

IDEOLOGY AMONG INDEPENDENT VOTER GROUPS

A Senior Honors Thesis

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MEAGAN BERRY

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## ABSTRACT

Ideology Among Independent Voter Groups (April 2007)

Meagan Berry  
Department of Political Science  
Texas A&M University

Fellows Advisor: Dr. Dave Peterson, Associate Professor  
Department of Political Science

Not all independent voters are the same. Some independents lean toward a political party and are therefore called “independent leaners.” The objective here is to uncover what forces cause independent leaners to retain some level of partisanship by leaning. I hypothesize that independent leaners tend to have a stronger political ideology which causes them to lean back toward a party. Through analysis of the data from the 2004 Annenberg National Election Survey, I conclude that an independent’s level of ideological consistency does influence whether they will be an independent leaner. It is also noted that other factors such as social identities and issues preferences can increase the influence of ideology. Furthermore, candidate preferences can reduce the influence of ideology. In conclusion, the hypothesis that ideology influences independents to lean

is upheld, but with the caveat that the strength of the influence is conditional on what other factors are included in the model.

## DEDICATION

To my parents, who have never doubted that I could do anything I set my mind to. Your love and encouragement throughout the years have helped me to reach beyond my grasp.

I love you both so much and cannot thank you enough!

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## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

It is well noted within the discipline of political science that the number of people who identify themselves as independent voters has increased. For political scientists, it is critical that we study this phenomenon to find its origins and to identify the behaviors that accompany it. Furthermore, we need to gain a better understanding of the relationship between political independence and ideology. Not all independent voters are the same. Some independents lean toward a political party and are therefore called “independent leaners.” The quest to explain the behavior of independent leaners is a two part mission. In order to understand the motivations of leaners, one must first find an explanation for why they identify themselves as independents rather than partisans. After all, they have clearly chosen political independence over partisanship. Next, one must find out why these independents then choose to lean toward a political party after they have renounced partisanship. There seem to be two forces at work, a centripetal force which pulls some people away from the partisan masses, and a centrifugal force which pulls them back toward the ends of the partisan spectrum. It is that second, centrifugal force, which this work attempts to identify.

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis follows the style and format of the *American Political Science Association*.



### **The Keith “Closet Partisan” Theory**

In *The Myth of the Independent Voter*, Bruce Keith et al. put forward their hypothesis that there has been no true growth in the number of independent voters (Keith, Magleby, Nelson, Orr, Westlye, and Wolfinger 1992). First, they divide all voters into seven groups: Strong Democrats, Weak Democrats, Independent Democrats, Pure Independents, Independent Republicans, Weak Republicans, and Strong Republicans. They claim that, although the number of self-described independent voters has increased, those independents who lean toward one party over another are “closet Democrats and Republicans” who act as partisans, not as independents, despite their lack of a party title. The authors point to key differences between independent leaners and pure independents that support their theory. They found that pure independents tend to be the most apathetic and uninvolved of all voter groups, as well as the least educated. Independent leaners however, tend to have involvement and education rates more like those of weak partisans. In some circumstances, Keith et al. found independent leaners to exhibit stronger partisan behavior than weak partisans (Keith et al. 1992).

## **Question and Hypothesis**

The research question in this paper takes another look at the “closet partisan” theory. Using the same categories of partisanship as Keith et al., my primary goal is to gain a better understanding of what makes people choose to be independent leaners. I offer some explanation as to why people choose to be independents in the background literature, however political independence is taken as a given in my analysis.

What motivates independent leaners to claim independence and to hold onto a party preference? I hypothesize that independents leaning toward a certain party are not actually more partisan than pure independents, as Keith et al. claim. Instead, I propose that these voters only seem more partisan, because they are pulled back toward the ends of the voting spectrum by a stronger ideological constraint.

## BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Before launching into my research on independent leaners, it is necessary to offer a review of the existing literature. Unfortunately, when it comes to independent voters and ideology, there is little consensus within the discipline. The following is an attempt to review the relevant literature concerning ideology, partisanship, political independence, and the relationships between them.

### **Ideology in the General Electorate**

The initial studies examining ideological behavior in the nineteen fifties and sixties, including *The American Voter*, concluded that ideology was not a strong force in voting behavior, and that the general voting public was unaware of ideological concerns (Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1976; Converse 1964). In the nineteen seventies and eighties, studies, such as that of Nie and Anderson in 1974, showed that the influence of ideology appeared to have increased. However, some studies since then, such as Sullivan et al. in 1978, have indicated that the visible increase in ideology shown by later studies may have been due to changes in methodology rather than a true increase in ideological voting. The implication of these studies is that the reported change in levels of ideology reflects methodology improvements within the discipline to detect

ideological behavior. Logically, one could conclude that there may have been more ideological behavior in the nineteen fifties than the studies at the time were able to accurately capture (Sullivan, Pierson, and Markus 1978). Furthermore, a study by Arthur H. Miller and Warren E. Miller found that, with the increased educational levels since the 1950s, the amount of the population that views politics in ideological terms has increased (1976). In *Classics in Voting Behavior*, Niemi and Weisberg conclude that there is a “reasonably sophisticated electorate... neither super-sophisticated nor abysmally ignorant” (1993, 50). Therefore, one can conclude that ideological constraint is not a strong force for all voters, but that it may be an influencing factor for some.

### **Partisanship and its Decline**

In *The Decline of American Political Parties, 1952-1996*, Martin P. Wattenberg notes that there are different definitions of “partisanship,” depending on the researcher’s intent. He also notes that partisanship has historically been a good predictor of voting behavior. According to Wattenberg, partisanship reflects “a generalized standing decision on the part of the citizen to vote for a particular party under normal circumstances” (1998, 7-8). Partisanship can also be described as a psychological attachment or “identification,” such as it is in *The Voter Decides* and *The American*

*Voter*. In these works, partisanship serves as an “orientation” or “perceptual screen” that guides people politically (Wattenberg 1998). Donald Green et al. propose a related theory that partisanship is a social group identity, similar to an individual’s religious or ethnic identity. However, they do not find evidence that this partisan social identity causes individuals to screen out undesirable information. Rather, they posit that differences that are generally seen as perceptual screening may actually be the result of evaluations that are based on different values. In Green’s model, partisanship is formed based on how individuals feel about the images and social groups associated with each party (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). Another theory, in works by Morris P. Fiorina as well as by Charles Franklin and John Jackson, suggests that voters choose a party based on their past and expected future experiences with each party. In this theory, voters use partisanship as “a running scorecard of the performance of the two parties” (Wattenberg 1998, 14-15). Furthermore, Wattenberg notes Herbert Weisberg’s theory that partisanship gauges “separate attitudes toward the Democratic and Republican parties, political independence, and political parties in general” (1998, 15). For the purposes of my research, I examine partisanship as a psychological attachment or identification.

The decline of partisanship has been seen in several ways. First, split-ticket voting between presidential and congressional elections has increased since the 1950s. Studies have also shown that public opinion tends to favor vote choice based on individual candidates rather than party-line voting. From these factors, Wattenberg argues that partisanship has declined in its “ability to structure the vote” (1998, 23). Secondly, the number of people who identify themselves as partisans has declined. Wattenberg notes that Philip Converse labeled the years 1952-1964 as the “steady state” of partisanship, in which identification was relatively stable. According to Wattenberg, the decline of partisan identification began around 1964. He claims that the decline occurred from 1964-1972 and then stabilized at a new, lower level.

Wattenberg mentions the general view by Campbell and others that independents are the least informed and least reliable voting group. However, Wattenberg argues that the parties have become less “salient” to the public, causing people to become “indifferent” to both major parties. He further argues that an independent political identification could be as stable as a partisan one, which he says is confirmed by a 1980 panel study. To further test the stability of partisanship, Wattenberg examines thermometer measures of opinion regarding the parties. The results showed that attitudes

toward the parties were not more stable than attitudes toward candidates. Therefore, Wattenberg argues that partisan identification may be stable because “it involves a process of self-labeling,” regardless of whether these labels credibly reflect attitudes toward the political parties. He says that “the responses are far more stable than the underlying attitudes that the supposedly represent” (Wattenberg 1998, 33). Wattenberg ultimately concludes that, partisan identification may be stable, but that it means less to people than it used to (1998).

Green and his co-authors in *Partisan Hearts and Minds* also make an examination of partisan stability. They emphasize the importance of measuring the drift of partisanship in the electorate as a whole over time as well as the position of individuals within the distribution. Their key objective is to determine to what extent individuals oscillate around a “long-term average” partisan identity (Green et al. 2002, 54-55). From their examination of individual level data, Green et al. determine that people to change their partisanship slightly in response to political fluctuations, but that these changes are usually short lived. They also conclude that shifts resulting in true realignments are rare and occur slowly. Using panel data, Green et al. found that individuals can move slowly within the partisan distribution, but that “people tend to

move in unison, if they move at all” (2002, 69). They also claim that studies based on simple correlations between partisan identity responses tend to exaggerate the actual amount of variation because of measurement error (Green et al. 2002).

One of the most commonly mentioned rationales for voters to become independents is what Wattenberg calls the “dissatisfaction hypothesis.” Upon examination of this theory, he finds that the perception of differences between the parties are relatively consistent, refuting the claim that voters are dissatisfied because they see no difference between the two major parties. Wattenberg also found that the number of people who believe that one party will perform better than the other has declined. Wattenberg hypothesizes that fewer respondents believe a specific party will be more likely to solve their issue because the relevance of parties has declined for them in general. In another test, he did not find consistent growth in negative opinion, but did find a decline in strong partisans and an increase in neutral opinions. Furthermore, he found that these trends were present even in the “steady state period” of 1952-1964, before partisan identification began to decline (Wattenberg 1998, 62). These findings support his evaluation that the dissatisfaction hypothesis is not largely responsible for the increase in independents.



In order to explain why partisanship has declined, Wattenberg considers V. O. Key's echo chamber theory from *The Responsible Electorate*. The argument behind the theory is that voters simply respond, or echo back, their opinion based on the options given to them. According to this theory, the public does not demand change, but simply responds to changes it sees occurring. Wattenberg believes that people have come to view political parties as less relevant (and people have become more neutral toward the parties) because the parties themselves have not worked to maintain their relevance as political institutions. He further argues that reduced partisan action by political leadership and changes in media coverage have had a role in decreasing party saliency (Wattenberg 1998).

It is generally agreed upon that the American two-party system is not likely to collapse any time soon, but that there are some problems associated with weak partisanship. Wattenberg specifically mentions a few of them: increased difficulty in forming "comprehensive programs" based on compromise, increased extremism "leading to a deep political cleavage," "the development of strident single-issue groups," increased negativity in politics, reliance on the presidency to fill gaps left by the parties (to build policies), and increased political volatility (1998, 128-130). Wattenberg

concludes that “As the long-term forces that serve to anchor electoral behavior decline, the potential increases for large oscillations in the vote because of short-term issue and candidate factors” (1998, 131).

The most relevant aspect of Wattenberg’s research for my project is that partisanship means less to people than it used to. Therefore, some other factor must be filling in for its influence. Specific issue interests, candidates, interest groups and ideological constraint all seem to be likely choices. Furthermore, Key’s echo chamber theory suggests that voters may be conditioned to pay more attention to these other factors and less to political parties. Another possibility may lie in Green et al.’s discussion of cohort replacement’s role in partisan realignments. Unfortunately, they only discuss increased political independence as a transitional period during the regional realignment in the South (Green et al. 2002). They do not cite cohort replacement as a possible cause of the increasing number of independent voters (likely because they do not discuss this phenomenon in detail), however cohort replacement could be a viable driver of political independence if it can be determined that younger generations are more favorably disposed to being independents. In short, a voter’s cohort and view of political independence could be factors that effect one’s partisanship, or lack thereof.

Therefore, my project to determine what separates independent leaners from pure independents, must center around a quest to determine which factor or factors are at work: ideological constraint (as I hypothesize), special issue interests, candidates, or the images of social groups and the parties themselves.

### **Partisanship and Political Independence**

In “Political Independence in America, Part II: Towards a Theory,” Jack Dennis identifies four “dominant rationales” that explain why people may become political independents. These rationales, or “attitude clusters,” are “anti-partyism”, “political autonomy”, “partisan neutrality”, and “partisan variability” (Dennis 1988, 218-219). “Anti-partyism” is largely self explanatory. Similar to what Wattenberg’s dissatisfaction hypothesis, this attitude cluster reflects negative feelings about the specific parties, or a feeling that parties in general are inefficient institutions. Dennis describes “political autonomy” as “identification with some positive ideals of being politically independent” (1988, 202). This encompasses the idea that one should remain politically independent in order to make sound, unbiased choices that are good for society. “Partisan neutrality” is an attitude that there are no real differences between the two major parties. One who holds this idea becomes an independent because they don’t see a clear choice to be

made. Dennis defines “partisan variability” as “a self-perceived lack of consistency of political thought and behavior” (1988, 205). One who holds this rationale may be remembering times in the past where they have deviated from partisan voting. Dennis concludes that these categories are separate, yet are also somewhat related to each other. He found that partisans may hold these attitudes at some level as well. As one would expect, these independence attitudes were found to be stronger among pure independents than among independent leaners (Dennis 1988).

Some of Dennis’s independence attitude groups may have connections to ideological constraint (and by extension to my hypothesis). Dennis did not argue that ideology is part of the political autonomy dimension, but it seems logical that this group may be especially driven by ideology as part of how they make their decisions about what is in society’s best interest. Partisan variability may also be driven by ideology if it is the basis for why people split tickets or bolt from the party line. However, this variability may be due to ambivalence as well. As for the partisan neutrals, it does not seem likely that they would be ideological since they do not see a distinction between the parties (which obviously have ideological differences). The anti-partyism category is probably not related to ideological constraint either, since it is driven by dislike of the

parties, not necessarily dislike of what they stand for. The relationship between these independence attitudes and ideological influence remains to be tested.

In another article by Dennis, “Political Independence in America, Part I: On Being an Independent Partisan Supporter,” the general argument is that the view of independents as politically uninvolved in *The American Voter* is incorrect, because the people who best fit this description do not consider themselves “unattached” rather than being partisans or independents. Dennis found that Independent Partisan Supporters (similar to Keith et al.’s independent leaners), for both parties, are the highest in involvement, and the Unattached are the lowest in involvement, with Ordinary Partisans and Ordinary Independents in the middle. This supports a picture of independents that is different from that of *The American Voter*. He says, “Overall we find this pattern repeated whatever indicators of political involvement are chosen – whether we are looking at particular items that are either attitudinal or behavioral in focus, or at more general measures of political involvement” (Dennis 1988, 97). Once again Dennis does not directly relate these findings to an ideological constraint. However, if Independent Partisan Supporters are more politically involved than Ordinary Partisans and Ordinary

Independents, it seems reasonable that this could be due to a higher ideological constraint.

Dennis compares what he calls the “Traditional Partisan Index”, or “TPI”, to a new scale he has created, called the “Partisan Supporter Typology series,” or “PST.” The TPI is the traditional seven point partisanship scale (used by Keith et al.). The PST is different, because it allows for the fact that partisanship and independence may be distinct identities that do not run on a continuum. With the PST, it is “possible for respondents to be *both* party supporters and Independents” [his emphasis] (Dennis 1988, 85). He mentions that Keith et al.’s “closet partisans” are lumped into the general category of Independent with the TPI. He further adds that there may be “closet non-partisans” who feel that they have to choose a party even though they don’t strongly identify with one. The PST adds more emphasis to the idea of partisanship by asking whether respondents consider themselves supporters of a party, rather partisans in general. Naturally, fewer people will be coded as partisan supporters with the PST than the TPI. Dennis also found that both types of the TPI leaners were generally “Ordinary Independents” in the PST format (1988). This evidence provides some support for my hypothesis that Keith et al.’s leaners are independents, not closet partisans, because they

do differentiate themselves by claiming independence above a party. Dennis also examined the PST and TPI groups compared to their responses to the seven point liberal-conservative ideological self-identification question. Consistent, with he previous findings, he found that Independent Partisan Supporters were the most likely to give themselves an ideological label. This evidence provides obvious support for my hypothesis. Dennis argues that the “shades and varieties of Independents” should be examined “given the empirically emergent bi-dimensionality of partisanship and independence” (1988, 100).

In “Understanding Party Identification: A Social Identity Approach,” Steven Greene argues that social identity theory can be applied to political partisanship in order to explain how people view themselves politically as partisans, independents, or independents who lean toward a party. According to Greene, “Social identity theory holds that individuals attempt to maximize differences between in-group and out-group...” and that as a result people will have an exaggerated perception of the differences between groups than what may objectively be true (1999, 393-394). This is similar to Converse’s “screening effect,” discussed earlier in the “Partisanship and It’s Decline” section of this paper. Greene states that partisanship has declined in the U.S.

because people do not socially identify with parties as much as they used to. He also argues that “some citizens may also socially identify with the category of political independents” (Greene 1999, 395). Greene goes on to say that a person may have more than one political social identity, therefore allowing them to identify themselves as an independent while exhibiting partisan behavior. This is similar to the argument Dennis makes that there are two separate dimensions of partisanship: general partisanship and independence. Greene found that “leaners were statistically indistinguishable from weak partisans in their partisan social identity” (1999, 399). Furthermore, the data suggested that there was some level of independent social identity occurring. Greene noted that because he didn’t find a significant difference in social identity between weak partisans and independent leaners, that he supported Keith’s argument that independent leaners are partisans, not true independents. However, he went on to note that “apparently this partisan identity is not strong enough to outweigh an independent social identity when they categorize themselves,” thus separating them from weak partisans (Greene 1999, 402). In conclusion, Greene suggests that people may have more than one political social identity. Furthermore, having multiple social identities may bring about a situation in



which a person perceives themselves as an independent, yet acts as a partisan (Greene 1999).

Greene's evidence that people can socially identify as independents lends some credence to my argument that people are not closet partisans, and are instead people who see themselves as independents, but act upon ideology, which is viewed by others as partisan behavior. It also makes sense that a person might perceive both parties to be extreme out-groups and see themselves as a moderate member of an independent in-group, thus causing them to be an independent, despite the fact that they may still have a partisan ideology. However, the article only supports my argument that ideology causes independents to act like partisans if it can be established that ideology contributes to a partisan social identity.

From the works summarized above, it is obvious that there are many different theories on the nature of ideology, partisanship, and political independence in the electorate. While some of these ideas do not support my hypothesis, there seems to be enough supporting literature out there to encourage and guide my efforts. This research will hopefully lead to a better understanding of the relationship between ideology and political independence. Although this is only a small facet of voting behavior, I believe

that it is an important contribution to the understanding of independent voters, making  
important to the discipline as a whole.

## METHODOLOGY

The data in this study is taken from National Annenberg Election Study conducted to analyze the dynamics leading up to the 2004 presidential election (Romer, Kenski, Winneg, Adasiewicz, and Jamieson 2006). This data set is ideal, because it has over 80,000 total respondents and asks a wide variety of demographic, sociological, issue preference, candidate-related questions. The large number of respondents allows one to select a small sub-population of the respondents (such as pure independents and independent leaners) yet still have a large enough pool of respondents to conduct significant analysis. Once all non-independent voters are eliminated from the dataset, over 21,000 self-identified independent voters still remain.

In order to examine the relationship (or lack thereof) between various factors and the tendency of an independent to lean toward a party I will utilize binary logistic regression analysis. The first step to regressing the variables is to create a usable measure of an independent's tendency to lean toward a political party. The particular party a leaner chooses is irrelevant to this analysis; the key object is whether or not the person leans at all. To do this I recoded the survey variable for partisanship to score a 1 for any independent that leaned and a 0 for all other independents.

### Testing the Hypothesis

In order to test the relationship between ideological constraint and independent leaning, it was first necessary to create an index to measure ideological constraint. This index is composed of a basket of special issue questions that have clearly identifiable liberal and/or conservative answers. First, I designated which responses for each question would be considered liberal or conservative (all opposing or supporting answers were coded the same regardless of whether the respondent “strongly” held that opinion or only “somewhat” held that opinion). Next, I created a “C score” or “Conservatism Score” to count the number of conservative answers given within the group of questions and an “L score” or “Liberalism Score” to count the number of liberal responses. Once these scores were created, the resulting numbers were inserted into the following formula:

$$\text{Ideological Consistency} = -1(C+L)/2 - |C - L|$$

(adapted from Thompson, Zanna, and Griffin 1995). This score can be regressed against the respondent’s tendency to lean in order to test the hypothesis that strong ideological constraint influences independents to lean toward a political party.

### **Testing Other Theories**

In addition to testing my hypothesis, I decided to test some other factors that could be causing independents to lean. I ran a regression of ideological consistency along with issue preferences and social identities together against independents' tendency to lean. The goal in this analysis is to see if there is any empirical support for these other rationales, and if so, whether the evidence is stronger or weaker than it is for my hypothesis.

Another logical factor that could cause an independent to lean would be a strong opinion on a special interest issue. These are the same issues that were used to build the ideological consistency index (banning all abortions, banning partial birth abortions, environmental protections, trade agreements, gun control, federal marriage amendment, homosexual civil unions, military spending, government health insurance, income redistribution, balanced budget, federal budget deficit, and funding for stem cell research). The respondents' C scores and L scores (the same ones used to develop the ideological consistency score) were used as an aggregate measure of the respondents' issue preferences. These scores allowed me to test how an independent's conservative or liberal opinions on common issues may impact their tendency to lean.

According to Green et al.'s theory in *Partisan Hearts and Minds*, social group identities and their relationship to the parties can influence partisanship (2002). Green's theory applies to partisanship in general, but I am extending it to independents and testing whether it might cause an independent to lean. The social identities tested were: race, gender, social class, religion, union membership, and sexuality. I recoded each of the social identities into a binary variable. I then ran the respondents' various social group identities against the leaning variable.

In his works, *The Decline of American Political Parties* and *The Rise of Candidate-Centered Politics*, Wattenberg builds his theory that candidates have become more influential as the relevance of political parties has declined (Wattenberg 1998). As an extension of this theory, I tested whether or not a candidate could influence an independent voter to lean toward a political party. As measures of opinion about the two presidential candidates in 2004, I used the feeling thermometer measures reported by the survey in two ways. First, I created a measure that I called candidate 1, which is the 1 to 10 measure of the candidate the respondent liked best. This represents the strength of their preference for their favored candidate. My other measure, candidate 2, evaluates the difference in opinions held about the two candidates, by taking the difference

between the two candidate feeling thermometer scores. The two measures, candidate 1 and candidate 2, are each run individually and then with the ideological consistency variable against independents' tendency to lean.

## RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

After performing the regression of my hypothesis variable for ideological consistency (IdeolConsist2) against independents' tendency to lean, I found that it had a coefficient of .062 which was statistically significant at the .05 level (see Appendix for the full regression output table). This suggests that there is a positive relationship between ideological constraint and leaning, which will make independents more likely to lean as they become more ideologically consistent. The mean value of IdeolConsist2 is -.09961. When this is plugged into the formula for converting coefficients from logistic regressions into predicted probabilities, this makes the average probability of being a leaner .7556, or 75.56%. The range of scores for ideological consistency is -4 to 4. When the highest and lowest values are plugged into the probability formula (which adjusts based on the regression output), there is a difference of .091, or 9.1%, between the highest and lowest scorers. This means that there is a 9.1% higher probability among independents of being a leaner if you have an ideological consistency score of 4 as opposed to -4. These results support my hypothesis that independents with higher levels of ideological constraint are in fact more likely to be leaners.



The regression of ideological consistency, issue preferences, and social identities against independents' tendency to lean produced a coefficient for ideological consistency (IdeolConsist2) of .0997, which was statistically significant at the .05 level (see Appendix for the full regression output table). The C score had a coefficient of .0852, which was statistically significant as well. However, all of the other variables in the model (the L score, race, gender, religion, union membership, and sexuality) were not statistically significant at the .05 level. The L score, gender, and religion become significant at the .1 level, but the other variables fail to be significant at any standard level. The coefficient for ideological consistency is larger in this model than in my hypothesized model. Furthermore, the average probability of being a leaner (based on the average value of ideological consistency), 78.13%, is greater in this model. The difference between the highest and lowest scorers becomes .1354, or 13.54% greater probability of leaning in this model. Therefore, the probability of being an independent leaner increases when issue preferences and social identity variables are added into the model, and the impact of the ideological consistency measure increases.

The two measures of opinion about candidates, regressed separately, both produced statistically significant coefficients at the .05 level (see Appendix for the full

regression output table). The coefficients were .1464 and .1237 respectively. This suggests that the measure of which candidate an independent prefers most has a greater impact than the measure of the difference between the two. The range of both measures runs from 0 to 10 (because the thermometer measures they are derived from run 0 to 10). The average probability of being a leaner was approximately the same between the two measures (around 77%). As with the previous regressions, I plugged the highest and lowest scores into the probability formula to determine the difference in probability between the ends of the scale. The differences were 29.33% and 20.40% respectively. This implies that the range of scores in candidate 1 has a greater impact on the tendency to lean than those of candidate 2.

After examining the each candidate feeling measure's relationship to an independent's tendency to lean, I regressed each of the candidate variables with the ideological consistency measure. This is done in order to see if either of the candidate measures have an effect on the relationship previously seen between ideological consistency and leaning. All of the coefficients in these two regressions were statistically significant at the .05 level (see Appendix for the full regression output table). The coefficient for ideological consistency in this model is .063. This is roughly the same as

the coefficient in the model with just ideological consistency (.062). The average probability of being a leaner (77.44%) and the difference in probability of leaning between the highest and lowest ideological consistency scores (8.77%) were also very similar to the model original model as well. This leads me to conclude that the addition of the candidate 1 measure (the thermometer measure for the respondent's preferred candidate) does not make a large difference in the modeled relationship between ideological consistency and an independent's tendency to lean. However, it should be noted that the average probability and difference in probability both dropped slightly with the addition of the first candidate measure, suggesting that ideology becomes a little less important in this model.

The combined model of ideological consistency and candidate 2 (the difference in thermometer measures between the two candidates) had a much difference result from the previous model. Under this condition, the coefficient of ideological consistency became .035, a large drop from the .062 in the model of ideology alone. Furthermore, the average probability of leaning rose to 77.66% and the difference in probability between the consistency scores was reduced to 4.85%. This suggests that ideological continues to play a role when the second candidate measure is added, but a much smaller

role. The difference in opinions of the two candidates does seem to reduce the influence of ideological consistency in determining an independent's tendency to be a leaner.

## **Conclusions**

From my analysis, it is clear that ideological consistency does influence whether or not an independent will be an independent leaner. This influence is made stronger by the addition of social identities and issue preferences into the model. On the contrary, the influence of ideological consistency is weakened when the measure of the difference between opinions of candidates is a factor in the model (opinion of the preferred candidate does not seem to play a significant role). In all, I believe that my hypothesis is upheld that ideology can pull independent leaners back toward the edges of the continuum and encourage them to be independent leaners. However, the candidate measure, which was not a part of my hypothesis, seems to be an influencing factor as well. I stick by my original proposition that independent leaners are not more partisan than pure independents, but concede that there are other factors besides ideological consistency (specifically candidate measures) that pull these voters away from the pure independent group.

These conclusions imply that if one wants to better understand independent voters, one should examine factors such as ideological consistency and candidate opinion that can influence a pure independent to become an independent leaner. With a better understanding of how independents choose to lean, perhaps the discipline can improve predictive models of vote choice for independents. Such improvements would indeed be beneficial as independents continue to be an electorally influential group.

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## APPENDIX

## Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
IdeolConsist2	21810	-4.00	4.00	-.0996	1.39126
C	21810	.00	8.00	1.5300	1.35870
L	21810	.00	8.00	2.4107	1.59853
Race	21810	.00	1.00	.0575	.23279
Religion	16748	.00	1.00	.5767	.49410
Sexuality	6966	.00	1.00	.0011	.03387
Union	21810	.00	1.00	.0922	.28932
Gender	21810	.00	1.00	.4948	.49998
candidate1	19895	.00	10.00	7.1974	1.99228
candidate2	19895	.00	10.00	4.2815	2.97908



## Ideological Consistency

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
IdeolConsist2	.062	.011	30.450	1	.000	1.064
Constant	1.135	.016	5117.432	1	.000	3.111

## Ideological Consistency, Conservatism, Liberalism, Race, Gender, Religion, Union Membership, and Sexuality

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
IdeolConsist2	.100	.026	14.346	1	.000	1.105
C	.085	.026	10.519	1	.001	1.089
L	.035	.020	2.993	1	.084	1.036
Race	-.133	.127	1.086	1	.297	.876
Gender	-.123	.065	3.580	1	.058	.884
Religion	.125	.065	3.659	1	.056	1.133
Union	.058	.113	.263	1	.608	1.060
Sexuality	.471	1.099	.184	1	.668	1.602
Constant	.942	.089	111.666	1	.000	2.566

## Preferred Candidate

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
candidate1	.146	.008	308.324	1	.000	1.158
Constant	.179	.060	8.877	1	.003	1.196

## Difference Between Candidates

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
candidate2	.124	.006	417.658	1	.000	1.132
Constant	.716	.028	648.112	1	.000	2.047

## Ideological Consistency and Preferred Candidate

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
IdeolConsist2	0.063	0.012	26.465	1	0	1.065
candidate1	0.147	0.008	309.697	1	0	1.158
Constant	0.182	0.06	9.226	1	0.002	1.2

## Ideological Consistency and Difference Between Candidates

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
IdeolConsist2	0.035	0.012	7.968	1	0.005	1.035
candidate2	0.122	0.006	402.266	1	0	1.13
Constant	0.727	0.028	654.76	1	0	2.068

## CURRICULUM VITA

### **Meagan Berry**

[Megberry@tamu.edu](mailto:Megberry@tamu.edu)

650 Matthew Court

Abilene, TX 79602

(325) 672-5765

### EDUCATION:

Texas A&M University

College Station, TX

Graduation: May 2007

Bachelor of Arts Degree

Majors: Political Science and Economics

Cumulative GPR: 3.931

### RESEARCH:

University Undergraduate Research Fellows 2006-2007

Thesis topic: Ideology Among Independent Voter Groups

### INTERNSHIPS:

U.S. Treasury Department,

Office of Economic Policy - Washington, DC

- Attended Congressional hearings and local public policy events
- Summarized policy events in brief reports for the policy staff
- Compiled Medicare information and prepared graphs to assist staff members preparing a report for Treasury Secretary Paulson

May-August 2006

U.S. Senator John Cornyn - Dallas, TX

- Compiled constituent data and submitted information to agencies on their behalf
- Tracked agency responses and follow-up correspondence to constituents
- Prepared responses to constituent concerns about policy issues

June 2004

### LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE AND ACTIVITIES:

Texas A&M University System Chancellor's Student Advisory Board

Texas A&M Student Government Association

Student Advocate for Academic Affairs

2004-2006

2003-2007

2006-2007

Student Senate, 56 <sup>th</sup> , 57 <sup>th</sup> , and 58 <sup>th</sup> Sessions	2003-2006
External Affairs Committee Vice-Chair, 57 <sup>th</sup> Session	2004-2005
Legislative Relations Committee	2003-2004
Academy for Future International Leaders	2005-2006
University Student Rules Committee	2005-2006
University Academic Operations Committee	2006- 2007
University Studies Degree Program Implementation Subcommittee	2006-2007
Helping One Student to Succeed (HOSTS) Volunteer	2003-2006

HONORS AND AWARDS:

Who's Who Among Students at American Colleges and Universities	2006-2007
Buck Weirus Spirit Award – Texas A&M Association of Former Students	2006-2007
Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society	2005-2007
Golden Key Honor Society - Silver Key Award	2005
National Society of Collegiate Scholars	2004-2007
National Dean's List	
Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society	2004
Texas A&M Student Government Association – Student Senate	
External Affairs Committee Member of the Year	2003-2004 & 2004-2005
Scholarship Recipient- Malon Southerland Aggie Leader	
Scholarship, Texas Sheriffs' Association, Barnes & Noble,	
Abilene A&M Club, and Abilene Aggie Moms Club	