of members of Congress have become increasingly ideologically pure.[29] As such, party alternatives are increasingly congruent with the ideological spectrum. If this assumption is correct, then a Democratic choice will conform to liberal values of

*(F'note continued)*

egalitarianism with Democrats, we could not expect much in the way of partisan value conflict. However, ANES data does not allow us to test this assumption explicitly.

[26] Converse, 'The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics'; Norman R. Luttbeg and Michael M. Gant, 'The Failure of Liberal/Conservative Ideology as a Cognitive Structure', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 49 (1985), 80–93.

[27] Converse, 'The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics'.

[28] Even though political rhetoric does not follow traditional value divisions absolutely, we argue that given arguments of issue ownership (John R. Petrocik, 'Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study', *American Journal of Political Science*, 40 (1996), 825–50; John R. Petrocik, William L. Benoit and Glenn J. Hansen, 'Issue Ownership and Presidential Campaigning, 1952–2000', *Political Science Quarterly*, 118 (2003), 599–626), elite values have historical ties with ideological value arrangements that political elites cannot easily escape. In the case of issue ownership, even though a Democrat can discuss defence spending and a Republican can promote government investment in social welfare programmes, each is recognized as having strayed from traditional positions. Likewise in the case of core values, if a conservative employs humanitarian arguments, these claims will be viewed differently than if offered by a liberal opponent. We argue that when elites borrow value rhetoric from ideological opponents, they are recognized as having strayed from traditional positions. Indeed, even when elites cross ideological lines with their value rhetoric, they seldom disavow the values that have historically defined their party's platform.

[29] John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995); David W. Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Post-reform House* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

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egalitarianism and humanitarianism, while a Republican choice will conform to conservative values of moral traditionalism and limited government.[30]

For those who have an ideological value orientation, the division of partisan discussion along ideological lines causes no conflict. But for individuals who support some of the values endorsed by liberals as well as some principles of conservative arguments, discussion along traditional ideological lines creates internal value competition. This conflict in turn will promote volatility in partisan preferences. For example, one voter may feel very strongly about equality, but at the same time, be suspicious of a large and intrusive government. Faced with the campaign speech of a Democratic candidate, the voter may embrace the politician's commitment to equality, while at the same time worrying that the candidate will use large government programmes to pursue equal opportunity goals.[31] Citizens who identify with the values raised in both liberal and conservative arguments should thus find it more difficult to choose a party to identify with. This disjuncture between one's own value organization and the value structure one perceives in political debate may lead to conflict and instability.

As a corollary, if our expectation about the mechanism underlying party ambivalence is true, then value conflict should have a minimal impact on the stability of ideological self-identification. Partisanship is a meaningful identification for nearly all citizens, while a much lower proportion of the public is ideologically adept. In the case of partisanship, people connect values to their party preferences and face conflict. In the case of ideology, those who fail to understand and use ideological labels will be unlikely to recognize the mismatch between their personal values and ideology. If citizens fail to connect their values to ideology, then value conflict will have little influence on the volatility of ideological preferences. Instead, the instability of responses relating to ideology is expected to be solely a function of political sophistication.

In sum, values and their organization should have important consequences for party identification. In inheriting the value frames of elite rhetoric, citizens may end up endorsing values from both sides of the partisan divide. Because the fault lines of partisan debate tend to persist over time, the chronic and systematic conflict of core values may be sufficient

[30] Some debate exists over the extent to which partisanship influences value priorities. Across many definitions, values are described as deep and pervasive principles that anchor other political beliefs (Feldman, 'Structure and Consistency in Public Opinion') and predict policy preferences (Feldman, 'Structure and Consistency in Public Opinion'; Feldman and Steenbergen, 'The Humanitarian Foundation of Public Support for Social Welfare') and even partisanship (Edward G. Carmines and Geoffrey C. Layman, 'Value Priorities, Partisanship, and Electoral Choice: The Neglected Case of the United States', *Political Behavior*, 19 (1997), 283–316). Research also shows that while these core values are not invulnerable to change, remarkable stability in value priorities exists over time (Ronald Inglehart, 'Aggregate Stability and Individual-Level Flux in Mass Belief Systems: The Level of Analysis Paradox', *American Political Science Review*, 79 (1985), 97–116; Rokeach, *The Nature of Human Values*; Milton Rokeach and Sandra J. Ball-Rokeach, 'Stability and Change in American Value Priorities', *American Psychologist*, 44 (1989), 775–84). In contrast to this research, some have suggested that candidate preferences are able to shift core value priorities over campaign seasons (James A. McCann, 'Electoral Choices and Core Value Change: The 1992 Presidential Campaign', *American Journal of Political Science*, 41 (1997), 564–83). While undoubtedly the appeals of candidates can influence how voters use values, this does not exclude the possibility of value structures shaping partisanship. As we find, about 30 per cent of our sample experiences some level of value conflict. This means that partisanship does not fully determine value priorities – if it did, we should expect little value conflict along partisan lines, with people changing their values to match one of the parties. So while reciprocal relations may exist among values and partisanship, our evidence supports the argument that the ways people organize and structure their values can influence partisan preferences.

[31] As Miller and Shanks (*The New American Voter*) find, voters use value priorities to inform candidate evaluation and vote choice, in ways consistent with ideological value organizations.

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to destabilize beliefs even as stable as partisanship. We consider the effects of value conflict on two aspects of partisan stability – the response variance of partisanship and the likelihood that a person will shift his or her party identification over time.

First, we expect value conflict to manifest itself as choice heterogeneity in response to party identification survey items. In cross-sectional data, individuals often have degrees of variability in their responses to survey questions. This heterogeneity in response variance can arise from factors such as varying levels of political information or differing amounts of socialization, among others. Here, we expect differences in the response variance of party identification survey items to reflect value conflict, as citizens with ideologically inconsistent value structures struggle with the question of party affiliation. In individuals experiencing such value conflict, we should observe unequal variances across observations, which is know as the familiar problem of heteroscedasticity. We model this heteroscedasticity to consider whether those who experience value conflict reveal less predictable responses to party identification survey items than those with ideologically consistent value priorities. We also model the response variance in ideology, with the expectation that information, rather than value conflict, drives response variability here.

Secondly, we consider whether value conflict contributes to greater instability in partisanship over time. We expect that those who struggle with competing value choices will have greater variability in partisan responses, such that, in repeated sampling, these individuals offer different responses to the same survey item. Certainly, a number of factors may cause partisan responses to vary over time, including the political performance of the incumbent government and measurement error or question-wording effects.[32] We consider whether competing values explain why partisan response may vary over time. In sum, we examine citizens' struggles to match their values to those of ideologically oriented political parties, and the consequences for both their response variability and stability in partisanship over time.

## MEASURING VALUE CONFLICT

Given these expectations regarding the consequences of conflict between core principles, we next consider how value conflict might be measured. Our measures for these values, egalitarianism, limited government, moral traditionalism and humanitarianism, are derived from a set of questions from the 1992 and 1996 National Election Studies. The 1996 ANES has items related to all four of the values, while the 1992 ANES has coverage of three values, with humanitarianism as the omitted value. The core principles are measured as additive scales each composed from a set of three to six questions. Each composite value item was centred and rescaled from $-1$ to 1. The questions used are to be found in the Appendix, and all scale well.[33]

[32] Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*; Franklin and Jackson, 'The Dynamics of Party Identification'; Howell, 'Short-term Forces and Changing Partisanship'; Abramson and Ostrom, 'Macropartisanship'; Green, Palmquist and Shickler, *Partisan Hearts and Minds;* Miller, 'Party Identification, Realignment, and Party Voting'.

[33] Some authors have argued that the NES egalitarianism items have two dimensions (David O. Sears, P. J. Henry and Richard Kosterman, 'Egalitarian Values and Contemporary Racial Politics', in David O. Sears, James Sidanius and Lawrence Bobo, eds, *Racialized Politics: The Debate About Racism in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 75–117). We found some limited evidence for this and created two separate egalitarianism scales and adjusted the conflict measures. We substituted these alternative scales in the analyses and found it made no difference to the results in any of the models.

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In our theory, partisan instability will result when individuals organize their value beliefs in a way inconsistent with the value structure presented in political debate. Because we are interested in the consequences of opposing values, our value-conflict measure is the product of a respondent's scores on two oppositional value scales.[34] The definition of oppositional values is based on an ideological organization, where conflict arises when individuals support both traditionally liberal and traditionally conservative core principles. As such, we created four measures of ideologically conflicting values: egalitarianism and moral traditionalism, limited government and egalitarianism, limited government and humanitarianism, and moral traditionalism and humanitarianism.[35] Higher scores on the value-conflict measures indicate an increased level of conflict between the two values. Questions about humanitarian values were not included in the 1992 ANES, so for these analyses, we have only two measures of value conflict: one of the conflict between egalitarianism and moral traditionalism and a second measure of conflict between egalitarianism and limited government.

In the 1996 survey, we find that the highest level of value conflict occurs between moral traditionalism and humanitarianism, with a majority of the sample (63 per cent) experiencing some level of value conflict between the two core values. The least common point of value conflict occurs between egalitarianism and traditional moral values, with 24 per cent experiencing some clash of views. In balancing support for limited government with egalitarianism, 32 per cent are undecided, while 35 per cent experience some conflict between limited government and humanitarianism. In the 1992 survey, 27 per cent find conflict between egalitarianism and limited government, while 29 per cent find it between egalitarianism and moral traditionalism. Clearly, value conflict is quite common.

## MODELLING THE CONSEQUENCES OF VALUE CONFLICT

We focus on two manifestations of partisan volatility. The first is the predictability of survey response, and whether value conflict induces response instability in party identification. Those experiencing conflict about the values underlying partisan choice are

[34] The selection of appropriate measures of value conflict and ambivalence has been debated (Peffley, Knigge and Hurwitz, 'A Multiple Values Model of Political Tolerance'; Arthur Miller, Tor Wynn, Phil Ullrich and Mollie Marti, 'Concept and Measurement Artifact in Multiple Values and Value Conflict Models', *Political Research Quarterly*, 54 (2001), 407–19). The most common measures used are the multiplicative measure used here (and in work by Alvarez and Brehm ('American Ambivalence Towards Abortion Policy: Development of a Heteroskedastic Probit Model of Competing Values'; 'Are Americans Ambivalent Towards Racial Policies?') and Griffin's ambivalence index (Megan M. Thompson, Mark P. Zanna and Dale W. Griffin, 'Let's Not Be Indifferent about (Attitudinal) Ambivalence', in Richard E. Petty and Jon A. Krosnick, eds, *Attitude Strength: Antecedents and Consequences* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1995), pp. 261–86). The Griffin index measures ambivalence $= (P + N)/2 - |P - N|$, where $P$ equals positive comments and $N$ corresponds to conflicting negative comments. Theoretically, the Griffin measure seems best suited for ambivalence produced by counts of arguments for and against and opposing recalled items, and less appropriate in looking at the absolute conflict between two core principles. As Steenbergen and Brewer ('The Not-So Ambivalent Public') note, however, their rescaled Griffin index correlates very highly with the multiplicative measure and produces results consistent with those generated by this measure as well. In our case, however, we can only use the multiplicative measure since we do not have counts of positive and negative comments for each value.

[35] A correlation matrix between the four core values, shown in the Appendix, supports this. In terms of value conflict, we see for instance that support for limited government is negatively correlated with egalitarianism, while egalitarianism is negatively associated with moral traditionalism. When values fall into the expected ideological orientation, we find positive correlations, such as the correlation between egalitarianism and humanitarianism.

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expected to have more volatility in survey responses about partisanship. Secondly, we test whether value conflict explains movements in party identification over time. Those who have greater amounts of value conflict should reveal more fluctuations in their partisan preferences at different time points. We test the two empirical expectations of our theory separately. First, we use heteroscedastic modelling techniques to model the response variance of party identification and ideology, relying on survey data from the 1992 and 1996 ANES. Secondly, we rely on panel data to assess whether value conflict also causes change in party identification over time, relying on 1994 and 1996 panel studies of the ANES.

To see whether value conflict drives instabilities in responses to party identification survey questions, we model not citizens' directional responses to partisan questions but rather their response variance. To model the response variance of party identification (and ideological self-identification in our corollary), we use models with a component for multiplicative heteroscedasticity. Such models require the specification and estimation of two simultaneous equations, where one equation models either the mean or probability of the dependent variable (here, a seven-point party identification scale and the seven-point ideological self-identification scale), and the second equation models the error variance of the choice model. The first equation, the choice model, relies on known predictors of the dependent variable of interest to produce the response variance that we model in the second equation, the variance model. The variance modelled is not the variance across the sample, but the variance in the individual respondent's answer. Because the choice model serves only as a mechanism to produce our equation of interest, the results of the choice model have no independent theoretical interest. For a review of these models, see work by Harvey as well as by Alvarez and Brehm.[36]

For the specification of the choice models for both party identification and ideology, we use several demographic variables including age, race, income and education, as well as prospective and retrospective economic evaluations.[37] We also include the four value scales since we expect them to be relevant to the choice of both ideology and party identification. The dependent variables are the seven-point party identification and ideological self-identification scales. For the partisanship model, ideology is included as a regressor, and for the ideology model, party identification is included as a regressor.

For the variance model, we maintain the same specification across models, since we expect the same value-conflict mechanism to underlie both of the processes we consider. The specification of the variance model includes the four value-conflict measures discussed earlier. In each model, we rely on two relevant tests of whether value-conflict affects partisanship. First, we consider the individual value conflict coefficients, to see whether a single non-ideological dimension of value conflict predicts partisan instability. Secondly, we consider whether the total amount of value conflict affects partisan stability by testing the total effect of all the value-conflict measures. We also consider one important alternative explanation for response instability in the variance model – uncertainty. Rather than reflect the conflict of values, instabilities in partisan opinions may instead reflect voters uncertain about their partisan preferences.[38] Any response instability we observe

[36] Andrew Harvey, 'Estimating Regression Models with Multiplicative Heteroskedasticity', *Econometrica*, 44 (1976), 461–65; Alvarez and Brehm, 'American Ambivalence Towards Abortion Policy'.

[37] Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*.

[38] R. Michael Alvarez, *Information and Elections* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); R. Michael Alvarez and Charles H. Franklin, 'Uncertainty and Political Perceptions', *Journal of Politics*, 56 (1994), 671–89.

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may be a product of door-step opinions, explained by low levels of political sophistication. We include political knowledge, measured as an additive scale of questions that test factual political knowledge, to capture any response variance that may be due to uncertainty or door-step opinions.

## RESULTS

### *Value Conflict and the Response Variance of Partisanship*

We first estimate the heteroscedastic regression models for party identification. Results are shown in Table 1, with results from the 1996 ANES in the first two columns and results from the 1992 ANES in the third column. We find first that the choice model appears to do an effective job capturing known sources of variability of partisanship, with the slate of predictors accounting for 53 per cent of the variance in the partisanship model in 1996 and 39 per cent of the variance in 1992. The choice model predictors themselves are of little theoretical interest, so we turn next to the results of the variance model. We test the models for heteroscedasticity, and find evidence of significant unequal variance across individuals. Results from the likelihood ratio test indicate that the $\chi^2$ values for the models exceed the 0.01 critical value required to reject the null hypothesis of homoscedasticity.

What we find is that the endorsement of ideologically competing values does explain heightened response variance in partisan identification. Considering the results from the 1996 survey first, we see that the four value conflict measures in concert are highly significant, as indicated by the block $F$-test ($p < 0.01$). Considering the value-conflict measures individually, the competition between egalitarianism and limited government is significant, as is the interaction of egalitarianism and moral traditionalism. Neither of the conflict measures with humanitarianism is significant, which reflects the fact that humanitarianism does not appear to be significantly related to partisanship in the choice model.[39] In the second column of Table 1, we test the same model excluding the humanitarianism conflict measures and find similar results.

Turning to results from the 1992 ANES, we again find that value-conflict explains response instabilities in party identification. The effect of the two value conflict measures taken together is highly significant in a block $F$-test ($p < 0.001$), an impressive result considering only two of the value-conflict measures were available for inclusion. Individually, both value conflict measures are correctly signed, but only the egalitarianism/limited government measure is statistically significant. In both samples, we find evidence that support of conflicting core principles translates into volatility in partisan identification. We also consider an alternative explanation for response variance in partisanship – uncertainty. As the negative coefficients for political knowledge in the variance models indicate ($-0.32$ in the 1996 model), some are indeed uncertain about partisan labels. Only in the 1992 case, however, is political knowledge significant, with a coefficient of $-0.11$.[40]

[39] Howard Lavine, 'Group Ambivalence and Issue Voting in American Presidential Elections' (unpublished manuscript, presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Meeting, Chicago, 2002).

[40] It is quite possible that the volatility of partisanship depends on the strength of one's partisan leanings. To explore this possibility, we estimated the models among partisan subgroups and found that value conflict does occur more frequently among independents and 'leaners'. This is not surprising, as strong partisans have pure value arrangements and thus feel little conflict when considering standard partisan value choices. We cannot place much faith in these models, however, since they are tantamount to selecting on the dependent variable.

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TABLE 1 *Explaining Response Variance in Party Identification*

| | 1996 | | 1992 |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Variance Model* | | | |
| Egalitarianism × Limited government | 0.82* | 0.79* | 0.70** |
| | (0.27) | (0.25) | (0.23) |
| Limited government × Humanitarianism | −0.12 | – | – |
| | (0.26) | | |
| Egalitarianism × Moral traditionalism | 1.47* | 1.25* | 0.36 |
| | (0.34) | (0.31) | (0.28) |
| Moral traditionalism × Humanitarianism | −0.62 | – | – |
| | (0.37) | | |
| *Joint Value Conflict Test* | | | |
| *F*-Test *p*-value | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Knowledge | −0.32 | −0.30 | −0.11** |
| | (0.19) | (0.19) | (0.03) |
| Egalitarianism | −0.45* | −0.35 | −0.26 |
| | (0.21) | (0.20) | (0.19) |
| Limited government | 0.07 | 0.02 | −0.08 |
| | (0.15) | (0.09) | (0.08) |
| Humanitarianism | 0.08 | – | – |
| | (0.21) | | |
| Moral traditionalism | 0.62* | 0.31* | 0.01 |
| | (0.22) | (0.12) | (0.10) |
| Constant | 0.99* | 1.05* | 1.37** |
| | (0.16) | (0.14) | (0.11) |
| *Choice Model* | | | |
| Ideology | 0.56* | 0.56* | 0.47** |
| | (0.04) | (0.04) | (0.04) |
| Race | −0.68* | −0.68* | −1.00* |
| | (0.18) | (0.18) | (0.15) |
| Gender | −0.04 | −0.05 | −0.06 |
| | (0.09) | (0.09) | (0.09) |
| Income | 0.03* | 0.03* | −0.001 |
| | (0.01) | (0.01) | (0.009) |
| Education | 0.10* | 0.11* | 0.10** |
| | (0.03) | (0.03) | (0.03) |
| Age | −0.007* | −0.006 | −0.01** |
| | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) |
| Prospective economic evaluations | −0.13* | −0.14* | 0.09 |
| | (0.07) | (0.04) | (0.06) |
| Retrospective economic evaluations | −0.29* | −0.28* | 0.08* |
| | (0.06) | (0.04) | (0.04) |
| Egalitarianism | −0.62** | −0.57* | −0.84** |
| | (0.18) | (0.17) | (0.17) |
| Limited government | 0.86** | 0.86* | 0.69** |
| | (0.09) | (0.09) | (0.10) |
| Humanitarianism | 0.10 | – | – |
| | (0.15) | | |
| Moral traditionalism | 0.40* | 0.41* | 0.39** |
| | (0.14) | (0.13) | (0.12) |
| Constant | 0.68* | 0.70* | 1.97** |
| | (0.26) | (0.26) | (0.27) |
| $R^2$ | 0.57 | 0.57 | 0.42 |
| *N* | 1,018 | 1,018 | 1,216 |
| Heteroscedasticity test | | | |
| Likelihood ratio test $\chi^2$ (df = 10) | 74.16† | 74.11† | 63.45† |

*Notes:* Maximum likelihood estimates. Standard errors in parentheses.
$p < 0.05$ $^{**}p < 0.01$ Two-tailed test. †Indicates $\chi^2$ significant at 0.01 level.

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So we do find some evidence that low levels of political information are linked to higher levels of response variance, and as information increases, this response instability declines. Despite the centrality of partisanship in politics, some appear not to relate to the political world in partisan terms.

### *Value Conflict and the Response Variance of Ideology*

Given evidence of value-driven volatility in partisanship, we next consider whether our corollary about ideological self-identification holds. Our expectation is that while the response instabilities of partisanship reflect value conflict, the response instability of ideology would instead reflect low information. Table 2 contains the results from the choice and variance models for ideology in 1992 and 1996. The choice models also explain large amounts of the response variance for the dependent variable, with the predictors explaining 52 per cent of the variance in the 1996 model and 41 per cent of the variance in the 1992 model. We again test for heteroscedasticity in the choice models, finding evidence of significant unequal variance across individuals. Both models exceed the 0.01 critical value in the likelihood ratio test that is required to reject the null hypothesis of homoscedasticity.

Considering the 1996 results first, we find little influence for value conflict on the response variance of ideology. As a block, the value-conflict measures have an insignificant impact on ideological response variance. Individually, we find the same, with none of the value-conflict measures significant. Rather than value conflict, our expectation was that response instabilities in ideology would instead be driven by political sophistication, and indeed, political knowledge is shown to be an important predictor of response variance. Unstable responses to ideology items seem to be driven less by the value mismatch of individuals, and more by the tendencies of voters not to use ideology in a meaningful way.

The 1992 ideology variance model echoes these conclusions. The value-conflict measures are insignificant both individually and as a set. Instead, response instability is from a single source – low levels of political information. As evidenced by the negative and significant coefficient on the political information variable, response instability in ideological self-placement reflects uncertain doorstep opinions about ideology. The evidence, here, is undeniable. Party identification, often assumed to be a rock solid political orientation, is subject to value-driven instability. As citizens are faced with identifying with a political party, they may meet a conflict in the mismatch between their own values and the value alternatives posed by the parties.

Figure 1 underscores the differing effects of value conflict on the response variance of party identification and ideology. We see that across levels of value conflict and, here, specifically across the single dimension of moral traditionalism and egalitarianism, the response variance of ideology remains flat. But for party identification, as value conflict increases, there is a dramatic increase in response variance for the same dimension of value conflict. The evidence thus far confirms what our theory would lead us to expect – instabilities in ideology reflect low information, while value conflict heightens the response variance of partisanship.

### *Value Conflict and Partisan Instability Over Time*

In the previous analyses, we found that value conflict heightened the response variance of partisanship, reflecting greater variability and lesser predictability of partisanship.

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TABLE 2 *Explaining Response Variance in ideology*

| | 1996 | | 1992 |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Variance Model* | | | |
| Egalitarianism × Limited government | −0.09 | −0.17 | 0.14 |
| | (0.27) | (0.25) | (0.23) |
| Limited government × Humanitarianism | −0.14 | – | – |
| | (0.26) | | |
| Egalitarianism × Moral traditionalism | 0.35 | 0.43 | 0.34 |
| | (0.34) | (0.31) | (0.28) |
| Moral traditionalism × Humanitarianism | 0.26 | – | – |
| | (0.37) | | |
| *Joint Value Conflict Test* | | | |
| *F*-Test *p*-value | 0.61 | 0.38 | 0.25 |
| Political knowledge | −0.91* | −0.91* | −0.18** |
| | (0.19) | (0.19) | (0.03) |
| Egalitarianism | −0.12 | −0.17 | 0.06 |
| | (0.21) | (0.20) | (0.19) |
| Limited government | −0.21 | −0.29* | −0.05 |
| | (0.15) | (0.09) | (0.08) |
| Humanitarianism | −0.16 | – | – |
| | (0.21) | | |
| Moral traditionalism | −0.002 | 0.12 | −0.01 |
| | (0.22) | (0.12) | (0.10) |
| Constant | 0.50* | 0.44* | 0.78** |
| | (0.16) | (0.15) | (0.11) |
| *Choice Model* | | | |
| Party identification | 0.26* | 0.26* | 0.22** |
| | (0.02) | (0.02) | (0.02) |
| Race | 0.45** | 0.45* | 0.33* |
| | (0.13) | (0.13) | (0.12) |
| Gender | −0.16* | −0.17* | −0.04* |
| | (0.06) | (0.06) | (0.06) |
| Income | −0.01 | −0.01 | 0.003 |
| | (0.01) | (0.01) | (0.006) |
| Education | −0.06* | −0.06* | −0.05* |
| | (0.02) | (0.02) | (0.02) |
| Age | 0.003 | 0.003 | 0.004* |
| | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) |
| Prospective economic evaluations | 0.03 | 0.03 | 0.07 |
| | (0.05) | (0.05) | (0.04) |
| Retrospective economic evaluations | −0.03 | −0.03 | 0.04 |
| | (0.04) | (0.04) | (0.03) |
| Egalitarianism | −0.69** | −0.69** | −0.71** |
| | (0.12) | (0.12) | (0.11) |
| Limited government | 0.21** | 0.21* | 0.29** |
| | (0.06) | (0.06) | (0.06) |
| Humanitarianism | −0.09 | – | – |
| | (0.10) | | |
| Moral traditionalism | 0.75* | 0.75* | 0.64** |
| | (0.08) | (0.08) | (0.08) |
| Constant | 2.69* | 2.69* | 2.48** |
| | (0.16) | (0.15) | (0.17) |
| $R^2$ | 0.52 | 0.52 | 0.41 |
| *N* | 1,018 | 1,018 | 1,216 |
| Heteroscedasticity test | | | |
| Likelihood ratio test $\chi^2$ (df = 10) | 48.62† | 48.32† | 69.26† |

*Notes:* Maximum likelihood estimates. Standard errors in parentheses.
*$p < 0.05$ **$p < 0.01$ Two-tailed test. †Indicates $\chi^2$ significant at 0.01 level.

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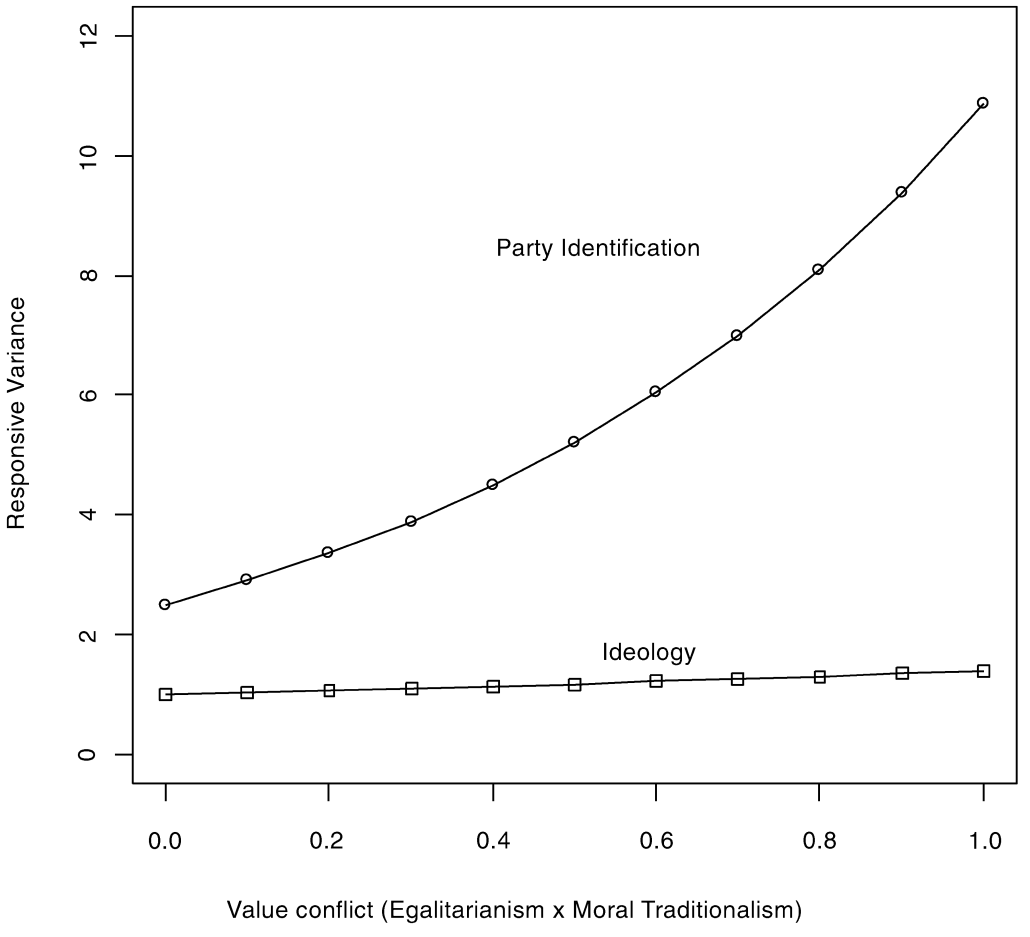



*Fig. 1. Differences in response variance across party identification and ideology*
*Note: Y*-axis represents individual-level survey response variance.

Another way value conflict may affect preferences is in the stability of survey responses over time. For those torn between competing value priorities, we expect weaker partisan stability. As different values predominate in the political discourse, these voters finding themselves in two minds may experience fluctuations in partisan preferences.

To consider whether value conflict contributes to the stability of party identification over time, we rely on the 1994–96 ANES panel study. To build a measure of party change, we subtract placement on the 1994 seven-point party-identification measure from placement on the 1996 party measure and fold the scale. The resulting measure is scaled from 0 to 6 with each additional value on the scale representing an increment of change in party identification. Considering the degree of partisan change among respondents, we find evidence of both stability and change. The median respondent did not waver in partisan preference between 1994 and 1996, indicating stable partisanship for many. At the same time, we also find evidence of partisan change of a not insignificant degree, as 44 per cent moved at least one position on the seven-point scale over this period. Among those who shifted on the scale, the average change was 1.55 points.

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To explore whether competing value preferences explain this change, we fit an ordered probit model including the four value-conflict measures of egalitarianism/moral traditionalism, egalitarianism/limited government, humanitarianism/limited government and humanitarianism/moral traditionalism as regressors. In addition, we include a measure of partisan strength, since those with stronger partisan ties will be less likely to exhibit change in party identification over time. Value conflict is one of many possible explanations for partisan instability and so we also include controls for important rival explanations for partisan instability. Some argue that the mobility of partisanship is an artefact of measurement error and uncrystallized opinions resulting from low levels of political sophistication.[41] To control for the possibility that movement over time reflects door-step opinions, we include a measure of political knowledge, again a scale of factual questions on politics. Others have argued that people change their political party depending on the performance of the two parties, with citizens gravitating towards whichever party is perceived as performing better.[42] To control for changes in party performance across the panel, we also include measures of change in presidential approval and retrospective economic evaluations. Both measures are the difference between the 1994 and 1996 measures of presidential approval and retrospective economic evaluations in the panel study. If value conflict contributes to change in party identification over time beyond the effects of measurement error and party performance, it will underscore the lasting salience of value conflict in partisan choice.[43]

Results from the ordered probit model are shown in Table 3.[44] In the first column, we test a restricted model that includes only the effects of values and value conflict. When we test for an effect across all the measures of value conflict, we find a highly significant effect, as the *p*-value for the *F*-test exceeds the 0.01 critical value. These value-conflict measures taken as a set show that when people endorse values from both the left and the right, partisanship is more variable over time. In tests of the individual coefficients, the conflict between egalitarianism and moral traditionalism has a significant effect, indicating that it is a value-conflict dimension that seems particularly salient to respondents as they settle on a party affiliation. To see whether these results from the naïve model persist even after controlling for information levels and performance evaluations, we next consider the results from the full model specified in the second column of Table 3.

Even after including controls for both political knowledge and party performance, the results from the naïve model are unchanged. Of the individual measures, value conflict

[41] Achen, 'Mass Political Attitudes and the Survey Response'.

[42] Brody and Rothenberg, 'The Instability of Partisanship'; Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*; Franklin and Jackson, 'The Dynamics of Party Identification'; Howell, 'Short-term Forces and Changing Partisanship'.

[43] There is an alternative model that we could estimate to assess the impact of value conflict on the stability of partisanship over time, explaining partisanship in 1996 as a function of partisanship in 1994 along with the covariates we currently include in the model. Such a specification models the weighted change in partisanship between 1994 and 1996 instead of the absolute change. We estimated this alternative model and found the effects of value conflict to be identical. We do not report this result, however, as the theory makes no predictions about the direction of the change, and this model implicitly tests a directional hypothesis about partisan change. The results from this model are available from the authors upon request.

[44] We also estimated a model using change in a three-point partisanship measure as the dependent variable. In this more conservative test of our hypothesis, we found a similar pattern of results, though of weaker statistical significance. We present the models with the seven-point measure of partisan change as a better assessment of the consequences of value conflict on partisan instability (over partisan change).

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TABLE 3 *Partisan Change and Value Conflict 1994–96*

| | Limited model | Full model | $\Delta Pr(Y=1)$ |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Variance Model* | | | |
| Egalitarianism × Limited government | 0.01 | − 0.19 | − 0.006 |
| | (0.21) | (0.21) | |
| Limited government × Humanitarianism | 0.26 | 0.18 | 0.009 |
| | (0.19) | (0.20) | |
| Egalitarianism × Moral traditionalism | 1.04* | 1.01* | 0.15 |
| | (0.34) | (0.28) | |
| Moral traditionalism × Humanitarianism | − 0.27 | − 0.36 | 0.02 |
| | (0.29) | (0.29) | |
| *Joint Value Conflict Test* | | | |
| *F*-test *p*-value | 0.00 | 0.01 | |
| Egalitarianism | − 0.27 | − 0.36* | 0.02 |
| | (0.17) | (0.17) | |
| Limited government | − 0.18 | − 0.15 | 0.04 |
| | (0.11) | (0.11) | |
| Moral traditionalism | 0.21 | 0.30 | − 0.08 |
| | (0.17) | (0.18) | |
| Humanitarianism | − 0.08 | 0.11 | 0.06 |
| | (0.16) | (0.17) | |
| Political sophistication | – | − 0.38* | 0.002 |
| | | (0.15) | |
| Partisan strength | – | − 0.25* | − 0.02 |
| | | (0.04) | |
| Clinton approval change | – | 0.004* | 0.05 |
| | | (0.002) | |
| Economic evaluation change | – | 0.04 | 0.06 |
| | | (0.03) | |
| $N$ | 1,124 | 1,110 | |
| $\chi^2$ | 23.15† | 45.10† | – |
| $\tau_0$ | 0.15 | − 0.56 | – |
| $\tau_1$ | 1.09 | 0.46 | – |
| $\tau_2$ | 1.51 | 0.92 | – |
| $\tau_3$ | 1.86 | 1.23 | – |
| $\tau_4$ | 2.26 | 1.56 | – |
| $\tau_5$ | 2.60 | 1.96 | – |

*Notes:* Ordered probit estimates. Standard errors in parentheses.
$^*p < 0.05$ $^{**}p < 0.01$ †Indicates $\chi^2$ significant at 0.01 level
$\Delta Pr(Y=1)$ is calculated as a shift from the mean to maximum value of each covariate.

between egalitarianism and moral traditionalism remains significant, and the joint test of the coefficients has a *p*-value mirroring that of the naïve model. To find such a robust result gives us confidence that the value differences between citizens and parties plays an important role in how party identification moves over time. As citizens use their own value arrangements to decide which party to identify with, they struggle with a choice that leaves them undecided. Moreover, we have evidence that value conflict is a pervasive aspect of partisan choice. Value conflict causes citizens to struggle with their response at the time of the survey interview, but also contributes to an instability over time beyond that caused by measurement error and changes in party performance.

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## CONCLUSIONS

Within the political landscape of the 1992 and 1996 elections, we find evidence of value-driven volatility in partisan identification. While instabilities in political views reflect low information for some, the trade-offs of the political world lead to conflict and ambivalence in the evaluations of others. And the consequences of value conflict on the stability of partisanship extend across multiple situations, influencing the individual response variance of partisan responses as well as the likelihood of movement on the partisan scale over time. For those who have value structures that match those of political elites, we should expect partisanship to exhibit a rather stable quality. Division of political discussion along ideological lines should prompt little value conflict, and perhaps even reinforce one's own value structuring. But for those who have internalized a value organization that does not match with that of political elites, the values projected in political discussion will generate value conflict and partisan volatility. In this way, values offer a mechanism of partisan instability that fits with competing expectations of party identification as both highly stable and movable in the face of a changing political climate.

Our results also underscore the deliberative nature of public opinion. The value-driven partisan instability we find implies that some part of the electorate wrestles with the decisions that confront them in politics. While citizens may not always be able to resolve the conflict between value priorities, the suggestion that they struggle with such choices implies that they are offering more than door-step opinions. In evaluating specific issues and candidates, voters may be in two minds when weighing competing considerations. The kind of conflict we consider here is one of an even more pervasive and durable character – not tied to specific electoral events, but instead to the underlying nature of elite political debate. When people support core principles endorsed by both the right and the left, this ideological inconsistency disrupts the stability of partisan identification.

These results also underscore the power of values in explaining the structure of public opinion. The fact that partisan volatility occurs along the fault lines of competing values indicates that these core principles are powerful concepts in politics. When political debate is structured in value terms, it has important consequences for the stability with which individuals hold their partisan beliefs. While our results do not offer a definitive answer to the question of the amount of instability in partisan beliefs, they do suggest a theoretical pathway by which these perceived stable beliefs might be found to be unstable and influenced by external events. The finding of value conflict underlying volatility in party identification reveals that instability in partisanship may not be a product of measurement error alone, and may instead represent a meaningful product of the value trade-offs found with politics. In this way, this micro-level account fits in with macro-level investigations, where movements in partisanship at the aggregate level are seen as driven by the ways elites define the value-conflict lines of politics.[45] The choices candidates make in framing values may affect the stability with which citizens hold central political opinions.

[45] Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989); Stuart Elaine Macdonald and George Rabinowitz, 'The Dynamics of Structural Realignment', *American Political Science Review*, 81 (1987), 775–96.

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APPENDIX

TABLE A1 *Correlations Between Value Scales, 1992*

| | Limited government | Egalitarianism | Moral traditionalism |
|---|---|---|---|
| Limited government | 1.000 | | |
| Egalitarianism | − 0.282 | 1.000 | |
| Moral traditionalism | 0.254 | − 0.311 | 1.000 |

TABLE A2 *Correlations Between Value Scales, 1996*

| | Limited government | Egalitarianism | Humanitarianism | Moral traditionalism |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Limited government | 1.000 | | | |
| Egalitarianism | − 0.231 | 1.000 | | |
| Humanitarianism | − 0.005 | 0.296 | 1.000 | |
| Moral traditionalism | 0.172 | − 0.377 | 0.038 | 1.000 |

*Value Survey Items*

*Egalitarianism:*

– Our society should do whatever is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed.
– We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country.
– One of the big problems in this country is that we don't give every one an equal chance.
– This country would be better off if we worried less about how equal people are.
– It is not really that big a problem that some people have more of a chance in life than others.
– If people were treated more equally in this country we would have many fewer problems.

*Limited government:*

– One, the less government the better; or two, there are more things that government should be doing.
– One, we need a strong government to handle today's complex economic problems; or two, the free market can handle these problems without the government being involved.
– One, the main reason government has become bigger over the years is because it has gotten involved in things that people should do for themselves; or two, government has become bigger because the problems we face have become bigger.

*Moral traditionalism:*

– This country would have fewer problems if there were more emphasis on family ties.
– The newer lifestyles are contributing to the breakdown of our society.
– The world is always changing and we should adjust our view of moral behaviour to those changes.
– We should be more tolerant of people who choose to live according to their own moral standards, even if they are very different from our own.

*Humanitarianism:*

– One should always find ways to help others less fortunate than oneself.
– A person should always be concerned about the well-being of others.
– It is best not to get too involved in taking care of other people's needs.
– People tend to pay more attention to the well-being of others than they should.

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