Reflective and Unreflective Partisans?

Experimental Evidence on the Links between Information, Opinion, and Party Identification

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Although much ink has been spilt on the topic of party identification, we still know little for certain about its origins and consequences. The prevailing image of party identification is more or less clear: *Party identification is a relatively stable psychological force, inherited from parents and shaped by experience, that powerfully influences political perceptions, attitudes, and choices.* Support for this image and for the various positions staked out in debates over the roots, impact, and measurement of partisanship comes almost entirely from empirical correlations and theoretical or methodological assumptions. Few scholars have attempted to test claims about impact and especially development of party identification with experiments. We are undertaking a series of experiments in an effort to shed greater light on the causes and effects of partisanship. In this paper, we test whether policy information affects partisanship and, in turn, whether partisanship affects the formation of policy opinions. Our evidence comes from survey experiments in Russia, where we expect that the weakness and instability of existing identities will provide a more suitable environment for investigating the origins of party identification.

Information, Opinion, and Party Identification

Partisanship is a predisposition to support a particular political party. Party identification typically denotes a strong psychological conception of partisanship as an "affective orientation" toward a party that "raises a perceptual screen" through which the identifier interprets and organizes the political world in a partisan fashion (Campbell et al. 1960). A partisan, in this view, sees herself as belonging to a party (e.g., "I am a Social Democrat") in much the same way she might see herself belonging to a religious faith (e.g., "I am a Catholic"). A simpler

conception holds partisanship to be a habitual tendency born of a loyal pattern of party support (Budge, Crewe, and Farley 1976; Key 1966). Both perspectives see a partisan as someone who is attracted consistently to one party over all others *ceteris paribus*.

Based on research on socialization and partisan stability, we do not expect citizens to acquire full identification quickly, but instead expect to observe weaker, nascent forms of partisanship among citizens in new democracies. However, we see these as differences of degree, not kind, and we will rely on multiple indicators of partisanship whenever possible (Brader and Tucker 2001; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). Although our primary focus is on party identities, we consider partisan orientations in a broader sense, as the extent to which citizens make sense of politics in terms of parties. While this is often conceived as going hand-in-hand with party identification, even non-partisans may develop and rely on partisan schemas, stereotypes, or heuristics to facilitate inference, memory, and judgment (Brady and Sniderman 1985; Hamill, Lodge, and Blake 1985; Rahn 1993).

Our goal is to understand better how and why voters develop partisanship in general, irrespective of the party preferred.[1] Previous work suggests at least three basic propositions about the formation of party identification (Brader and Tucker 2001). First, attachment to a political party grows with the cumulative effect of experience. Whether this effect is conceived as a "running tally" of rational evaluations (Achen 1989; Fiorina 1981) or the product of reference group socialization and habituation (Converse 1969; Gerber and Green 1998), repeated attraction to the same party reinforces a sense of partisan identity. Second, partisanship becomes more than a "standing decision" about how to vote, it becomes a frame of mind toward politics in

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[1] This is not to say that explanations for general partisanship and particular partisan identities are unrelated. Parties may generate distinct means by which citizens become partisans. Nonetheless, the attempt to explain why an individual identifies with the nationalist party and not the social democratic party needs to be distinguished from the attempt to explain why some nationalist or social democratic party voters are identifiers and others are not.

general. As attachment strengthens, an individual's political attitudes and perceptions are increasingly shaped with reference to her party of choice (Campbell et al. 1960). Third, partisanship is ultimately rooted in rational evaluations of the fit between the individual and the party, although this does not imply that partisanship itself is a rational evaluation. Even where partisanship is initially inherited uncritically from parents, voters will be drawn over time to those parties which seem to share their beliefs and values, serve their interests, and embrace people similar to themselves (Achen 1989; Campbell et al. 1960; Franklin and Jackson 1983; Fiorina 1981; Jennings and Niemi 1981; Miller and Shanks 1996). The present study is principally concerned with the impact of this "rational" evaluation process, especially the evaluation of policy information or arguments.

Within this broad framework, existing theories and research have suggested several factors that contribute to the formation of partisan identities. These include parental partisanship (Achen 2002; Greenstein 1965; Jennings and Niemi 1981; Jennings, Stoker, and Bower 2001), political engagement (Campbell et al. 1960; Jennings, Stoker, and Bower 2001; Shively 1979), and the habituation of attachment that often comes with age (Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1969). Scholars have also asserted, somewhat more controversially, that adult party identification is the product of more-or-less rational evaluations of policy and performance (Achen 1989, 2002; Fiorina 1981; Franklin and Jackson 1983). In these models, citizens are assumed to judge the differential policy and performance benefits associated with competing parties and to update their partisan attachment in light of this information. Controversy over this view reflects in part a broader debate over the contending depictions of citizen judgment provided by rational choice and social psychological theories, with the former often criticized as assuming far more rational, thorough decision making than humans typically exhibit. However, the notion that partisanship

is shaped by the assessment of a party's fit with individual and group positions is consistent with work on early adult socialization (Beck and Jennings 1991) and sociological analysis of social group cross-pressures (Lazarsfeld 1944).

Although studying the development of party identification is generally difficult, models that propose partisanship is shaped by the same short-term forces (e.g., perception and evaluation of policy information) it is presumed to influence face additional challenges. Recognition that partisanship and policy assessments may be correlated due to projection and rationalization generates skepticism that party identities are updated through assessment of policy information. All evidence to date on the rational policy basis of partisanship depends on tenuous assumptions of structural equation models (Fiorina 1981; Franklin and Jackson 1983) or fitting of "stylized" models to "stylized" facts (Achen 2002). When causal claims are in doubt, scientists typically turn to experimental evidence for illumination. Not so in the study of party identification. Many scholars likely have been deterred by their belief that party identification changes only rarely and slowly, thus making it difficult to observe short-term changes during an experiment. However, even those who believe short-term updating occurs have not made their case with experimental evidence. The only exception seems to confirm these suspicions: Cowden and McDermott (2000) run two experiments on U.S. college students to test the impact of short-term forces.[2] Neither voting defections nor advocacy for/against presidential impeachment significantly affects party identification, despite plenty of movement in party choice.

Despite these null results, Cowden and McDermott set an example for greater understanding of party identification through experiments. Their two small studies represent a start, not an end, to answering many of our questions. Indeed, many subjects in their studies experienced at least a

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[2] To the best of our knowledge, this is the only published experimental research to test the impact of any potential explanatory factor on party identification.

small change in the strength of their partisan identity, and between 10 and 20% of subjects changed parties.[3] Further experimentation provides the most promising path for building on what we already know (or think we know), especially concerning the causal relationship between party identification and potentially endogenous factors (e.g., evaluation of policy information, political action on behalf of a party, or political engagement).

Experimental studies have been slightly more common in the study of partisan effects. A massive literature argues for the strong impact of partisanship on policy opinions, character assessments, factual perceptions, and voting (Bartels 2000, 2002; Campbell et al. 1960; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Jackson 1975; Jacobson 2006; Jacoby 1988; Markus and Converse 1979; Miller and Shanks 1996; Page and Jones 1979). Most of the evidence comes from survey data. A few experiments, however, lend support to these arguments. Experimental studies demonstrate that partisanship can improve memory and increase its selectivity (Lodge and Hamill 1986), that partisan stereotypes can influence candidate inferences and evaluation (Rahn 1993; Rahn and Cramer 1996), and that partisan cues can overwhelm policy information in choosing between candidates (Van Houweling and Sniderman n.d.). Although the field exhibits greater confidence about the effects than origins of partisanship, here too it would benefit from further experimentation. For example, leading scholars have taken diametrically opposing views on whether party identification serves as a "perceptual screen" that biases learning even about factual matters (Achen 1992, 2002; Bartels 2002; Gerber and Green 1998; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002), yet no one has conducted an experimental study to help resolve a controversy that seems to beg for controlled examination. In addition, the handful of experiments mentioned earlier have been neither replicated nor extended to other contexts (e.g.,

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[3] It is difficult to tell from the results, as reported, how many of these changes were in the expected direction. (Manipulations in both experiments were designed to push subjects in a particular direction.)

countries beyond the U.S., where the potency of partisanship has sometimes been called into question). The flipside of the relationship between partisanship and policy opinions—i.e., the impact of partisanship on the formation of policy opinions—has similarly been subjected to little experimental scrutiny, despite widespread belief in the existence of such effects.

Party Identification and Political Sophistication

In the multiply determinant world of human behavior (Cacioppo and Visser 2003), it is often a mistake to look for a single necessary and sufficient cause that explains every incidence of a behavior or disposition. In studying party identification, the same factors may not be universally relevant. Skepticism about whether citizens update their partisanship in response to policy information may render it valuable to establish whether policy information can indeed ever have such effects. But given the strong policy reputations and stereotypes of parties (Rahn 1993; Van Houweling and Sniderman n.d.) and their close links to group interests (Campbell et al. 1960), we would hardly be surprised to uncover harder evidence suggesting that partisanship has some sort of rational policy basis (Brader and Tucker 2001). The more interesting and important question might be figuring out *who* updates their partisanship in this manner and under what circumstances. We consider in this study the extent to which the impact of policy information and evaluation on partisanship is contingent on levels of political sophistication.

Prior research shows that political sophistication moderates political decision making and attitude change in general (Fiske, Kinder, and Larter 1983; Miller and Krosnick 2000; Rahn, Aldrich, and Borgida 1994; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991; Zaller 1992; but see Goren 2004; Rahn et al. 1990). This line of work suggests political sophisticates or experts are better able and more likely to engage in complex reasoning, apply abstract ideals, or draw appropriate

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inferences than their less sophisticated fellow citizens. Scholars also have invoked the importance of individual aptitude, whether political sophistication or more general cognitive abilities imparted by education, when discussing partisanship. Downs (1957) posits party labels as cues that enable voters to choose among candidates despite incentives for rational ignorance. Building on this perspective, Shively (1979) poses the "decisional function" hypothesis: The fewer "resources" a voter possesses to "pay the costs" of information (e.g., about issues and party performance) needed to make an electoral choice, the more likely she is to acquire a party identification. If partisanship works as a decision-making crutch for those who lack information, then we would expect informationally-handicapped voters to depend on it most. Decades of empirical research, however, seem to point in the opposite direction: The best informed and most engaged citizens are also the most partisan (Campbell et al. 1960; Miller and Shanks 1996). Greater expertise may facilitate the formation of party identification, rather than render it unnecessary (Brader and Tucker 2002; Huber, Kernell, and Leoni 2005). Although sophisticated voters expose themselves more frequently to information that could change their preferences, the repository of prior information that undergirds their predispositions is many times larger than among the less informed (Achen 2002; Converse 1962; Fiorina 1981; Zaller 1992). Finally, Lodge and Hamill (1986) demonstrate that partisan sophisticates show better memory for partisan information but also exhibit stronger partisan biases in which information is recalled.

We expect political sophistication to affect whether and how citizens update their party identification in response to reasoned evaluation of the policy positions of parties. Skepticism about this model of partisan learning is rooted in the sense that involves greater effort than most citizens are willing and able to devote to the politics. Citizens who possess greater political expertise should also possess the motivation and effort to update their party identification on the

basis of policy information. We are arguing not that the partisanship of less sophisticated

citizens is necessarily any less genuine or solid, but rather that their partisanship is likely to have

other, perhaps more symbolic bases (Sears 1993). If true, we might even expect careful

evaluation of policy information to weaken partisanship among political novices by increasing

their confusion or by forcing them to focus on criteria that are not the true basis of their partisan

preferences (cf. Wilson et al. 1983).[4] Sophistication may also play a bigger role in predicting

both partisanship and short-term policy updating in the context of new citizens and/or new

democracies. In established party systems like the U.S. and much of Western Europe,

sophistication should predict who among younger citizens or immigrants (i.e., new entrants to

the electorate) is willing and able to reassess their parentally inherited party identification in light

of their own policy interests and preferences (Achen 2002). In newer or less stable party systems

like many in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Latin America, all citizens should face greater demands

in figuring out which parties best represent their policy goals and sophisticates should meet these

demands more readily (Brader and Tucker 2002).

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In this paper, we examine the causal relationships among policy information, policy

opinions, and party identification. Scholars have sifted through considerable survey evidence on

this topic but conducted few experiments. Most experimental research on party identification

has focused on measurement (e.g., question wording),[5] with only a handful of experiments on the

effects on party identification and only a single published experimental study of what influences

party identification. We use an experiment to test whether citizens update their partisanship on

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[4] If some citizens pick parties largely on the basis of "gut feelings" that defy introspection, much as they might pick
out a favorite poster or food item, then encouraging them to perform such introspection about their party choice may
temporarily cause them to weaken or temporarily abandon their true partisan preference (cf. Wilson et al. 1983).
[5] For example, see Abramson and Ostrom (1994), Burden and Klofstad (2005), Johnston (1992), Krosnick and
Berent (1993), McAllister and Wattenberg (1995), and Sanders, Burton, and Kneeshaw (2002).

<div align="center">8</div>

the basis of policy information in the manner some rational models have controversially

suggested. We also examine whether such updating is contingent on political sophistication. We

carried out the study in Russia, where we expect the relative youth and instability of the party

system to make partisanship more responsive to information and where such responsiveness may

hinge to a greater extent on sophistication.[6] In order to ascertain whether partisanship in this

setting has any impact on voters, a second experiment tests the effects of partisan cues on the

formation of policy opinions. A small number of prior studies have used experiments to test the

impact of partisanship, but none have extended this work beyond the U.S.


In Search of Nascent Party Identities

Before turning to the experiments, let us briefly consider the question of what "party

identification" actually is in its earliest stages. Clearly, we would not expect to observe full

blown partisan identification of the type found in the United States at a time $\mathbf{T = t_0}$ when a new

party system populated primarily by new political parties emerges. Based on the American

experience, though, we have at least some reason to expect to find partisan identification in our

hypothetical country at some time $\mathbf{T = t_n}$. If $\mathbf{t_n = t_0 + \epsilon,}$ the complication is that we have no idea

how long $\boldsymbol{\epsilon}$ is. So this raises the question of how we ought to study the emergence of party

identification at time at some time $\mathbf{T = t_{n-X},}$ where $\mathbf{t_{n-X} < t_n}$; this is both a theoretical and

methodological question.

Theoretically, let us consider perhaps the simplest world in which the population of our new

democracy is divided into two groups: those who are developing partisan identification, and

those who are not. The members of the former group, which we will call *nascent partisans*, are

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[6] We have subsequently carried out similar experiments in Poland, but have not yet had to time to analyze the results of this study. We also hope to have a third round of experiments in the field in Hungary early this summer.

those who at time $T = t_n$ will be our partisan identifiers, while the members of the latter group

are those who will have little or no attachment to political parties at time $T = t_n$. One option

(illustrated below in Figure 1) is that these two groups will be virtually indistinguishable form

one another until the day before time $T = t_n$, at which point some shock will suddenly divide the

country into strong and weak partisan identifiers. If this is the case, then distinguishing nascent

partisans at some time $T = t_{n-X}$ will be practically impossible.

Figure 1. Sudden Development of Partisan Identification
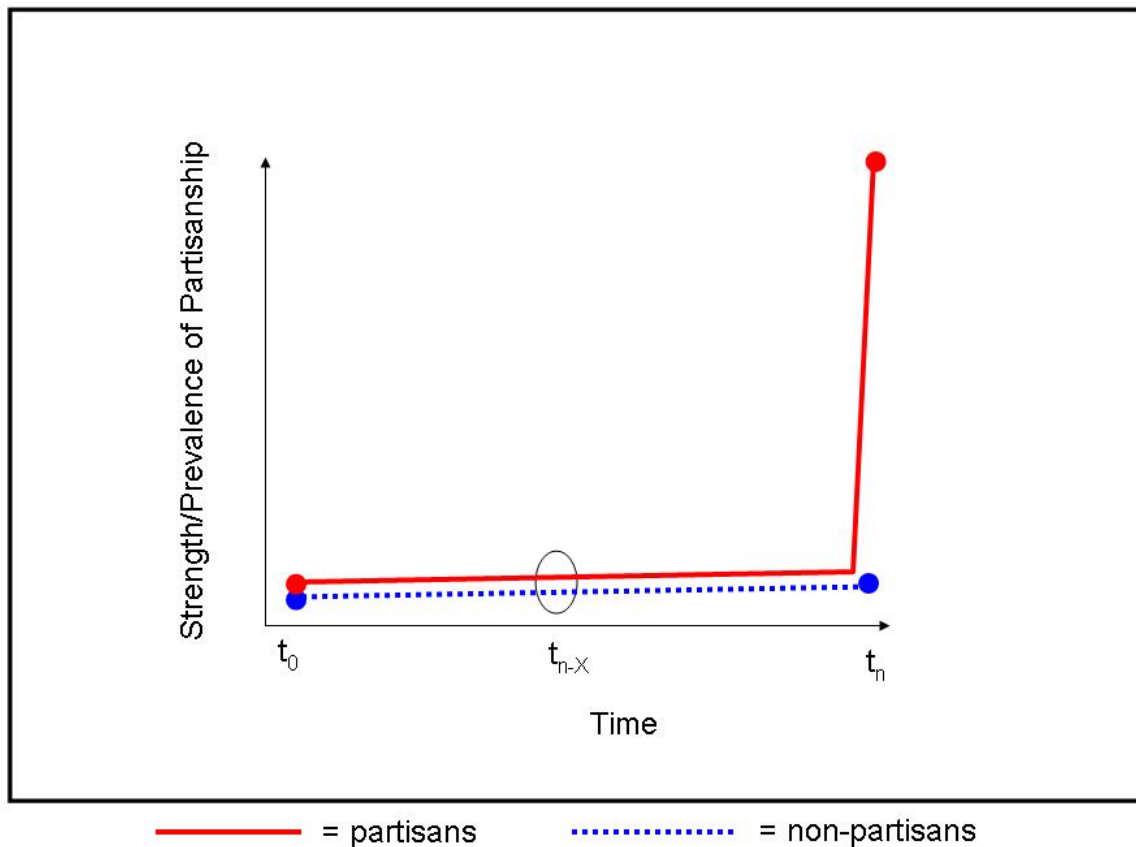
Alternately, we might expect that partisan identification is something that develops more gradually over time. If so, it stands to reason that during the period at some time $T = t_{n-X}$, nascent partisans should be distinguished from their counterparts in meaningful – albeit perhaps subtle – ways, as illustrated below in Figure 2. Although this distinction is certainly smaller than at time $T = t_n$, we can still aspire to observe it, and there to use theory to predict the factors that distinguish these nascent partisans from their fellow citizens.

Figure 2. Gradual Development of Partisan Identification
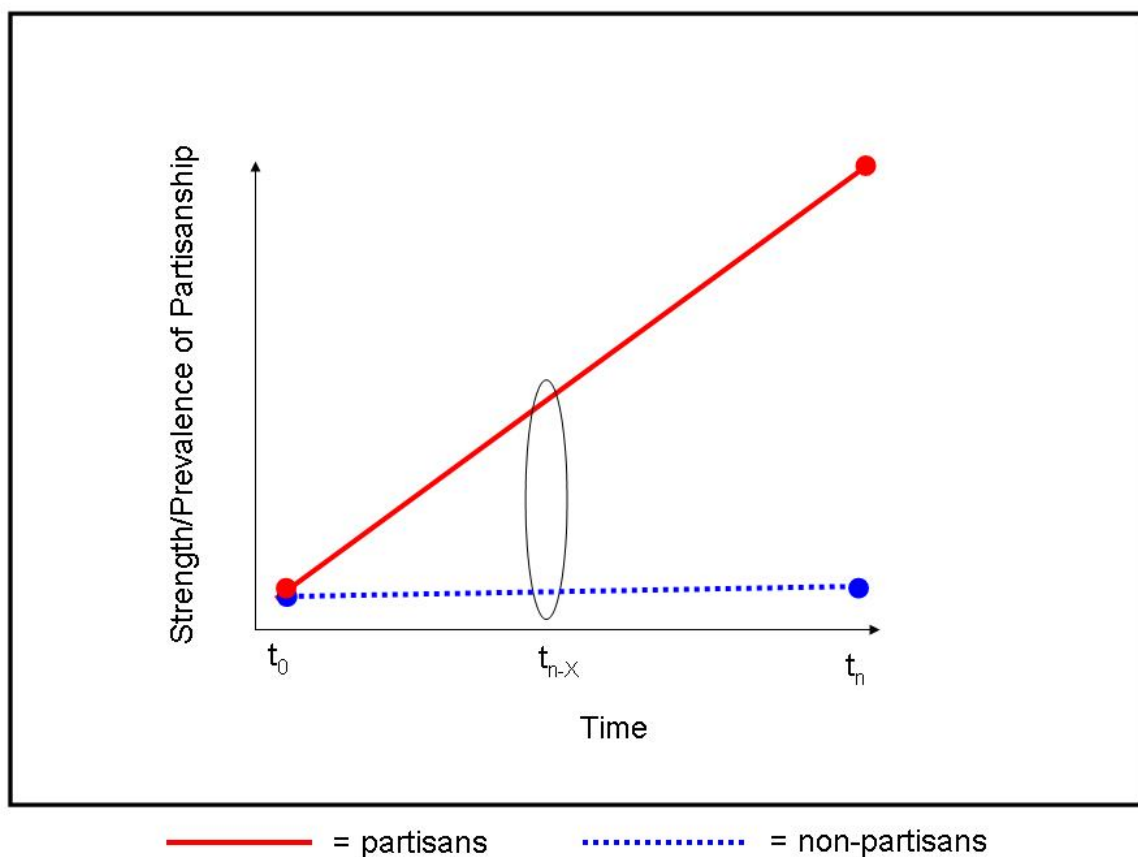
Our strategy, therefore, is to use theory of the sort presented in the previous section to predict how "nascent partisans" (those on the solid red line) ought to be distinguished from

citizens who are not developing partisanship (those on the dotted blue line). We have no way of

knowing *a priori* if we are in the world described by Figure 1 or Figure 2. However, if we are in

the world described by Figure 1, then we should be unable to find any variables that predict a

distinction in levels of partisanship between nascent partisans and non-nascent partisans, as the

distinction will be unobservable at this point in time. If we can, however, find variables

suggested by theory that can predict nascent partisanship, then it would suggest that we are in a

world that looks more like Figure 2. If we are indeed in such a world, then it is possible to study

partisanship in its earlier, less developed form as it emerges.[7]

    The next question, of course, is how we actually identify these nascent partisans to see if

theory can indeed predict who they are. It is to this topic that we turn in the following section.

The short answer, though, is that there is clearly no single "best" measure for doing so. For this

reason, we pursue a strategy both here and elsewhere (Brader and Tucker 2002, 2001) that relies

on multiple indicators of nascent partisanship. We do not necessarily presuppose that one is

better than the others, but rather hope to use consistent results across multiple measures as

stronger evidence.

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[7] This kind of a set-up makes negative results somewhat difficult to interpret. For example, if we find that policy information has no effect upon partisanship, it may be the case that we are living in the world described by Figure 1, and thus nothing could predict the difference between nascent partisans and non-nascent partisans. It could also be the case that we are living in the world described by Figure 2, but policy information is just a bad predictor of the distinction between nascent partisans and non-nascent partisans. This latter interpretation would cast doubt on the validity of the running-tally approach to partisanship, at least in so far as its ability to predict the development of nascent partisanship, whereas the former interpretation would have less to say in this regard. One way out of this dilemma is that if we are the world described by Figure 1, then no variables should prove to be useful predictors. Thus if we find support for some variables in predicting nascent partisans and not others, it would at least be suggestive that negative results are due to a lack of empirical support for the theory in question, as opposed to just not having a meaningful distinction to explain.

Data and Methods

Our evidence comes from a pair of survey experiments carried out in Russia during the spring of 2006. We worked with the Levada Center, Russia's preeminent polling firm, to collect data on a probability sample of 402 adult citizens in Moscow. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in the respondents' homes and lasted roughly 50 minutes on average. Respondents range in age from 18 to 91 (mean = 44). The median respondent has completed specialized secondary education, while 37% of respondents have higher education degrees. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents were women.[8]

Measures. The key dependent variable is partisanship. At present, we report results on two measures of partisanship.[9] The first, which we shall refer to as *party identification* or *party ID,* is an adaptation of the traditional American National Election Studies (ANES) measure modified for use in the post-communist Russian election studies (Colton 2000; Colton and McFaul 2003):[10]

> Please tell me, is there any one among the present parties, movements, and associations about which you would say, 'This is my party, my movement, or my association'?
> [IF YES:] Which party, movement, or association is that? Please name it for me. To what degree does this party, movement, or association reflect your interests, views, and concerns?

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[8] We have not yet performed the analyses with sampling weights.

[9] The survey included two other measures of partisanship that we have not yet analyzed. The first is a battery of questions tapping the *social identity* dimension of partisanship, tied to the party mentioned in the party closeness measure (see text), adapted from organizational psychology by Greene (1999; see also Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). The second is our own adaptation of the American National Election Studies (ANES) party identification, which appears in the post-test following the second experiment. This party ID measure follows the form of the ANES measure more directly; it lists the six largest parties by name and explicitly mentions the possibility of being independent from parties.

[10] One difficulty in adapting the ANES measure to the Russian context is literally a matter of translation. The Russian language lacks an exact cognate for "identify with/as" as well as noun forms that mean partisans of the particular parties (e.g., in the way Democrat means a partisan of the Democratic party in the U.S.).

[IF NO:] Please tell me, does their exist a party, movement, or association which more than the others reflects your interests, views, and concerns? [IF YES:] Which party, movement, or association would that be? Please name it for me.

The second is the *party closeness* measure that has been used in numerous countries and has been part of the cross-national Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) project:

Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party, movement, or association?
[IF YES:] Which party, movement, or association is that? Do you feel very close to this party, somewhat close, or not very close?
[IF NO:] Is there a party to which you feel yourself a little closer than to the others? [IF YES:] Which party is that? Name it, please. Do you feel very close to this party, somewhat close, or not very close?

From both measures, we also construct four-point scales (0-3) to capture the strength of partisanship. Finally, we assess contemporary *party preference* in reference to the six major parties discussed in our experiment by asking respondents which of the six parties they like the best (or dislike the least).

Some of our analyses concern the potential moderating role of political sophistication. In keeping with standard practice, we measure sophistication with a multi-item battery of questions that taps respondents' factual knowledge of Russian politics. The battery includes questions about the positions and identities of public officials, the size of the Russian Duma (legislature), and the names of the parties who passed the national vote threshold for party list representation in 2003. In all, this yields a twelve-point (0-11) knowledge scale with exactly 50% of respondents falling on either side of the midpoint. For analytical convenience, we split the sample in this manner and refer to those who gave fewer correct answers as less sophisticated or novices, and those who gave more correct answers as sophisticates or experts.

Procedure. The survey included two experiments interspersed among the other questions. The first experiment occurred very early in the survey, following a few introductory queries about the respondent's mood, media usage, and interest in politics. After the administration of the first experiment, the interviewed asked about the respondent's party ID immediately, then a short time later about party closeness and social identity aspects of partisanship, and finally, a little later still, about party preference. Other items in this lengthy middle section of the questionnaire included trust, party and leader feeling thermometers, efficacy, beliefs about government and politics, party issue handling, opinions about a wide range of issues, and open-ended questions tapping partisan stereotypes. Interviewers then administered the second experiment, which was followed by the remainder of the questionnaire. The ultimate post-test contained another measure of party ID, self and party ideological placement, social network questions, past voting behavior, vote choice criteria, anti-partisanship, exposure to political propaganda, recent political participation, political knowledge, party and associational membership, past ties to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), and standard demographic questions. We provide details about each experiment in the results sections.

Experiment 1: Effects of Policy Information on Party Identification

Design. Our first goal is to assess the impact of policy information on partisanship. To that end, the first experiment is a 2×2 design that manipulates exposure to information about the policy stances of the parties and evaluation of the relative positions of the parties on policy issues. The stimulus for the *information* manipulation consisted of a card that interviewers handed to respondents, while saying:

Here is some information about a number of major political parties in Russia today. Please read over this information now, and then I will ask you some questions about these political parties. Please let me know when you are done reading over the card and I will continue.

Half of the respondents were randomly assigned to receive a card that contained policy information about the six largest political parties in Russia, the other half were assigned to receive a card that lacked this information. Both cards listed the name, symbol, and leader of each of the parties. The policy information card also contained a bullet point list of short phrases indicating the major policy positions, goals, and ideological outlook of each party, which we drew from their own public materials. Figures A1 and A2 in the appendix show the layout of the cards.

Note two important features of this manipulation. First, the manipulation of information takes the form of balanced information about policy positions. With this design, we want to observe whether exposing citizens to policy-related information that accurately reflects the views of all the major parties (at least as the parties see themselves) assists them in identifying a party that best represents their interests and thereby causes them to update their partisanship accordingly. In other words, the expectation is that more citizens will be able to report an identification and/or will profess a stronger identity. We see this as consistent with those rational policy models that focus more heavily on the comparison of policy positions and expected policy benefits (Achen 1989, 1992; Franklin and Jackson 1983). An alternative design, perhaps more in line with Fiorina's (1981) model, could be used to assess the impact of performance information that suggests greater benefits come from one or more parties relative to the others. In that sort of design, the expectation would be for more party-specific directional effects as citizens move toward some parties and away from others. The second feature of this manipulation to notice is that the information is fairly general in nature and modest in amount. The stimulus in this sense

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is not very powerful, especially compared to what voters may potentially be exposed to during the course of election campaigns. However, it is closer to the volume and generality of information that a broader share of the electorate should be willing and able to digest in a short time period.

The second manipulation is the *evaluation task*. Respondents were randomly assigned to receive the task or not, and this was balanced across the information manipulation. For the evaluation task, interviewers asked respondents to place all six major parties on a seven-point scale for each of three specific policy issues. After placing each party, respondents then place themselves on the same scale. This task is essentially identical to the sorts of standard survey items researchers use to test policy-based models with non-experimental data. Our goal was to examine what thinking through the policy placement of parties vis a vis oneself contributes to partisan learning beyond whatever thinking is prompted by mere exposure to the policy information. Respondents were allowed to consult the party information card as much as they liked during the evaluation task. Although some of the statements on the policy information card might be useful for placing parties on policy scales, they are more general than the evaluation questions.

Results. We turn now to the results. Figures 1 and 2 display the impact of the information and evaluation treatments on partisanship, respectively.[11] Consistent with the expectations of the rational policy model of partisan learning, exposure to policy information about the parties increases the rate of identification from 50% to 59% for the party ID measure ($t = 1.77$, $p < .08$) and from 59% to 66% for the party closeness measure ($t = 1.52$, $p < .13$).[12] When we assess the strength of partisanship, we see modest increases of 0.17 ($t = 1.70$, $p < .09$) and 0.11 ($t = 1.12$, p

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[11] In the figures, asterisks (*) indicate significant differences or effects at $p < .10$ (two-tailed) or better, while carets (^) indicate differences just shy of standard significance levels (e.g., $.10 < p < .15$).
[12] Significance levels are two-tailed throughout the paper, unless otherwise noted.

< .27) on the three-point scales, respectively. The information treatment also boosts the share of respondents reporting a party preference from 70% to 80% (t = 2.22, p < .03). Although the results hover just below and above standard thresholds of significance, the general pattern is clear and lends credence to the notion that Russians update their partisanship on the basis of policy information. Moreover, the magnitude of these effects is modest for partisan strength but substantial for rates of identification, especially in light of the generality and brevity of the stimulus. In contrast, we find little evidence that the evaluation task, which involved placing the parties and oneself on three policy dimensions, had any effect on partisanship.

We earlier suggested that citizens may process political information differently depending on their level of political sophistication. In light of skepticism about the abilities of most citizens to engage in thoughtful policy comparisons and in light of what we know from prior work on political sophistication, we expected that if the rational policy model described partisan learning accurately for anyone, it would be relatively sophisticated voters. Figures 3a and 3b show the experimental results for the more politically knowledgeable half of the sample. These results strongly confirm our expectations about the moderating role of sophistication. The original information exposure findings appear more clearly and strongly among these respondents. Exposure to policy information increases the rate of identification by 16 and 11 percentage points, respectively (t = 2.39, p < .02; t = 1.77, p < .08) and increases partisan strength by 0.25 and 0.20, respectively (t = 1.78, p < .08; t = 1.47, p < .14). Information also increases the share of sophisticated respondents expressing a party preference from 74% to 86% (t = 2.17, p < .03). Unlike the more general results, Figure 3b also reveals a general pattern of increased partisanship across measures in response to the evaluation task. The results are significant in only two cases, however: Evaluating the policy positions of the parties increases the strength of partisanship, as

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measured by the closeness item, by 0.24 (t = 1.77, p < .08) and it lifts the rate of indicating a party preference from 73% to 87% (t = 2.54, p < .01). We checked to see whether the interaction of the two treatments compounded the growth in partisanship, but the evidence suggests that no such interaction exists. Instead, either exposure or the evaluation task appear to be sufficient to produce roughly equivalent boosts among more sophisticated citizens.

The picture, displayed in Figures 4a and 4b, looks quite different for political novices. Exposure to policy information has no effect on partisanship among less sophisticated citizens. The difference in party identification rates between those receiving policy information and those who do not is 48% to 44% (p < .60) for party ID and 53% to 52% (p < .85) for closeness, respectively. Differences in partisan strength are similarly negligible. The evaluation task produces a more striking contrast with previous results. Here we see a general pattern of *weakened* partisanship after less sophisticated citizens evaluate the policy positions of parties. Rates of identification drop from 51% to 41% for party ID (t = 1.31, p < .19) and from 58% to 47% for closeness (t =1.50, p < .13); note that neither drop, while substantial, is statistically significant. We have greater confidence in the declines in partisan strength for each measure, which are 0.31 (t = 2.15, p < .03) and 0.24 (t = 1.65, p < .10). The share of novices expressing a party preference also decreases by nine percentage points, but this change also is not significant (p < . 21). In sum, for less sophisticated members of the electorate, exposure to policy information not only fails to assist in the formation of party identities, but evaluation of the policy positions of parties actually seems to weaken existing identities. Although partisanship is at its weakest when novices are called upon to make evaluations without the benefit of the policy information card, this interaction effect never reaches statistical significance.

Before concluding our analysis of the first experiment, we perform a couple of checks on the data to ensure that the manipulations, which seem to yield interesting results, are working the way we suppose. Our first check is to examine the amount of time respondents spent looking at the party information card across experimental conditions. Interviewers kept track of the approximate number of minutes each respondent looked at the card from 0 to more than 5 (0-5). If respondents actually read the cards, they should spend more time looking at the policy information card, which has more information on it. This is the case. Respondents spent more than a minute more on average looking at the policy information card than the card lacking this information (p < .001). Furthermore, those performing the evaluation task had an extra incentive to consult the information card, but only if they received the card with policy information on it. This expectation is also borne out by the time data. Average time looking at the card scarcely changes at all when the evaluation task is added in the "no information" condition; it changes from 2.25 to 2.29. But, in the policy information condition, the evaluation task increases time spent with the card from 2.84 to 4.06 (p < .001). Although we don't know exactly how respondents processed information across conditions, these data suggest they did so in a manner quite consistent with our expectations.[13]

Our second check is to examine whether the availability of policy information affects the ability and/or willingness of respondents to place the parties or themselves on various policy dimensions during the evaluation task. Most respondents placed most of the parties and themselves on all three policy questions. Nonetheless, as expected, the policy information improved performance on the evaluation task by reducing refusals or "don't know's" by an

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[13] These manipulations did not, however, increase the overall duration of the interview. In fact, both the information and the evaluation treatment seem to slightly reduce the length of the survey interview by anywhere from one to three minutes. Although we can only speculate about why this is the case, it may be that the initial effort to digest and make sense of information about the parties enabled respondents to move more quickly through a questionnaire laden with party-related questions.

average of nearly one on each of three policy questions (see Figure 5). In the presence of a

policy information card, the omission rate across the placement of six parties dropped by 0.70 for

the trade-off between order versus civil rights (t = 2.39, p < ..02), by 0.98 for the preference

between communism and market reforms (t = 3.82, p < .001), and by 0.60 for willingness to

work with the West on national security (t = 2.30, p < .02). There is even suggestive evidence

that the availability of the policy information card improved respondents' ability to place

themselves on the scales (t = 1.51, p < .13). We have little doubt then that respondents

approached the policy information card and evaluation task in the expected manner.

Experiment 2: Effects of Party Cues and Identification on Policy Opinions

Design. Our second goal in this paper is to assess the impact of partisanship on policy

opinions, essentially the flipside of this potentially reciprocal relationship. In the U.S., scholars

have little doubt that partisanship biases the views of citizens. We ask whether parties are

sufficiently meaningful in Russia at this time to influence the expression of policy opinions. To

answer this question, we included the second experiment, which is a single-factor, two-cell

design. Interviewers asked all respondents a battery of six questions seeking their opinions on

relatively new or underpublicized issues.[14] Versions of the questions in the *party cue* treatment

contained information about the (alleged) stance of one or all six of the parties on the issue;

versions in the baseline condition were identical except they lacked any party cue. Respondents

were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions.

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[14] Many of the questions are similar or identical to actual policies under consideration or recently approved in Russia. However, some characterizations of the issue and party positions were our invention. Interviewers phrased the questions in somewhat hypothetical manner ("Suppose I told you…") and debriefed subjects after the survey about the fictional nature of these items and our research goals.

There are two other important other features of this design. The first feature is the inclusion of two types of questions within each condition. Three of the six questions introduced respondents to a policy proposal made either by a particular party or by unnamed people, and then asked respondents whether they support or oppose the proposal. The other three questions describe a variety of positions people or parties are (allegedly) taking on an issue, and then asked respondents which position best reflects their own views. We refer to these as the *single cue* and *multiple cue* questions, respectively. Single cue issues include a Moscow metro fare increase, weapon sales to China, and the importation of nuclear fuel for processing and storage. Multiple cue issues include a student exchange program with Germany, the merger of federal regions in Russia, and expansion of the number of guest workers in the country.

The second feature is the selection of the specific party cue for the single cue questions. For these questions, interviewers inserted the name of the party the respondent had mentioned earlier in response to the party preference question. We did this to assess the impact of a positive party cue on respondents' opinions. Some respondents, however, insisted that they could not choose a preferred party among the options. Roughly 70% of respondents named a preferred party, the remainder did not. For the latter, interviewers inserted the name of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF). We chose the KPRF because it seemed quite likely that most unaligned respondents would have some sort of attitude toward the communist successor party and, based on earlier evidence from post-communist Russia (Colton 2000), we expected that attitude to be negative in most cases. In sum, for the single cue questions, our expectation is that respondents will be more likely to support the proposed policy when receiving their own party cue and perhaps less likely to do so when receiving the communist cue (relative to those who receive no cues). For the multiple cue questions, our expectation is that cued respondents will be

more likely to adopt the position attributed to their party, even though the positions are consistent with the views of the respective parties (i.e., such that supporters might be able to select the "correct" position even without explicitly mentioning the party).

Results. We now turn to the results of the second experiment. As Figures 6a and 6b show, party cues influence opinion formation in Russia. In two out of three cases, respondents were more likely to support a policy proposal when cued that it had been proposed by their own party (t = 1.59, p < .11; t = 1.65, p < .10). Similarly, in two out of three cases, respondents were more likely to choose a policy position consistent with their own party's views when positions were explicitly linked to parties (t = 2.18, p < .03, t = 1.80, p < .07). The preceding analyses consider only those have a preferred party (single cue) or who identify with a party (multiple cue).[15]

What about those expressed no preference and were presented with a Communist party cue for the single-cue questions? Here are the results are mixed in an interesting manner (see Figure 7). As for those with a party preference, there is no impact on the question of importing nuclear fuel; this policy is so unpopular with everyone that there seems to be little that can move them. In another case, weapon sales to China, the result is as we might expect—the preferred party cue has an effect (discussed above), but the Communist cue does not have an effect (t = 0.32, p < .75). However, in the remaining case concerning a proposed increase in the Moscow Metro fare, both cues have a positive effect and the Communist cue effect appears stronger (t = 2.74, p < .01). This runs contrary to our expectations. Throughout much of the post-communist period. the Communist party has been exceedingly unpopular with most citizens other than partisans of that party. We therefore expected the Communist party cue to be repellent, if anything, for non-

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[15] We also examined the impact of the party cue broken down by party. We hypothesized that the strength of the party cue would be stronger for parties that had the longest and most stable record on policy positions in post-communist Russia. However, we found no clear evidence of differences in the strength of party cue by party across all six issues.

partisans. Why wasn't it? We of course can only speculate at this point, but it is interesting to note that this strong positive cueing effect occurs on the one question that involves a serious imposition on the poor. The policy proposal in question would enact a flat fare increase for riders of the subway system (following another increase that occurred recently) for the sake of making improvements. It is possible that Russian voters make far more informational use of party cues than we have supposed and, in this case, have taken it is a credible signal of policy merits that Communist party (of all others), defender of the poor and pensioners, has proposed the fare increase.

In the U.S., scholars have argued that parties may serve an informational or heuristic purpose in helping all voters to make up their minds about issues, not just partisans (Brady and Sniderman 1985). We examine the impact of party cues on opinionation, or the ability and/or willingness to express an opinion on the policy issue. Figures 8a and 8b display the results. In three of six cases, the presence of party cues appear to increase the share of respondents who express an opinion, including suggestively so for weapon sales to China ($t = 1.42$, $p < .16$) and more clearly for the German exchange student program ($t = 1.75$, $p < .08$) and the merger of federal regions ($t = 2.03$, $p < .04$). Understandably, we are more likely to observe this boost to opinionation on issues that have lower baseline response rates.

Do the benefits of party cues to opinion expression redound primarily to partisans or non-partisans? Figures 9a through 9d provide the answer. Partisans are already more likely to express opinions, and we observe only suggestive evidence of a boost to opinionation for the question about merger of federal regions ($t = 1.51$, $p < .13$) and even smaller differences for the other questions. In contrast, we see more changes in opinionation among non-partisans. Nonetheless, not all of these changes are in the expected direction. The share of respondents

voicing an opinion on the Metro fare increase drops by six percentage points in response to the party cue (Communist cue for most of them; t =1.64, p < .10). However, in two other cases, the impact is consistent with expectations—opinionation increases for the German student exchange program (t = 2.21, p < .03) and the merger of federal regions (t = 1.77, p < .08). In sum, we find that evidence that both partisan and non-partisan Russians are able to make use of party cues in forming policy opinions.

Discussion

This study yields several important findings about the relationship between partisanship, policy information, and opinion, at least in the Russian context. First, despite the prevailing skepticism about rational policy models of partisan learning, some citizens update their party identities in light of information about the policy positions of parties. Second, and more importantly, the impact on partisanship depends critically on political sophistication. Exposure to policy information and the process of evaluating the policy positions of the parties vis a vis oneself strengthens the party identification of more sophisticated citizens. For less sophisticated citizens, the same evaluation process weakens partisanship, especially in the absence of information to help make the judgments.[16] Stepping back then, we believe this evidence suggests the possibility that there are distinct types of partisans—a more reflective set of partisans who acquire and update their partisanship, at least in part, on the evaluation of policy differences across parties, and a relatively unreflective set of partisans whose presumably more symbolic attachment to parties is undermined when asked to evaluate policy differences they are poorly equipped and motivated to consider.

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[16] These results on strikingly parallel findings from a series of experiments we conducted on American college students.

A third key finding comes from our second experiment: Party cues influence the policy opinions of Russians in much the same way as they influence the opinions of Americans. Russians are more likely to support a policy they know to be endorsed by their preferred party. They are also more likely to express an opinion at all when party cues are present. However, also consistent with evidence from the U.S., we find that party cues are informative for voters in general and not just identifiers. More generally, these findings shed light on whether we are observing partisanship that is at all meaningful for the political psychology of Russians. The evidence suggests that, despite instability and loss of power by parties in Russia, partisanship remains meaningful to Russians at this time. In other words, the partisanship that was susceptible to updating in the first experiment is nonetheless partisanship that has teeth. The moderating role of sophistication in the first experiment further underscores this idea. More politically sophisticated Russians are the ones who moved more reliably in response to information. In other words, the individuals who are most likely to have well-developed and firm partisan commitments (as opposed to "non-attitudes") are the same ones whose partisan ties strengthened visibly.

This study is a first step in our effort to shore up a wealth of correlational evidence on the origins and effects of party identification with more secure experimental foundations. More analysis of these two experiments awaits, including assessments of the impact on partisan attitude constraint, social identification with parties, and readiness for political action. We also are currently conducting comparable experiments in Poland and anticipate doing so in one or two additional countries, in an effort to continue strengthening our sense of cross-cultural similarities and differences. Finally, we hope to carry out other sorts of experiments that test other key

propositions about the determinants of party identification, such as political engagement and

crystallization of commitment through political action.

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Figure 1. Impact of Party Policy Information on Partisanship
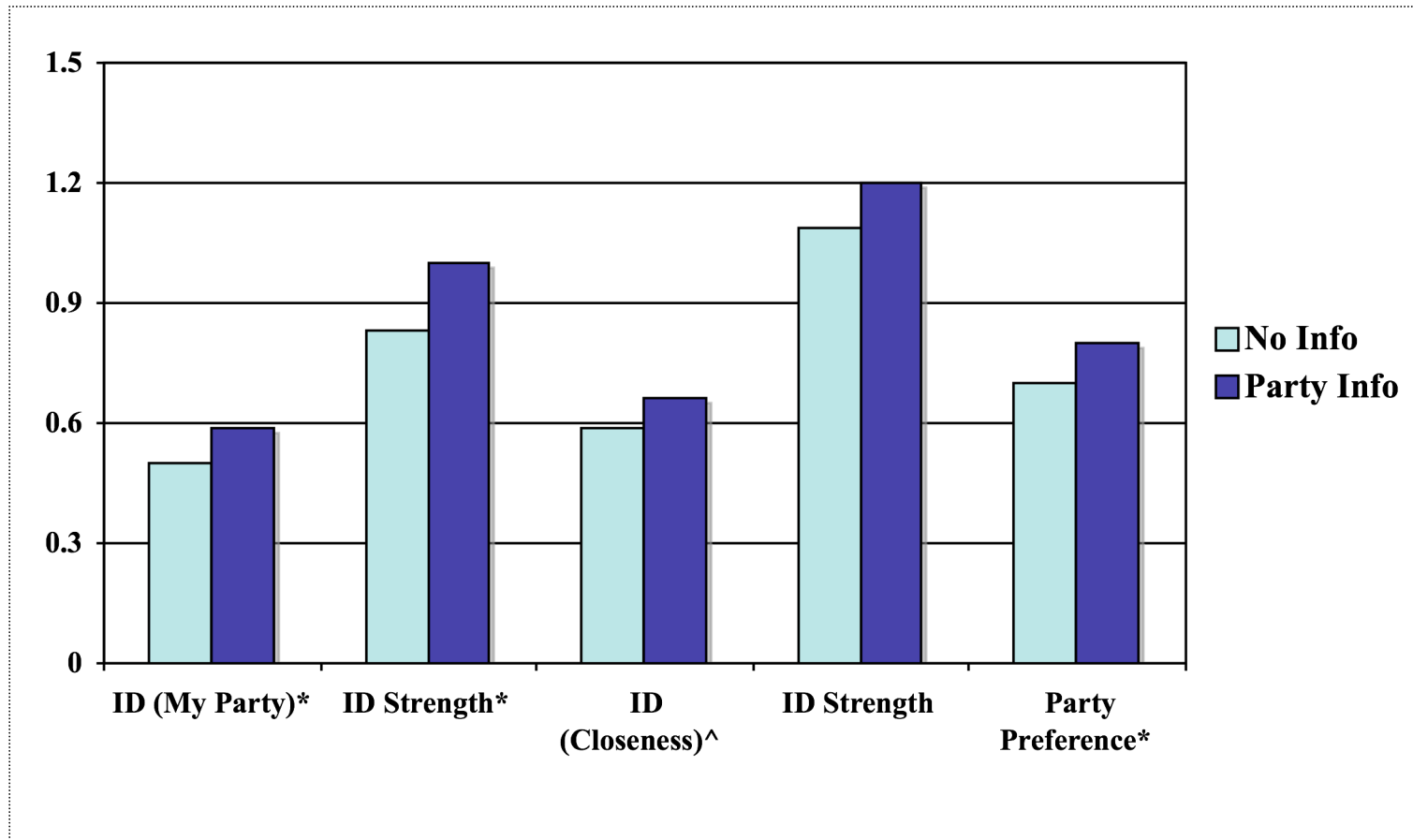
Figure 2. Impact of Party Evaluation (Placement) Task on Partisanship
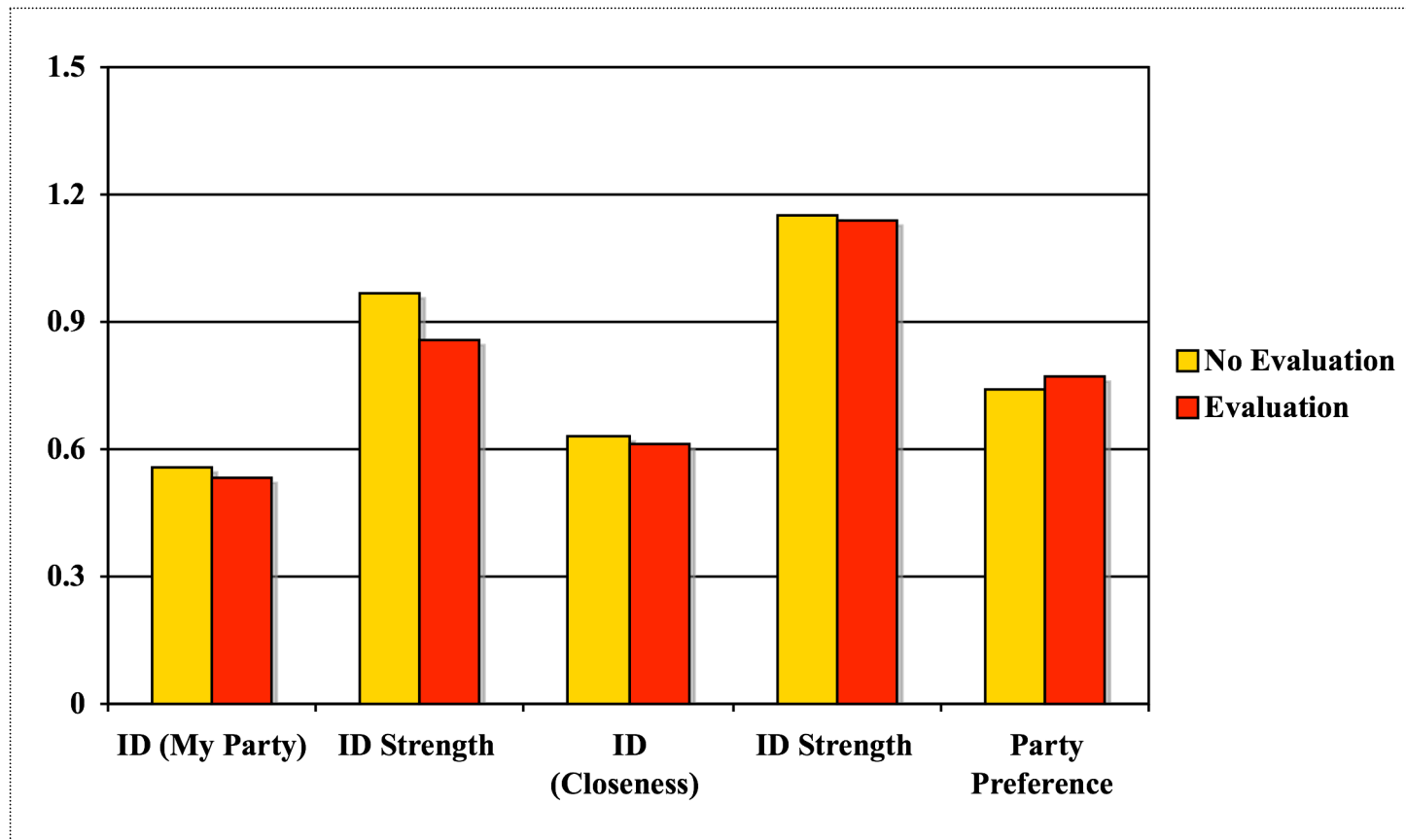
Figures 2

Figure 3a. Impact of Policy Information on Partisanship (More Knowledgeable Respondents)
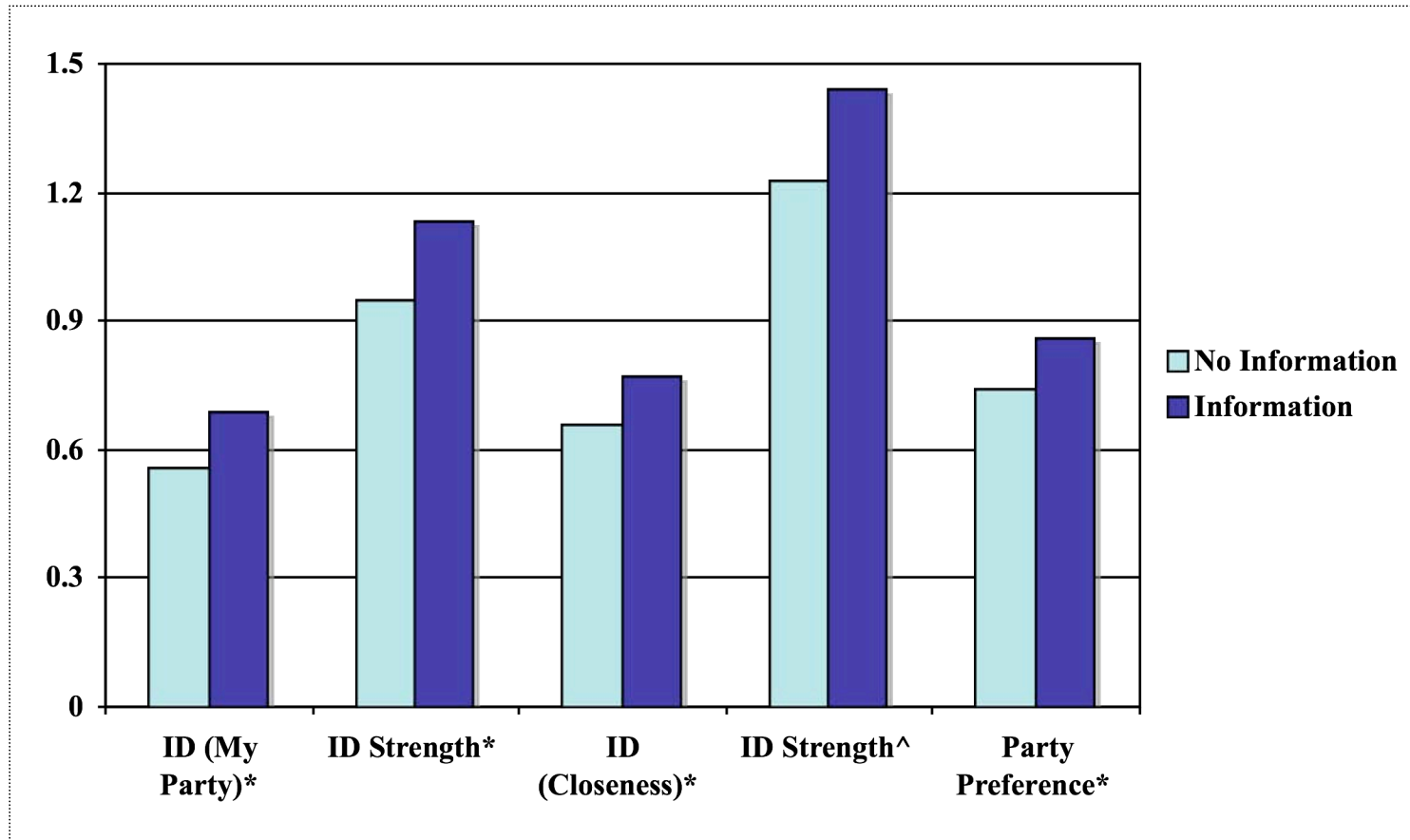
Figures 3

Figure 3b. Impact of Policy Information on Partisanship (More Knowledgeable Respondents)

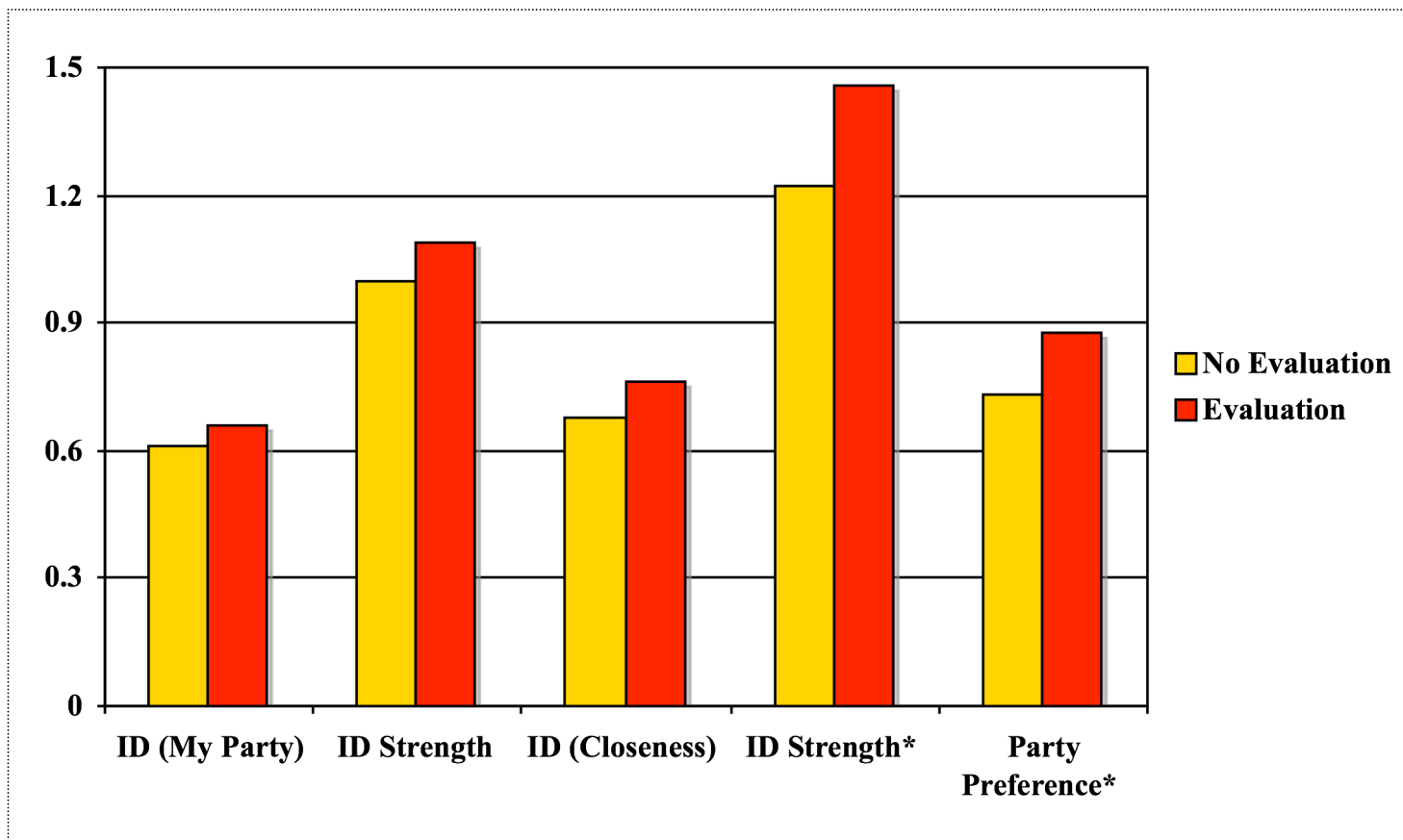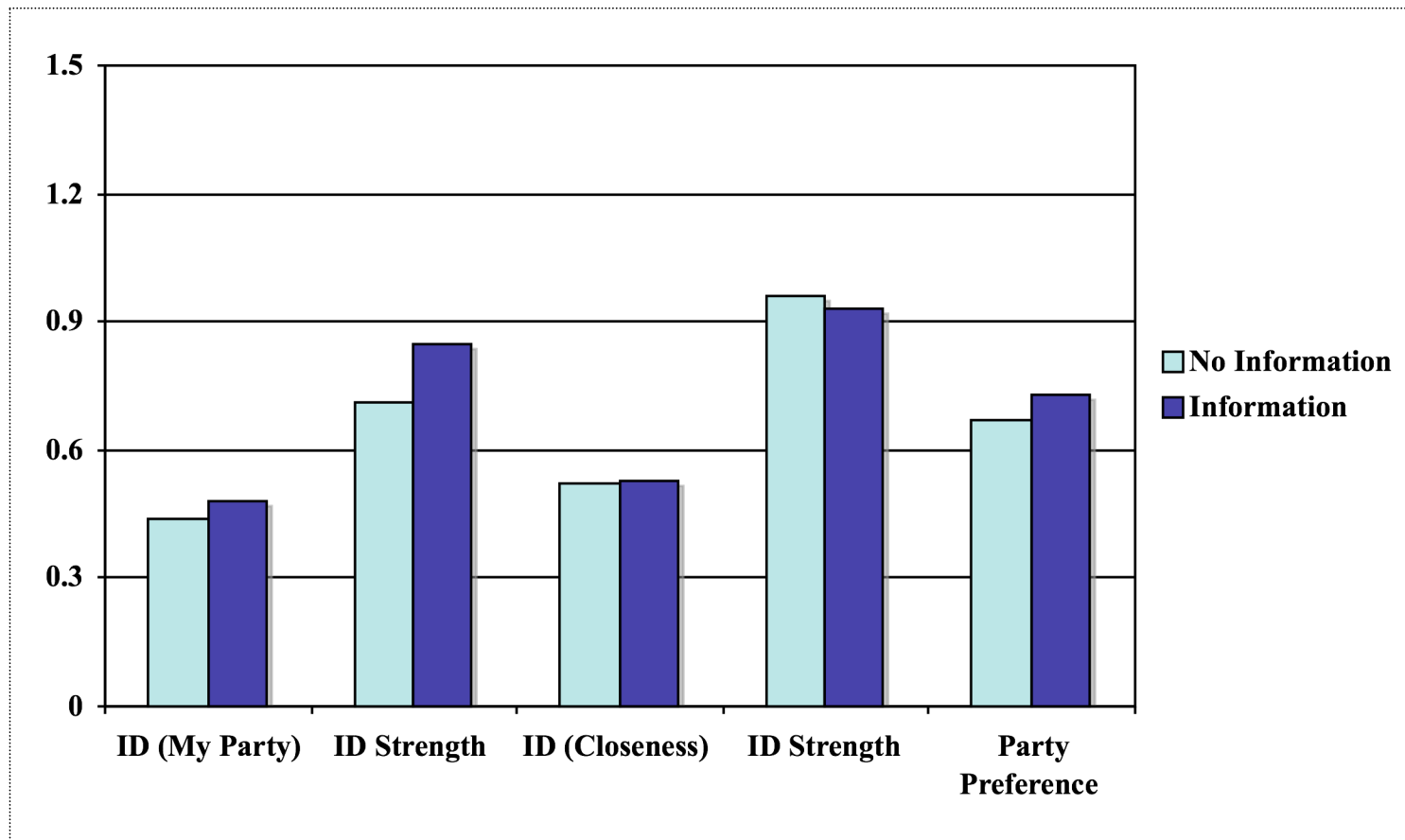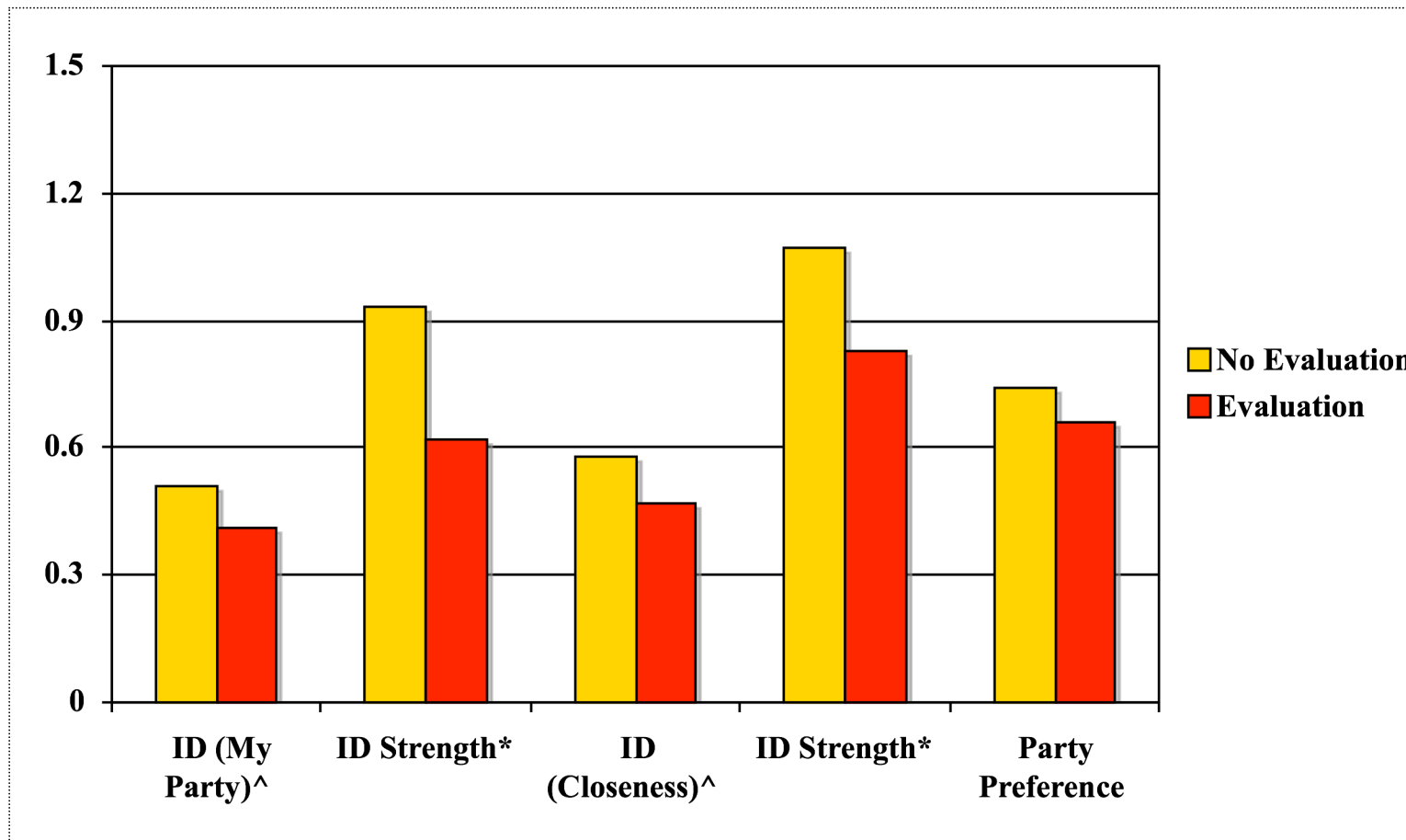**Figure 4a. Impact of Policy Information on Partisanship (Less Knowledgeable Respondents)**

Figures 5

Figure 4b. Impact of Evaluation Task on Partisanship (Less Knowledgeable Respondents)

Figure 5. Impact of Policy Information Card on Inability to Place Parties or Self during Evaluation Task
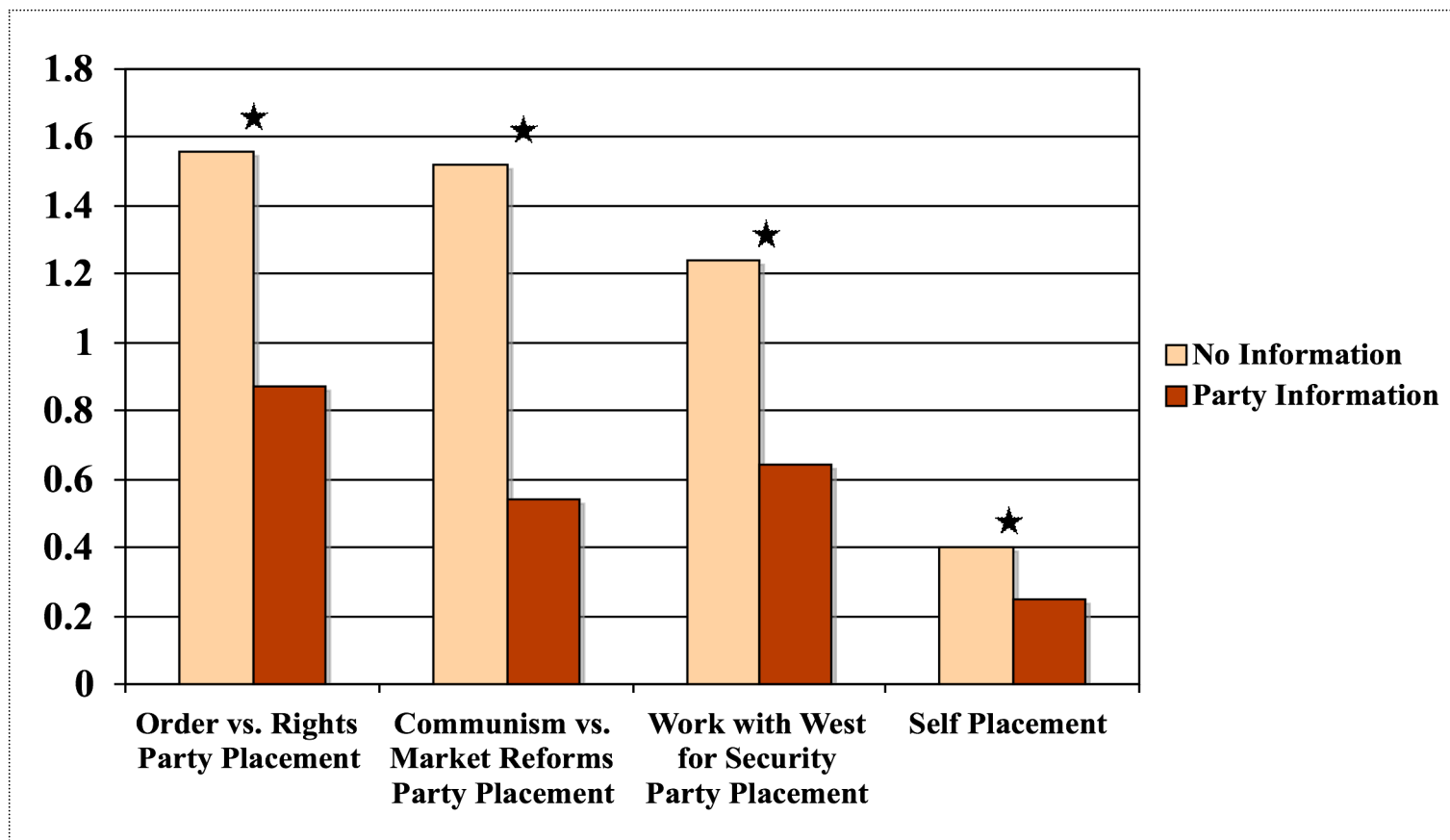
Figure 6a. Impact of Party Cue on Support for Policy Proposal (Single Cue)
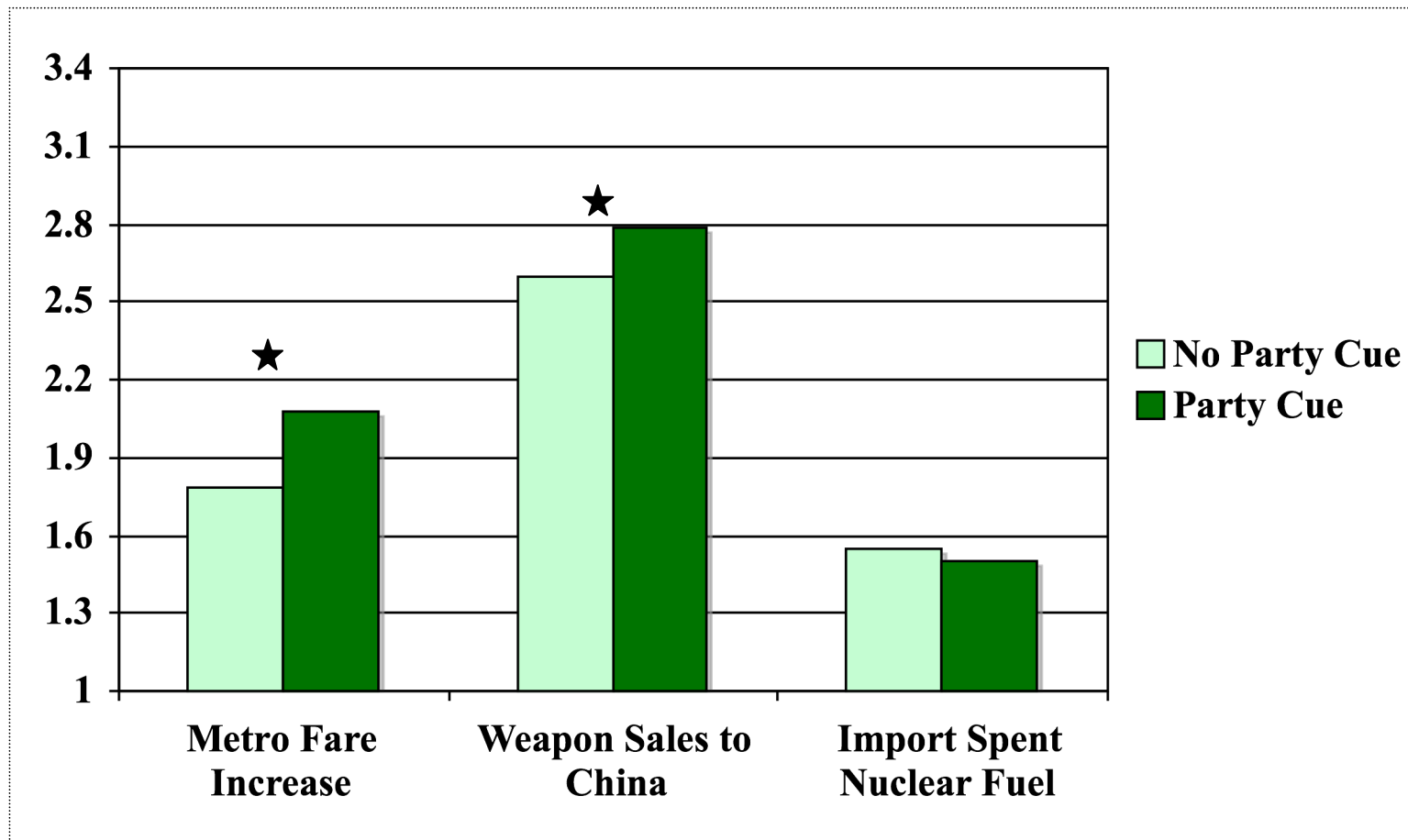
Figure 6b. Impact of Party Cues on Choosing Party's Position (Multiple Cues)
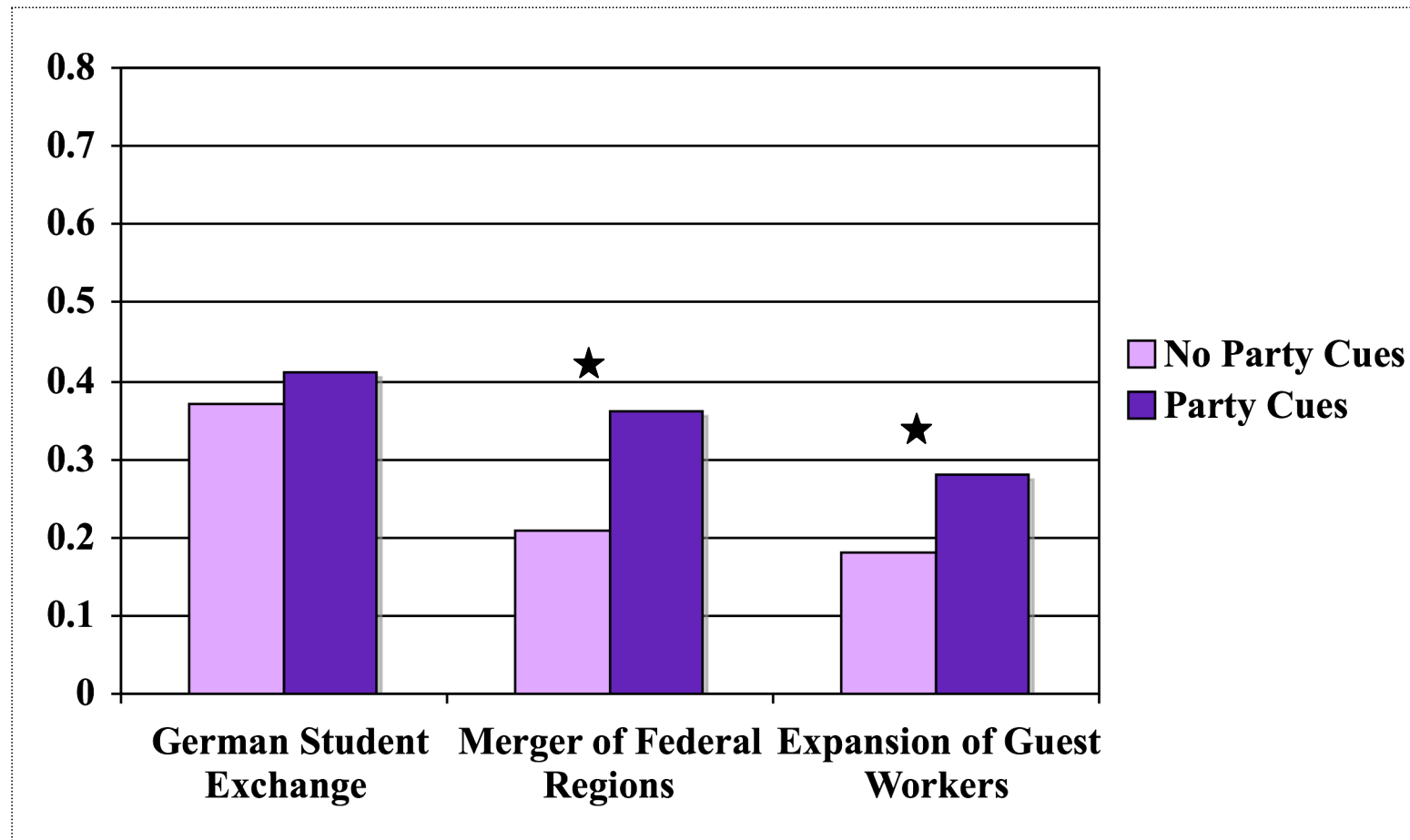
Figure 7. Impact of Own Party and Communist Party Cue on Support (Single Cue)
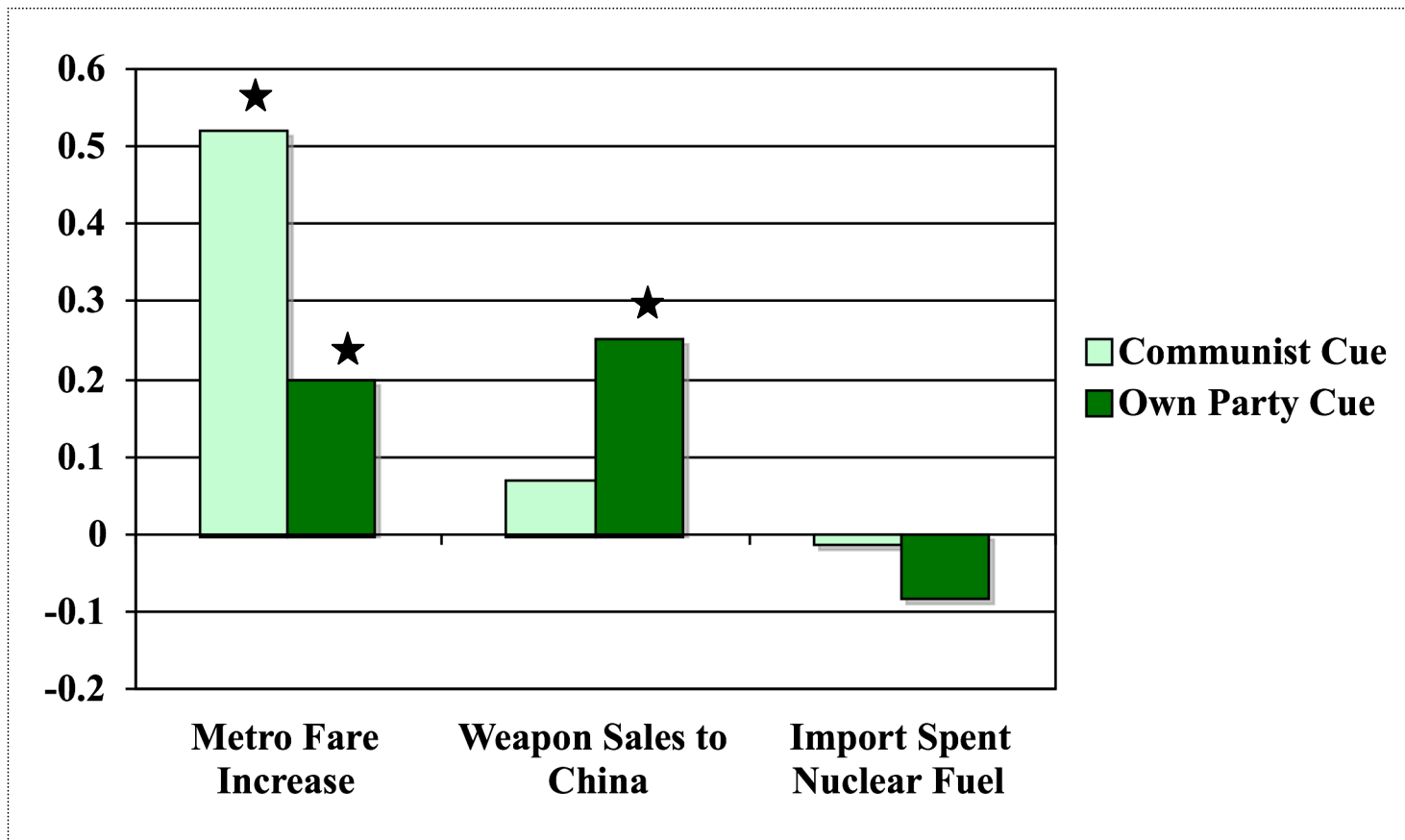
Figure 8a. Impact of Party Cue on Opinionation (Single Cue)
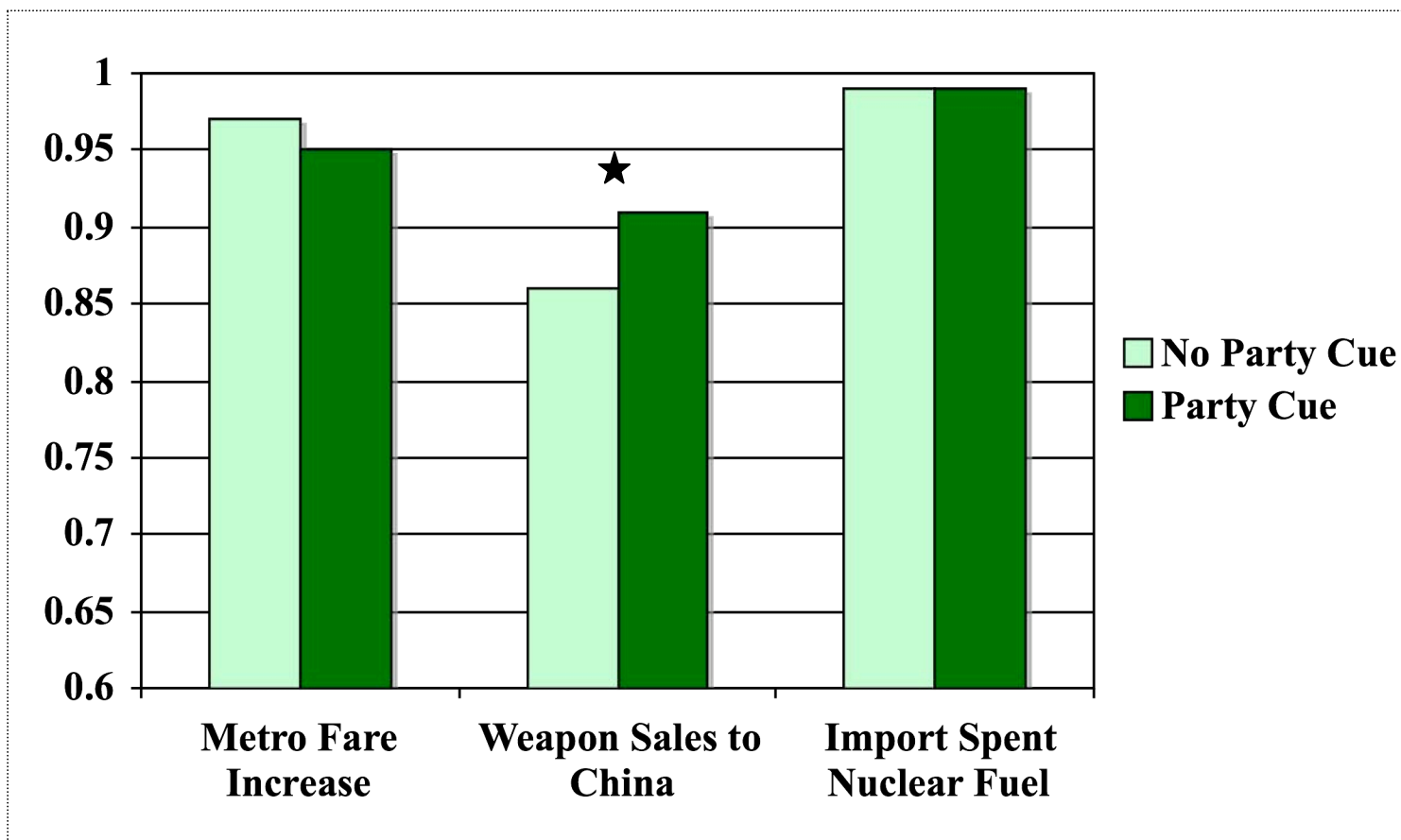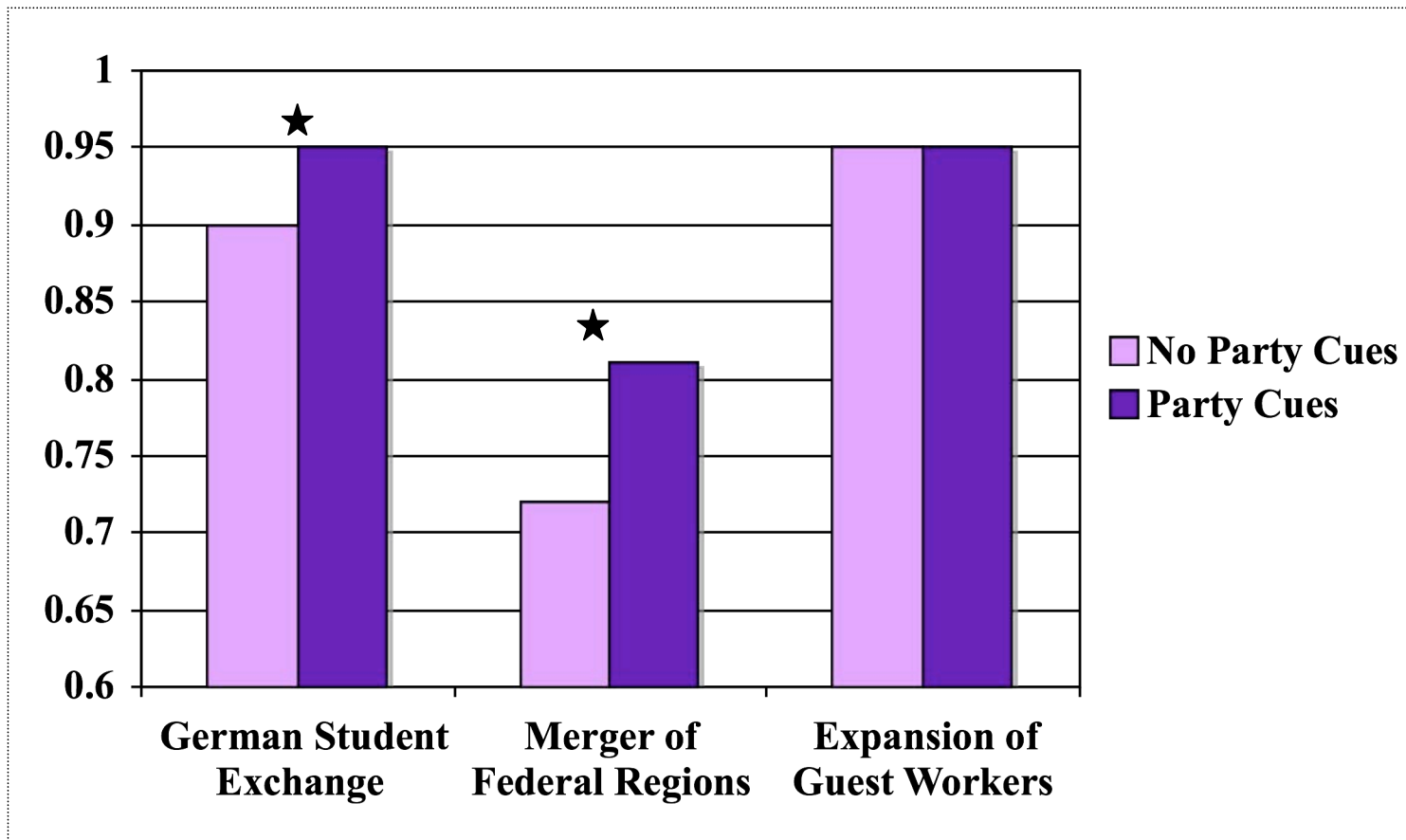
Figure 8b. Impact of Party Cues on Opinionation (Multiple Cues)

Figures 12

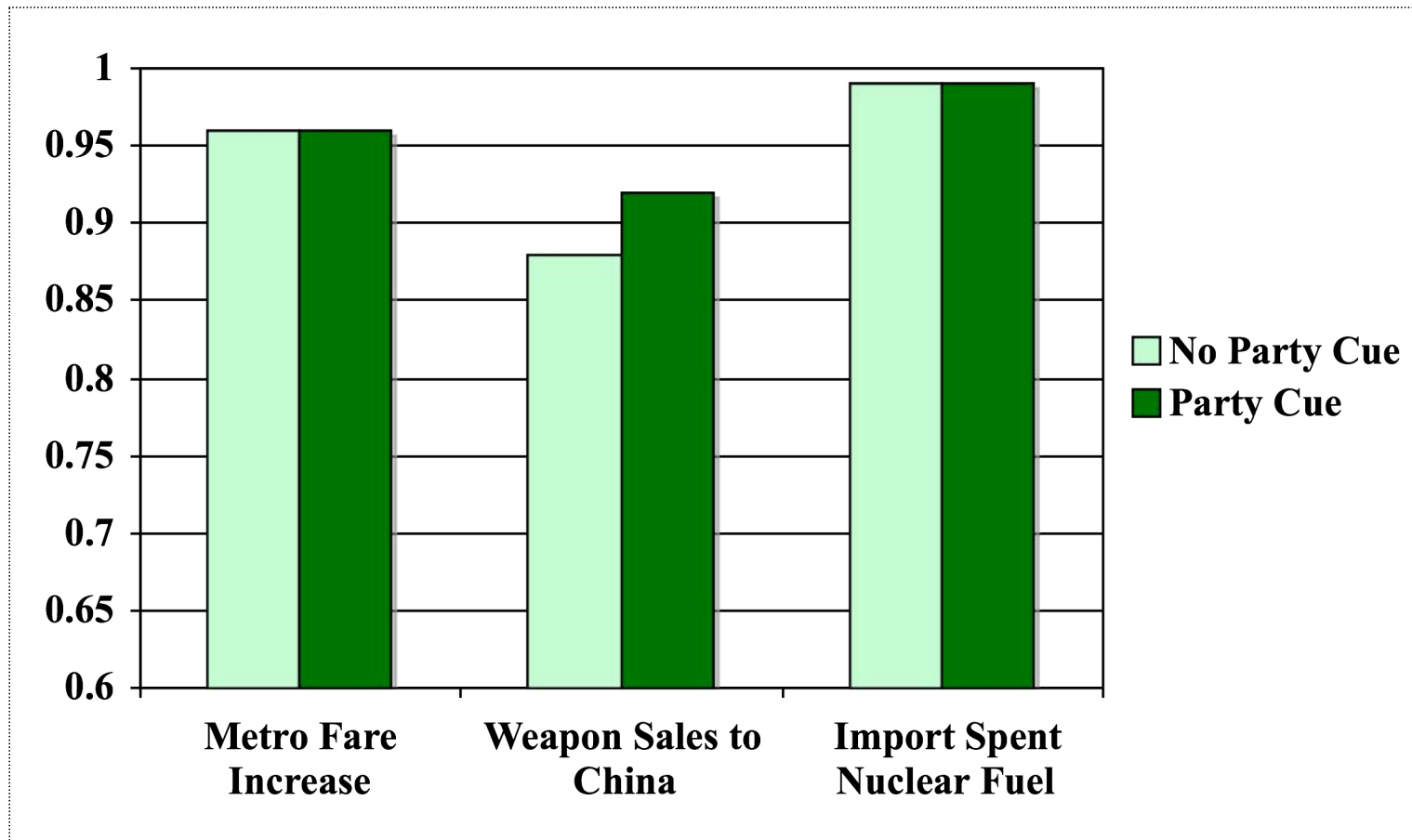**Figure 9a. Impact of Party Cue on Opinionation for Partisans (Single Cue)**

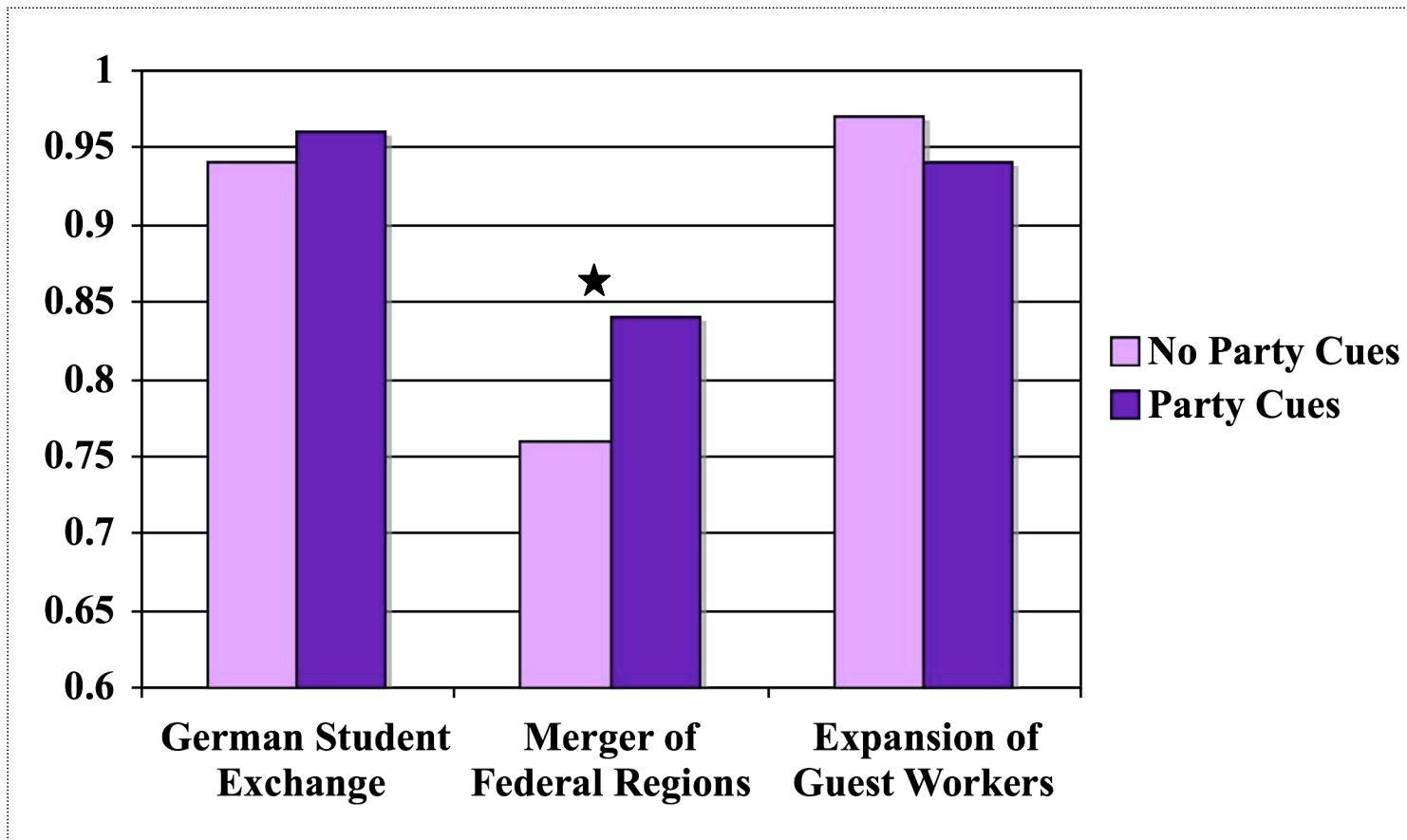**Figure 9b. Impact of Party Cues on Opinionation for Partisans (Multiple Cues)**

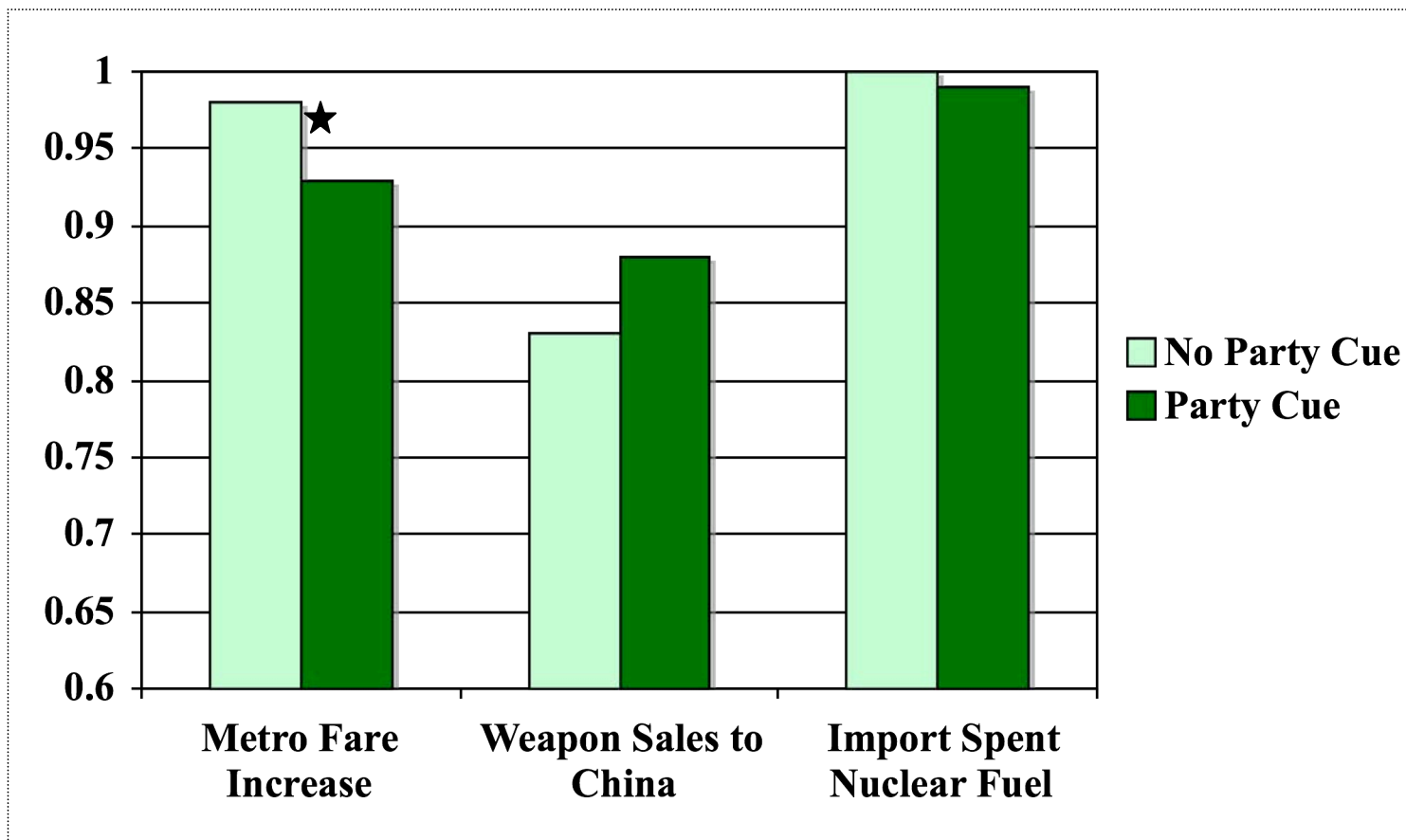**Figure 9c. Impact of Party Cue on Opinionation for Non-Partisans (Single Cue)**

Figure 9d. Impact of Party Cues on Opinionation for Non-Partisans (Multiple Cues)
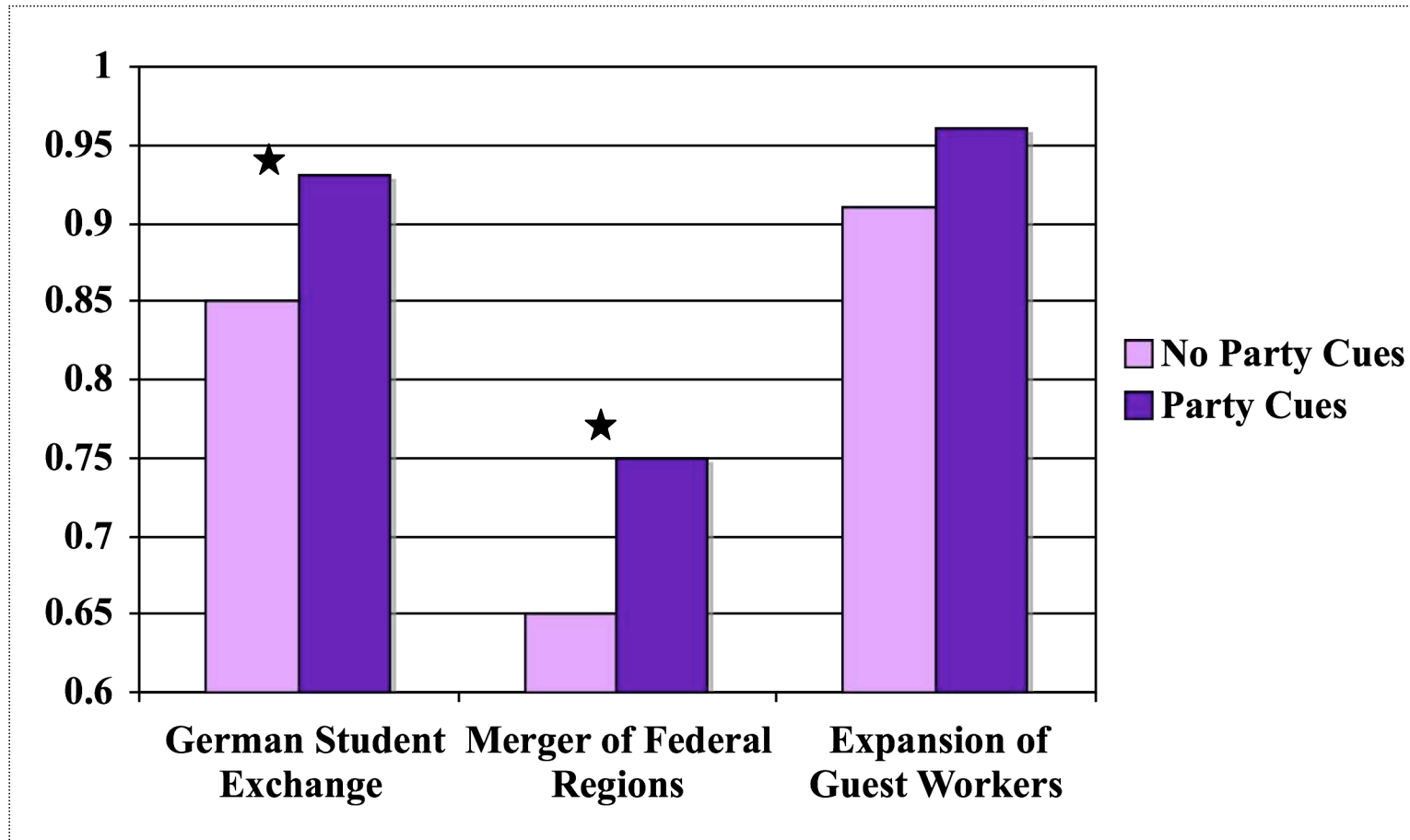
Figure A1. Party Information Stimulus

КАРТОЧКА S1

Коммунистическая Партия Российской Федерации

Лидер: Геннадий Зюганов

Ряд экспертов полагает, что КПРФ
- Хранит верность идеалам коммунизма
- Выступает за сочетание социалистической экономики и рынка
- Защищает интересы рабочего класса
- Выступает за контроль государства над нефтяными и газовыми компаний
- Партия российских патриотов
- Выступает за Россию как великую державу
- Противник НАТО

Яблоко

Лидер: Григорий Явлинский

Ряд экспертов полагает, что партия Яблоко
- Считает, что государство обязано гарантировать индивидуальные права и свободы
- Выступает за новый демократический курс для России
- Поддерживают свободное гражданское общество и правовое государство
- Сторонник рыночной экономики, но считает, что государство должно обеспечить равные возможности для всех, помогая неимущим
- Считают, что Россия должна стараться вступить в ЕС и в другие европейские организации
- Выступает против войны в Чечне

Сюох Правых Сил

Лидер: Никита Белых

Ряд экспертов полагает, что СП.
- Выступает за сильное эффективное правительство
- Поддерживает рыночную конкуренцию
- Требует продолжить рыночные реформы
- Требует гарантировать неприкосновенность частной собственности
- Выступает за права и свободы граждан
- Защищает свободу печати
- Предложил отмену воинской обязанности и введение профессиональной армии
- За сотрудничество с Западом в тех случаях, когда это выгодно России

Либерально-Демократическая Партия России

Лидер: Владимир Жириновский

Ряд экспертов полагает, что ЛДПР
- Выступает за резкое усиление роли государства
- Предлагает упразднить национальные республики
- Хотят утвердить русский единственным языком страны
- Хочет восстановить союз России с Белоруссией, Украиной и другими бывшими советскими республиками
- Борется за победу российского патриотизма над идеологией исламской революции
- Выступает за предоставление бесплатного жилья пенсионерам и молодым семьям
- Выступает за реформирование юридической системы и введение более жестких наказаний за уголовные преступления
- Считает, что государство должно обеспечивать закон и порядок

Единая Россия

Лидер: Борис Грызлов

Ряд экспертов полагает, что партия Единая Россия
- Основана в 2001 году объединением партий Единство и Отечество
- Прагматичная центристская партия, не левая и не правая
- Поддерживает сильную президентскую власть как гарантию стабильности в стране
- Хочет сократить число бюрократов
- Стремится обеспечить президенту большинство в Думе ради проведения законов
- Требует защитить национальные интересы России без оглядки на другие страны – союзники или противники

Родина

Лидер: Александр Бабаков

Ряд экспертов полагает, что партия Родина
- Социально-патриотическая партия
- Выступает за резкое усиление роли государств
- Считает, что Россия должна проявлять бдительность против угроз со стороны иностранцев, включая мусульман и сионистов.
- Категорически против нелегальной иммиграц
- Выступает за социальную справедливость
- Считает, что размер минимальной оплаты труд должен быть повышен
- Выступает за пересмотр итогов незаконной приватизации
- Требует тюремного заключения для олигархов наживших состояния нечестным путем
- Резко выступает против монетизации льгот

Figures 17

Figure A2. Party Information Stimulus – No Policy Information Condition

КАРТОЧКА S2

Коммунистическая Партия Российской Федерации
КПРФ
Лидер: Геннадий Зюганов

Яблоко
ЯБЛОКО
Лидер: Григорий Явлинский

Сюох Правых Сил
союз ПРАВЫХ СИЛ
Лидер: Никита Белых

Либерально-Демократическая Партия России
Лидер: Владимир Жириновский

Единая Россия
ЕДИНАЯ РОССИЯ
Лидер: Борис Грызлов

Родина
Родина
Лидер: Адександр Бабакол

Figures 18