

Proposal for Questions in LISS Panel on Party Attachments

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in cooperation with

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Measuring identification with multiple political parties

Abstract

The notion of party identification has been one of the most prominent concepts in political science, in particular in the field of mass political behaviour. Recently, the measurement of this concept was strongly improved via publications based on survey data with multi-item indices includes in the LISS Panel (2012) and surveys in Sweden (2013) and Britain (2015). The proposed set of survey items will take the conceptual development of citizens' party identification and its measurement another great step forward. It will do so by focusing on the attachment citizens may have with multiple political parties and by analysing the short-term and long-term stability of partisan identities. To this end, it proposes the inclusion of a validated abbreviated version the previous items in three waves of the LISS Panel.

Introduction

The notion of party identification has been one of the most prominent concepts in political science, in particular in the field of mass political behaviour. The concept was introduced by scholars in the United States in the 1950s, when survey questionnaires had become the most important method to study elections. In two seminal books, Campbell et al. (1954, 1960) emphasized that in order to understand why people vote as they do, it is crucial to map how political objects are represented in the mind. They added that this involves not only the cognitive representation, but also the affective orientation towards those objects. This led them introduce the concept of party identification, which indicates the psychological attachment that a person feels with a political party. The questions that Campbell et al. (1954, 1960) formulated to measure party identification in the American context have become standard items in election surveys, not only in the United States but also in many other countries (for a review of the extensive literature on the concept and measurement of party identification, see Johnston, 2006; Rosema and Mayer, in press).

The original measurement of party identification consists of two simple survey questions, which ask respondents first which political party they identify with, if any, and next whether they consider their partisanship to be weak or strong (Campbell et al., 1954; Miller,

1991; Rosema and Mayer, in press). It almost speaks for itself that there are better, more scientific, ways to determine the strength of an identification than merely asking an individual if it is weak or strong. Hence, several scholars have advocated the use multi-item indices that are grounded in social identity theory (Greene, 1999, 2002, 2004; Huddy et al., 2015; Bankert et al., 2017; Rosema and Mayer, in press). The LISS Panel provided a huge impetus for improving the measurement of this key concept in voting research, through a short module included in 2012. Because the results were successful, similar survey items were next included in the Swedish Citizen Panel (2013-2014) and the British Election Studies (2015). These items have been shown to be a major improvement for the measurement of partisan identities (Bankert et al., 2017; Huddy et al., 2018; Rosema and Mayer, in press) and also were an inspiration for research on the identity of British' citizens regarding the Leave and Remain side in the Brexit Referendum (Hobolt, 2016).¹

Although much progress has been made with respect to the measurement of citizens' psychological attachment with political parties, there are important matters that require further steps in order to truly understand how citizens relate to political parties and how this affects their decisions in elections. The most important next step is arguably to tailor the measurements better to multi-party systems. The concept of party identification and its common measures, which were developed in the American two-party system, assume that citizens identify with one party only. Hence, the common questions target measuring the direction and strength of this psychological attachment. However, several studies have shown that in multi-party democracies, such as Germany or the Netherlands, many voters identify with two or more parties (Van der Eijk and Niemöller, 1983; Mayer, 2017; Rosema and Mayer, in press). In the Netherlands this has never been analysed with some depth, while studies abroad are rare (for an exception, see Mayer & Schultze, 2019). However, in a survey conducted by I&O Research shortly before the 2017 Second Chamber elections, 56 percent of the Dutch voters (N=3.208) reported feeling attracted to at least two parties and for about two-thirds of them the identification with the secondly mentioned party was equally strong (or sometimes even stronger) than with the first-mentioned party and the attachment with both

¹ The journal article in which the LISS data were first presented and analysed (Bankert et al., 2017), has been received well among academics. The corresponding conference paper, which was presented by Alexa Bankert at the 2015 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, received the John Sullivan Award 2016. Two years after publication of the article, its citation count in Google Scholar equals 36.

parties could be measured well with a four-item index like the one proposed here for the LISS Panel (Rosema, 2017). This indicates that multiple partisanship is not uncommon and therefore strong and validated measures for it are badly needed. The LISS Panel is ideally suited for developing and testing them.

In addition to multiple partisanship, there are also two other matters related to party attachments that could be improved substantially through new data collection. First, the stability of partisan identities has long been one of the key matters of debate in research in this field (Thomassen, 1976; Thomassen and Rosema, 2009). To the best of our knowledge, however, no research has been conducted on the stability of partisan identities using multi-item measures. Consequently, how stable or instable partisan attachments really are is poorly understood, even though in the original conceptualisation this is a pivotal element (see Johnston, 2006; Thomassen and Rosema, 2009). Second, several scholars have acknowledged that the psychological attachments of citizens with political parties may comprise elements of the social-psychological concept of attitudes as well as the concept of social identity (Greene, 1999; Rosema, 2004; Rosema & Mayer, in press). How both elements relate to each other, however, is still unclear. Through repeated measures of attitudinal measures of partisanship and social-identity based measures, this topic can be properly analysed. Again, the LISS Panel is ideally suited to analyse this.

Aims and nature of the proposed questions

We propose to include an abbreviated version of the set of eight items that were included on the LISS Panel in 2012, and then administer these items for two (or in some cases three) political parties instead of only one. Furthermore, we propose to repeat this module twice in order to enable a well-founded analysis of the stability of partisan identities. Because analyses of the previously included set of eight items showed that an abbreviated version consisting of four items performs reasonably well (Bankert et al., 2017; Rosema and Mayer, in press), we propose such a set for the new module. Based on results from previous results, some of these items have been slightly rephrased (in order to decrease the ‘difficulty’ of the item).

Including the proposed items in the LISS Panel will enable us, as well as other researchers, to accomplish the following goals:

- a. Test the reliability and validity of this measure of (multiple) partisan identity, which is a key concept in the study of voting across the democratic world.
- b. Analyse the short-term (2-6 months) and long-term (8 years) stability of partisan identities in the Netherlands.
- c. Analyse the impact of multiple partisan identities, as compared to the traditional measure and our previously tested multi-item index of single partisanship, in explaining voting behaviour (electoral participation and party choice).
- d. Examine the explanatory power of the new measure of partisan identity, as compared to the traditional measure, in explaining political attitudes and political participation. These are measured in the Politics and Values module of the core study.
- e. Examine the extent to which multiple partisan identities are shaped by personality characteristics. These are measured in the Personality module of the core study.

The question wordings of the proposed items are listed in Appendix A. These items can be used to create an index that measures the strength of partisan identities. The items will be preceded by the standard items to measure party identification, not only because this facilitates comparisons between the traditional and new measure, but also because the standard items can still be used to measure the *direction* of party identification (which party citizens feel closer to). We propose to use identical question wordings as in the Politics and Values module from the core study of the LISS Panel for this. We add one question about past voting behaviour, in order to identify the closest party for respondents who reply negatively to the two standard questions. Furthermore, we add another question in order to identify the second party that voters potentially feel attached to.

Sample

Requested sample size: 1.500

Repeat: 3 times

(We assume that this requires not more time than the one survey without repeat, 2.500 respondents, 40 simple questions for 15 minutes). In case this is not the case, we self-evidently are happy to discuss the best way forward with those in charge of the LISS Panel.

If the current LISS Panel still has members that were interviewed in 2012 and answered the items about partisan identities (proposal from Martin Rosema and Leonie Huddy), we propose to include these people in the sample. This would enable us to analyse the long-term stability of partisan identities for this sub-set of the sample for this new module. Even though this is not the primary purpose of the proposed items (this is focused on multiple partisanship. Which can just as well be studied with a fresh sample), it would give additional value to the study.

Timing of the questionnaire

One of the key reasons that the concept of party identification has become so central in political science, is because of its presumed influence on voting behaviour (Johnston, 2006). In order to examine the stability of partisan identities, which has also been a debated topic in the literature (Johnston, 2006), it is desirable to repeat the same measures after 2-3 months as well as 6-12 months. This can be done in connection to the Politics and Values module, but it can also be done in a separate questionnaire. In order to analyse the impact of partisanship of voting properly, and benefit optimally from the structure of the LISS panel, it is important to include the questions in the survey before the next Dutch parliamentary elections. At present these are scheduled for 17 March 2021. In normal circumstances, we assume the new module would have been administered beforehand. Only in case the government would resign earlier, and elections would be scheduled earlier, the timing would become a matter to pay closer attention to. Inclusion of the items in the questionnaire before those elections is preferable, at least for the first round.

Targeted outlets

The primary target for publishing the results of the research conducted with the data from the LISS Panel is highly-ranked international journals. We accomplished this for the previous module in 2012 that the current proposal builds on (Bankert et al. 2017; Huddy et al. 2019; Rosema & Mayer, in press). Additionally, the findings may be used in connection to the

academic output for infusion in the public debate, for example via blog posts or media outlets.
The applicant has ample experience with this (see CV on personal website for details).

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APPENDIX A: Proposed questions (in Dutch, including routing)

<intro>

Nu volgen enkele vragen over politieke partijen.

1. Vindt u zichzelf aanhanger van een bepaalde politieke partij?
 - a. Ja > ga naar vraag 3
 - b. Nee

2. Voel u zich meer aangetrokken tot één van de politieke partijen dan tot andere?
 - a. Ja > ga naar vraag 4
 - b. Nee > ga naar vraag 5

3. Van welke politieke partij bent u een aanhanger?
 - a. VVD
 - b. PvdA
 - c. PVV
 - d. CDA
 - e. SP
 - f. D66
 - g. GroenLinks
 - h. ChristenUnie
 - i. SGP
 - j. Partij voor de Dieren
 - k. 50 PLUS
 - l. DENK
 - m. Forum voor Democratie
 - n. Andere partij, namelijk... [string variabele]> ga naar vraag 7

4. Tot welke politieke partij voelt u zich aangetrokken?
 - a. VVD
 - b. PvdA

- c. PVV
- d. CDA
- e. SP
- f. D66
- g. GroenLinks
- h. ChristenUnie
- i. SGP
- j. Partij voor de Dieren
- k. 50 PLUS
- l. DENK
- m. Forum voor Democratie
- n. Andere partij, namelijk... [string variabele]

> ga naar vraag 7

5. De laatste keer dat u hebt gestemd bij Tweede Kamer verkiezingen, op welke partij hebt u toen gestemd?

- a. ik heb nog nooit gestemd bij Tweede Kamer verkiezingen

> ga naar einde vragenlijst

- b. VVD
- c. PvdA
- d. PVV
- e. CDA
- f. SP
- g. D66
- h. GroenLinks
- i. ChristenUnie
- j. SGP
- k. Partij voor de Dieren
- l. 50 PLUS
- m. DENK
- n. Forum voor Democratie
- o. Andere partij, namelijk... [string variabele]
- p. blanco > ga naar einde vragenlijst

6. Is er nog een andere partij waarvan u zich herinnert dat u er ooit op heeft gestemd?
- a. ik heb nooit op een andere partij gestemd
 - b. VVD
 - c. PvdA
 - d. PVV
 - e. CDA
 - f. SP
 - g. D66
 - h. GroenLinks
 - i. ChristenUnie
 - j. SGP
 - k. Partij voor de Dieren
 - k. 50 PLUS
 - l. DENK
 - m. Forum voor Democratie
 - n. Andere partij, namelijk... [string variabele]

> ga naar vraag 9

7. Zou u zich een zeer overtuigde aanhanger willen noemen, een overtuigde aanhanger, of niet zo'n overtuigde aanhanger?
- a. Zeer overtuigde aanhanger
 - b. Overtuigde aanhanger
 - c. Niet zo'n overtuigde aanhanger
- > ga naar vraag 9

8. Hoe sterk voelt u zich aangetrokken tot deze partij?
- a. Zeer sterk
 - b. Tamelijk sterk
 - c. Niet zo sterk

9. Is er nog een andere partij waartoe u zich voelt u zich aangetrokken?
- a. VVD
 - b. PvdA
 - c. PVV
 - d. CDA
 - e. SP
 - f. D66
 - g. GroenLinks
 - h. ChristenUnie
 - i. SGP
 - j. Partij voor de Dieren
 - k. 50 PLUS
 - l. DENK
 - m. Forum voor Democratie
 - n. Andere partij, namelijk... [string variabele]
- > ga naar vraag

< uitleg >

Nu volgen enkele uitspraken over een politieke partij die u zojuist hebt genoemd, namelijk [PARTIJNAAM]. Wilt u voor elke uitspraak aangeven in hoeverre deze op u van toepassing is.

10. Als mensen kritiek leveren op deze partij, dan trek ik mij dat persoonlijk aan
11. Als ik iemand ontmoet die deze partij steunt, dan voel ik me met die persoon verbonden
12. Als ik over deze partij praat, dan verwijs ik ernaar als “mijn partij”
13. Als mensen positief praten over deze partij, dan geeft me dat een goed gevoel

Nu volgen enkele uitspraken over een andere politieke partij die u zojuist hebt genoemd, namelijk [PARTIJNAAM]. Wilt u voor elke uitspraak aangeven in hoeverre deze op u van toepassing is.

14. Als mensen kritiek leveren op deze partij, dan trek ik mij dat persoonlijk aan
15. Als ik iemand ontmoet die deze partij steunt, dan voel ik me met die persoon verbonden
16. Als ik over deze partij praat, dan verwijs ik ernaar als “mijn partij”
17. Als mensen positief praten over deze partij, dan geeft me dat een goed gevoel

Antwoordcategorieën vraag 10–17:

- a. Nooit
- b. Soms
- c. Vaak
- d. Altijd

APPENDIX B: Brief CV and key publications of the applicant

Martin Rosema

Martin Rosema is assistant professor of political science at the University of Twente. His main area of expertise is the psychology of voting. He has published on topics such as voter decision-making, partisanship, strategic voting, and electoral turnout. He was co-director of the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies (2006), co-editor of the journals *Political Psychology* (2015-2019) and *Res Publica* (2007-2010), and governing board of the International Society of Political Psychology (2008-2011) and the Dutch Political Science Association (2009-2015).

Selected publications

Bankert, A., L. Huddy, and M. Rosema (2017). Measuring partisanship as a social identity in multi-party systems. *Political Behavior*, 39(1), 103-132.

Costello, R., J. Thomassen, and M. Rosema (2012). European Parliament elections and political representation: Policy congruence between voters and parties. *West European Politics*, 35(6), 1226-1248.

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