Social Identities and Dynamic Partisanship: How Race, Ethnicity, and Sex Intersect to Shape Partisan Attachments

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Abstract

Extensive research has independently examined how race, ethnicity, and sex shape partisan attachments. A more limited body of scholarship analyzes how these different politically relevant social identities intersect to shape partisan identities. My empirical analysis is based on a unique dataset that contains over 2 million individual level observations from over 1500 Gallup surveys conducted between 1950 and 2012. This extensive dataset allows for a more robust and thorough analysis of partisanship among sub-groups in the population than possible with existing data sets. Analysis demonstrates that gender intersects with race and ethnicity to shape the partisan attachments of white women, white men, black women, black men, Latinas, and Latinos over time.

Leading up to Election Day, commentators predicted that women voters would be key to Hillary Clinton's win over Donald Trump (Chaturvedi July 28, 2016, Enten October 17, 2016). When Clinton lost, contaminators blamed women despite the fact that Clinton won the majority of votes cast by women, 54% (Fox November 10, 2016, Newton-Small November 10, 2016). While Hillary Clinton's nomination and the 2016 election were historic in many respects, the voting patterns exhibited by male and female voters reflected a long-term trend in U.S. politics of women being more supportive of the Democratic candidates and Democratic Party and men being more supportive of the Republican candidates and Republican Party (Ondercin 2017, Dittmar July 15, 2014).

The role of gender in shaping vote choice in the 2016 presidential election highlighted the importance of the intersection of political and social identities. While both Blacks and Latinxs were overwhelmingly likely to vote for Clinton, Black women were 9% more likely than black men to support Clinton and Latinas were 7% more likely to support Clinton than Latinos. White voters supported Trump in higher numbers, but white women were still 10% less likely to support Trump than white men (Center for American Women and Politics November 23, 2016).[1] The results of the 2016 election suggest important questions about how race and ethnicity intersect with gender to shape the partisan attachments of the electorate and how have these attachments evolved over time?

The electorate for the 2016 Presidential election was the most diverse in the United States' history. About a third of voters were Hispanic, black, Asian, or other racial or ethnic groups (Krogstad Febuary 3, 2016), representing a continued decline of the eligible voters in the United States who are white. In addition to diversity, many see minority groups as not aligned with one party or having alignments that are tenuous in nature (Hajnal &

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[1]Support among whites further divided along educational lines with college-educated white women favoring for Clinton and non-college educated white women favoring for Trump. These election results highlight important ways that class also interacts with gender and race. I have research planned to investigate the intersection of class with gender and race on party identification.

Lee 2011, Philpot 2009, Hero et al. 2000, Dawson 1995). Given the important role parties play in the political system in the United States, understanding how groups within the electorate identify with the political parties is critical to understanding U.S. electoral politics. Moreover, understanding how levels of identification have changed provides insights into when the parties are successful at attracting different demographic groups in the United States.

I examine how race, ethnicity, and gender intersect to shape party identification using a unique data set based on Gallup Survey data from 1950 to 2012. First, I start with a brief overview of theories of partisanship and existing research on how gender, race, and ethnicity have shaped partisanship over time and develop a set of expectations regarding these processes. Next, I provide an overview of the data and the approach to data analysis. Then, I examine the partisan attachments of whites, blacks, and Latinxs by sex to understand how multiple social identities shape the partisan attachments of these groups. Finally, I offer some concluding thoughts.

Theories of Partisan Attachments

Election outcomes do not materialize overnight. Moreover, the gender gap in vote choice is a product of long-term changes in the partisan identification patterns of the electorate (Erikson, Mackuen & Stimson 2002, Ondercin 2017). Given the importance of party identification in electoral political behavior, extensive scholarship has examined the formation and dynamics of partisan attachments in the United States.

Partisanship is considered an affective psychological attachment to a political party that develops in late adolescence and young adulthood and remains relatively stable over the course of an individual's life (Campbell et al. 1960). Most individuals "inherit" their partisanship affiliation from their parents (Campbell et al. 1960, Jennings & Markus 1984).

Social identity theories of partisanship argue that an individual forms a psychological attachment with the party that best represents salient social identities (Green, Palmquist & Schickler 2002). Individuals seek to join the party that minimizes the distance between them and individuals who share a similar social identity and maximize the distance between them and individuals who do not share the same identity. Under this theory of partisan identification, partisanship is largely about identification based on group identity and membership (Wlezien & Miller 1997). Just as individual voters are seeking a party that is perceived as best representing their interests, so are groups or categories of voters of particular races, religions, classes, or sexes.

Moreover, the electorate looks for cues from the political parties regarding representation (Levendusky 2009, Levendusky 2010). Ondercin (2017) finds that women's Democratic macropartisanship increased and men's Democratic macropartisanship decreased as women's presence and visibility in the Democratic Party congressional delegation increased compared to the representation of women in the Republican Party. Ondercin argues the visible cue of women's representation transmits messages both about substantive and symbolic representation that individuals in the electorate pick-up on when forming their partisan identities. Additionally, Philpot (2009) demonstrates messages regarding diversity during the 2000 Republican convention influenced voters perceptions of the Republican Party on issues of race. However, these effects were found among whites, not blacks, the supposed target of this message. Philpot (2009) suggests that symbolic images and talk about diversity had a limited impact on African American attitudes without substantive policy changes to the Republican Party's platform related to race.

Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Partisan Attachments

Research on partisan attachments has regularly explored differences in attachments based on sex, race, and ethnicity. These largely independent streams of research find that women,

African Americans, and Latinx favor the Democratic Party. However, analyses of each of these groups find these social identities shape partisan attachments unique and varied ways.

In the aftermath of the 1980 election both the media and scholars started to pay attention to men's and women's voting differences, which led to a further exploration of differences in partisanship, ideology, and issue positions (Wirls 1986, Barnes & Cassese 2016, Ondercin 2017). There is little evidence of sex differences in party identification before or after the passage of the 19th Amendment. After the enactment of the 19th Amendment, both parties started to recruit and appeal to female voters in an attempt to gain an electoral advantage. The success of these activities was primarily dependent on the local partisan context in which women were recruited. That is, the Democratic Party benefited from newly enfranchised women registering in areas where they already had a strong partisan base, while the Republican Party benefited where they already had a strong partisan base (Andersen 1996, Corder & Wolbrecht 2016). The result of this dynamic is that there is little evidence that suggests men and women, in aggregate, identified with the parties at different rates in the immediate post-suffrage era.

Starting in the 1960s women began to consistently identify with the Democratic Party at higher rates than men. Each subsequent decade the gender gap in partisanship continued to grow until in the 2010s the gender gap in partisanship averaged about 11.7 points (Ondercin 2017). Explanations for the difference in men's and women's partisanship often acknowledge that issues owned by the Democratic Party are also issues where women express higher levels of support than men (Barnes & Cassese 2016, Huddy et al. 2008). Changes in men's and women's political attitudes and behavior can also be explained by demographic changes and the different social positions of men and women (Manza & Brooks 1998, Howell & Day 2000, Diekman & Schneider 2010).

Black party identification is mainly based on which party was most supportive of the advancement of blacks or which party was the most hostile to racial equality. Philpot (2009)

argues the connection between blacks and the Republican Party can be traced to the founding of the Republican Party in 1854. In an attempt to form a winning coalition of voters, the new Republican Party received the support of free blacks based on the party's support for abolition. The connection between blacks and the Republican Party was further strengthened during the Civil War and the period of Reconstruction after the war (Gurin, Hatchett & Jackson 1989). The relationship between the Republican party and blacks became strained as early as 1877 as a result of the deal struck that allowed Rutherford B. Hayes to assume the presidency; a deal which highlighted the need for the Republican Party to incorporate southern whites into its coalition (Philpot 2009, Walton 1972) .

The movement from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party for blacks started slowly at the local level and advanced to national politics in the 1900s (Philpot 2009). This process was reinforced further during the New Deal and Franklin Roosevelt's time in office. Dawson (1995) explains the Depression had a greater economic impact on blacks because poverty was reinforced by racial discrimination. While some early New Deal programs hurt blacks, later New Deal programs, such as the Works Progress Administration, benefited African Americans. In the 1936 elections, the Democratic Party actively campaigned on these New Deal programs to mobilize blacks, helping Roosevelt win 76% of the black vote (Dawson 1995).

The movement of blacks from the Republican Party towards the Democratic Party was solidified in the 1964 presidential election (Carmines & Stimson 1989). After this period, blacks have solidly supported the Democratic Party (Philpot 2009, Dawson 1995). While blacks are still strongly Democratic, there has been some weakening of this relationship as younger generations come of age politically after the civil rights movement (Luks & Elms 2005). However, without significant policy change, it is unlikely that we will see a massive movement of blacks away from the Democratic Party (Philpot 2009).

Two factors have had an important role in shaping Latinx party identification. First, Lat-

inxs, like other recent immigrant groups, do not have the familial relationships with strong party identification that can be passed down from parents to children. As a result, Latinxs have been more likely to not identify with a major political party or as independents than other ethnic groups (Hajnal & Lee 2011). Second, Latinx captures a diverse set of individuals from different countries of origins and cultural backgrounds. Concerning partisanship, national origin is an important predictor of Latinx partisanship (Hero et al. 2000, Alvarez & Bedolla 2003). Among those who identify with a major political party, Latinxs generally have favored the Democratic Party since the 1960s (Hero et al. 2000). Despite appeals from the Republican Party, policy proposals and actions by some Republican elected officials turned many Latinx away from the Republican Party (Hero et al. 2000, Alvarez & Bedolla 2003).

Drawing on work from intersectionality and politics, we know that individuals do not have a single social identity (Brown & Gershon 2016). Rather social and political identities are a function of complex interactions of multiple identities interacting in complex, conflicting, and reinforcing ways. How do multiple social identities work to the shape partisan attachments?

Intersection of Gender, Race, and Ethnicity

Research examining the intersections of gender with race and ethnicity is limited. Overall, evidence points to a gender gap in party identification among blacks and Latinx, but the magnitude of the gender gap varies. Welch & Sigelman (1992) identify gender gaps in party identification among blacks, Latinxs, and whites between 1980 and 1988. On average, the gender gaps in party identification for Latinx and whites were approximately the same size, while sex differences for blacks were slightly smaller. More recently, scholars have noted a continued gender gap in Latinx partisanship (Bejarano 2013, Montoya, Hardy-Fanta & Garcia 2000). Bejarano (2013) reports that Latinxs who come from families who have been in the United States longer are more likely to identify with a party; however, the magnitude of the gap varies little across generations and Latinas are consistently more likely to identify

as Democrats than Latinos.

Numerous scholars have attempted to determine if race or gender matters more for attitude formation. In an examination of black public opinion, Gay & Tate (1998) argue that racial identification matters more for the formation of black women's attitudes than gender unless the issue causes conflict between the two identities. Lien (1998) also argues that racial identity is more important than gender. These studies assume that we can separate out the effects of race and gender into discrete components. In particular, these conclusions are based on multivariate analysis that control for many factors that are correlated with both race and gender. These results do not mean that gender intersects with race and ethnicity in important ways to shape attitudes.

Hypotheses

Based on the existing research, I offer a series of expectations about gender differences both within and across racial groups. I do not assume that race is more important than gender or that gender is more important than race. Rather, gender and race likely intersects in unique and complex ways to shape attitudes. In general, I expect gender, race, and ethnicity to uniquely shape partisan attachments.

Minority and marginalized groups in the electorate may have a hard time connecting their social identities to mainstream party identification (Hajnal & Lee 2011). As a result, we would expect to see these group express lower levels of party identification. Women, blacks, and Latinx have all faced discrimination that excluded them from voting and other traditional forms of political participation (Corder & Wolbrecht 2016, Philpot 2009, Hero et al. 2000). Additionally, these groups are under-represented in elected office (Burrell 2014, Hero et al. 2000). Based on their marginalization from mainstream politics, I expect to find lower levels of identification with a party (Democratic, Republican, or independent) for

women, blacks, and Latinxs.

- H1: Women should be less likely to identify with a political party compared to men, regardless of race or ethnicity.

- H2: Black women and Latinas should be less likely than white women to identify with a political party.

The extant literature finds that women, blacks, and Latinxs should be more likely to identify with the Democratic Party. When these identities intersect, I would expect them to reinforce each other. Thusm black women, white women, and Latinas should all be more likely than black men, white men, and Latinos to identify with the Democratic Party. While these identities should reinforce each other, the existing literature does not suggest that there should be variation across race and ethnicity on the size of the gender gap. Finally, we know that, in general, the gender gap has increased over time. Once again there is no reason a priori why this sould be different across racial groups.

- H3: Women should be more likely to identify with the Democratic Party than men, regardless of race and ethnicity.

- H4: The gaps between women's and men's Democratic Party identification should be approximately the same size across racial and ethnic groups.

- H5: The difference between men's and women's partisan identification should grow over time regardless of race or ethnicity.

Data

The Gallup organization has had at least one survey in the field almost every single month since 1950. Traditionally, the use of these surveys has been limited because the topics

and content of the surveys constantly change. However, Gallup surveys are useful for the study of partisanship at the aggregate level of analysis (for example Ondercin 2017, Erikson, Mackuen & Stimson 2002). Gallup consistently asks an individual's partisanship and basic demographic questions. Gallup Surveys with a national adult sample that were archived with the *Roper Center for Public Opinion* serve as the basis of the dataset used here. A total of 1,579 surveys compose the dataset. Overall, there are just over 2 million individual level respondents in the dataset.

To construct the estimates, each Gallup Survey was downloaded from the Roper Center for Public Opinion. The surveys were then cleaned and recoded to ensure consistency over time. Surveys that spanned multiple months were coded based on their start date. These surveys were aggregated to provide yearly estimates of partisan attachments, weighted based on their sample size.

Analysis of the intersection of gender, race, and ethnicity has been limited by the low number of respondents that fall into each one of these categories in surveys traditionally used to study partisanship, such as the National Election Studies or General Social Survey. Some scholars have been able to explore within-group variation in partisan attachment of Latinxs or African-American by using surveys designed to measure these groups in the electorate, such as Latino National Elections Studies or the National Black Election Studies. While these studies provide in-depth analysis of within-group attitudes, we are limited in our ability to study variation across groups. Moreover, these studies have not been conducted over as long of a time period or as consistently as the Roper Surveys.

Gallup changed their racial identification question several times between 1950 and 2012. In particular, the number of response categories changes. At the start of the series, only white and black were options. Gallup then added an "other" response category and more recently increased further the number of response categories. The changes in question wording and response categories reflect our changing understanding of the social identity of race.

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Additionally, Gallup only started to ask about Hispanic/Latinx identification in the late 1980s. Unfortunately, lacking the ability to travel back in time, I am limited by the questions and response categories used by Gallup. As a result, analysis is restricted to only the partisan attachments of whites and blacks for the period of 1950-2012. Latinx partisan identification is analyzed between 1989-2012. Moreover, analysis is limited to using the demographic categories of gender, race, and ethnicity instead of measures of group identification or consciousness. Group identification and group consciousness are powerful predictors of individual level behavior. As a result, they would help construct the aggregate level of various political attitudes. Additionally, while the Gallup Surveys are designed to have nationally representative samples, this does not mean that samples of groups within that population are representative.

How independents who lean towards a party are treated will influence the overall partisan attachments (Klar & Krupnikov 2016). Norrander (1997) raises the issue that the size of the gender gap may be influenced by how partisan leaners are treated. Unfortunately, Gallup fails to consistently ask independent identifiers whether they lean towards one of the major parties. Additionally, Gallup does not consistently ask partisans about the strength of their attachments. Party identifiers consist of both strong and weak identifiers to maintain consistency in coding over time. Independent identifiers contain pure independents and those who lean towards one of the major political parties.

Some scholars have criticized the use of Gallup surveys because the partisanship question is different from the question used by other survey houses (Converse 1976, Abramson & Ostrom Jr 1991). Gallup asks "In politics today, do you considers yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Republican." Critics argue the phrase "In politics today" results in greater short-term variation than questions that use the phrase "Generally speaking." While there is evidence that the Gallup series do exhibit greater variation, this variation does not appear to influence substantive results (Erikson, Mackuen & Stimson 2002, MacKuen, Erikson &

Stimson 1992, Bishop et al. 1994). Unfortunately, other surveys do not offer the rich time series that can be compiled from the Gallup surveys.

One potential obstacle with basing the time series on Gallup surveys is that Gallup changed their mode of the interview from in-person to telephone. Many have observed that the telephone interviews produced samples that tended to be more Republican (Erikson, Mackuen & Stimson 2002, Green, Palmquist & Schickler 2002, Hugick 1991). If left uncorrected, there would be a drift towards the Republican Party starting in the 1980s not present in the in-person interviews or other survey houses. Gallup continued to use both modes of interviews in the 1980s and 1990s, with the majority of the transition occurring between 1984 and 1995. Following Erikson, Mackuen & Stimson (2002), I use the in-person interviews as the baseline to estimate the bias in the telephone samples. After estimating the bias, I adjusted the telephone samples before incorporating them into the time series.

Methodological Approach

There are two key features of the analysis. First, the analysis does not include any form of control variables, only the effects of gender, race, and ethnicity are examined. Scholars commonly include a set of control variables in their analysis, most often variables that might be correlated with one of the explanatory variables and the dependent variable to avoid omitted variable bias. Their approach attempts to parse out how much of the variation in the dependent variables is attributable to each independent variable. This more traditional approach tells us the "residual" effect of a variable. For example, in standard multiple regression models, the effect of sex is the effect of sex after controlling for a host of factors that we know are correlated with sex, like education and income. Studies that model the residual effects of gender, race, and ethnicity can be helpful and informative. But the very fact that, for example, education is correlated with sex, is an important component of gender.

Thus, to understand how these socially constructed categories shape partisan attachments, we also need to conduct analyses that examine the un-residualized effects of these categories.

Second, I report my analyses with a series of figures. To construct the figures, I use lowess smoothing lines. Lowess lines are calculated using nonparametric locally weighted regressions of the yearly estimates. The lowess lines allow us to see the general trends in the movement of macropartisanship. The smoothness of the line, or how much it responds to each yearly estimates, is determined by the bandwidth. For example, a bandwidth of .1 means that the lowess line is a moving average of the yearly estimates using 10% of the yearly estimates to create each point in the lowess line. Bandwiths used in the manuscript range from .05 to .15. The data used in this analysis represent aggregate yearly estimates partisanship.

Analysis in the paper focuses on non-partisan identifiers and Democratic identifiers. The appendix contains analysis for independent identifiers and Republican identifiers.

Results

Figures 1 and 2 report the percent of individuals who fail to identify with a major political by race and Latinx identifiers. Overall, both figures suggest that it is relatively uncommon to not identify as a Democrat, Republican, or independent in the U.S. political system. On average, fewer than 3% of whites, 5% of blacks, and 10% of Latinx are non-partisan. Figure 1 illustrates the non-partisan rates at which white women, white men, black women, and black men. Blacks are slightly more likely to not identify with one of the major political parties compared to whites. Differences based on sex are small, but black women are slightly more likely than black men to express no party attachment. The differences between whites are even smaller, but white women are also slightly more likely to be non-partisan than white men.
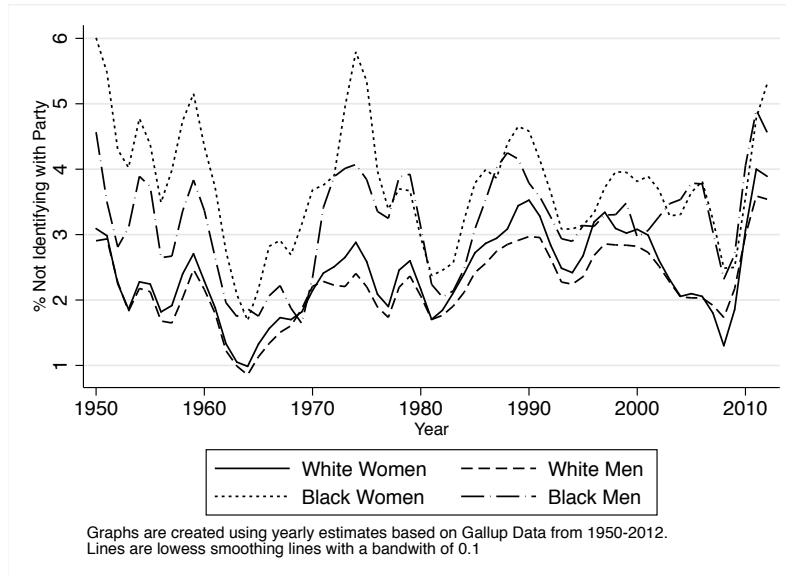
Figure 1: Non-Partisan Identification by Race and Sex

Figure 2 reports the non-partisan rates for Latinx and non-Latinx identifiers. Latinxs are much more likely than non-Latinx to fail to form a party attachment to one of the major political parties. There is almost no difference between Latinas and Latinos and non-Latinas and non-Latinos in their lack of identification with the political parties. Thus, there is mixed support for hypothesis 1, that the gender gap in non-partisanship should be present regardless of race. Small gaps in non-partisanship exist for both whites and blacks, but there is no evidence of a non-partisan gender gap for Latinxs. While the Gallup data used in this analysis provide fairly decent sample sizes for yearly analysis, because of the overall low levels of non-partisan identification we should interpret these results with caution.

Hypothesis 2 is tested by Figure 3, which reports the non-partisan identification rates for white women, black women, Latinas, non-Latinas. Latinas are most likely to not identify with one of the major political parties, compared to both black women and white women. Black women are also slightly more likely than white women not to identify with a political party. These patterns reflect the expectations offered in hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 states that women should be more likely to identify with the Democratic
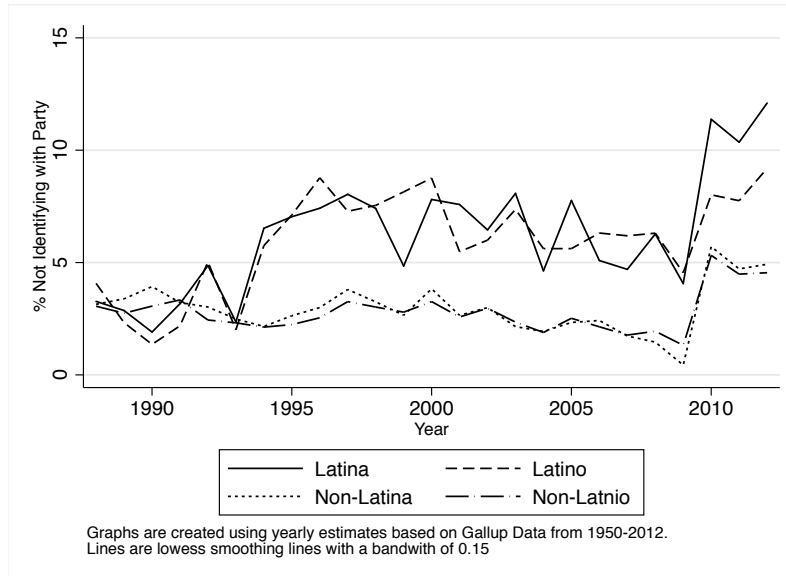
Figure 2: Non-Partisan Identification by Latinx and Sex

Party compared to men, regardless of sex. Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the levels of men's and women's Democratic Partisanship by race. Figure 4 illustrates that the partisan attachment for blacks and whites. As we would expect, blacks are more likely to identify with the Democratic Party than whites; this difference increases dramatically after the 1960s. On average black women are more likely to identify with the Democratic Party than black men. Similar patterns are observed for whites, with white women being more likely to identify with Democratic Party than white men.

Figure 5 report the results for Latinx identifiers. Before the mid-1990s Latinxs are less likely to identify with the Democratic Party than non-Latinxs. This relationship flips in the mid-1990s, and Latinxs start to favor the Democratic Party more than non-Latinxs. For non-Latinxs, there are persistent difference between men and women between 1988-2012, with non-Latinas more likely to identify with the Democratic Party than non-Latinos. Before the mid-1990s we observe no differences between Latinas and Latinos in their identification with the Democratic Party. Starting in the mid-1990s, Latinas favor the Democratic Party at a higher rate than Latinos. Once again, we find evidence confirming hypothesis 3.
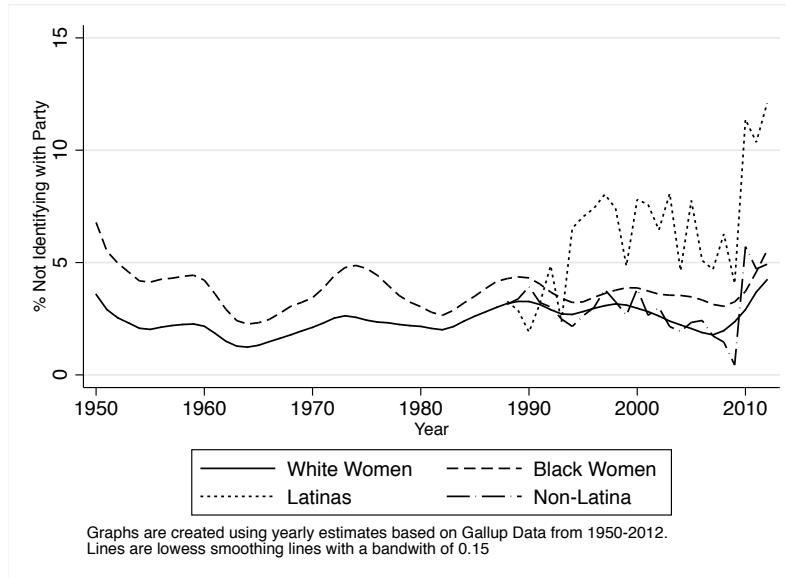
Figure 3: Women's Non-Partisan Identification Comparison Across Race and Ethnicity

Figures 6 and 7 report the gender gap in Democratic Party identification across different racial and ethnic groups. Hypothesis 4 contends that the gender gap should be approximately the same size, regardless of racial or ethnic groups. Figure 7 illustrates the gaps for black and whites. The gender gap among whites shows less variation, likely due to the larger sample sizes; however, on average the gender gap is approximately the same size for white as blacks. Figure 7 reports for the gender gap for Latinx and non-Latinx. Once again, due to the larger samples used to calculate the estimates, the gender gap among non-Latinx shows less variation than the Latinx gender gap. On average, the Latinx gender gap is slightly smaller than the non-Latinx gender gap. Thus, there is mixed support for hypothesis 4.

Hypothesis 5 argues that the gender gap across all racial and ethnic groups should increase over time. Figures 6 and 7 show support for this pattern. The gender gaps for whites and blacks show a steady increase over the course of the time series. The Latinx gap shows some growth, but over time it is not as dramatic as growth for whites or blacks. However, this could be driven by the shorter period of time that we observe Latinx.
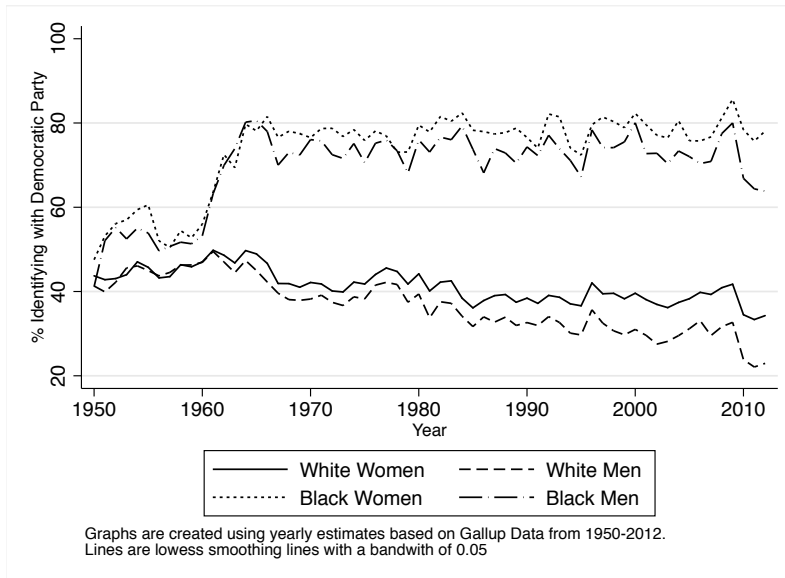
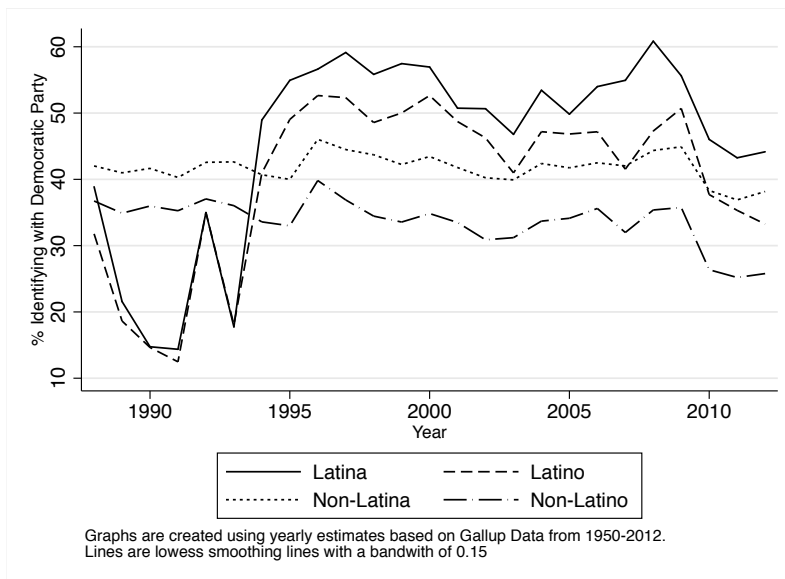Figure 4: Democratic Identification by Race and Sex

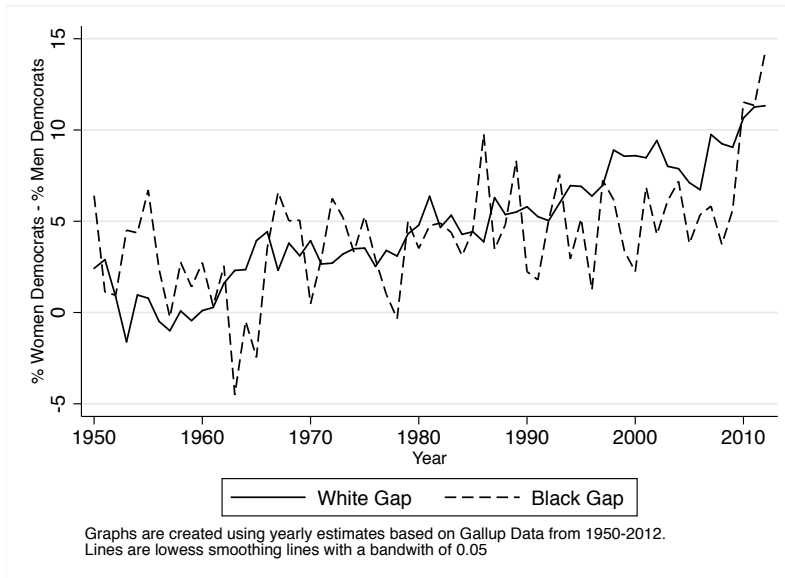Figure 5: Democratic Identification by Lantix and Sex
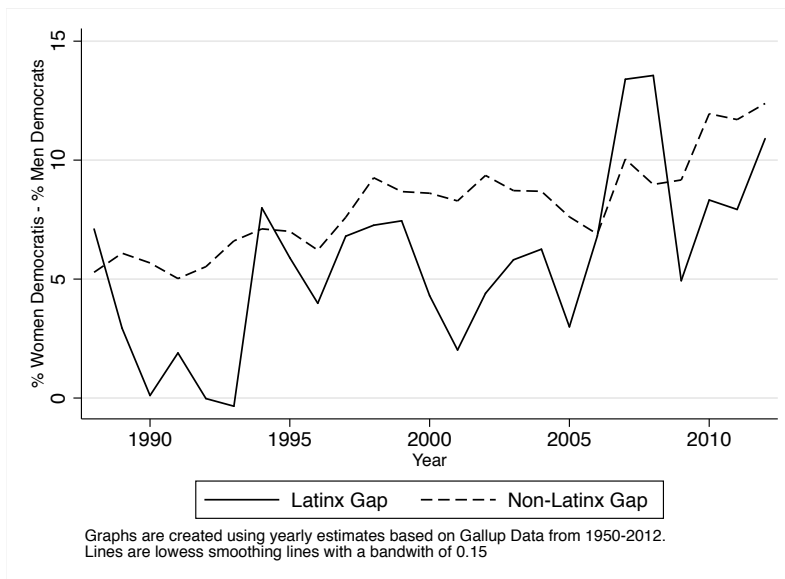
Figure 6: Democratic Gender Gap by Race

Figure 7: Democratic Gender Gap by Latinx

Conclusion

I examine how gender intersects with race and ethnicity to understand how these social identities interact to shape partisan attachments. First, I examined how attachments to a major political party differ based on race, ethnicity, and gender. There is some support that groups who have been marginalized by the major political parties exhibit lower levels of party identification. Both blacks and Latinx were less likely to identify with a political party than whites. Moreover, black women and Latinas were less likely than black men and Latinos, respectively, to identify with a party.

Turning to those who identified with a political party, I find further evidence that race, ethnicity, and gender shape partisan attachments. Moreover, we cannot make claims that one identity matters more than another identity; rather, these identities intersect to shape partisanship. This claim is supported by the analysis where both race and ethnicity intersect with gender. For instance, black women hold different partisan attachments compared to white women but also white men.

The findings in this manuscript highlight the need to expand our theoretical understanding of partisanship. Social identity theory argues that individuals form their partisan identities by attempting to minimize the distance between in-group and maximize their distance between out-groups. Such a process is simple when we consider one social identity; however, individuals have multiple identities. Further work needs to be done to understand how individuals use multiples identities that can conflict or reinforce each other to form partisan attachments.

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A   Independent Identification
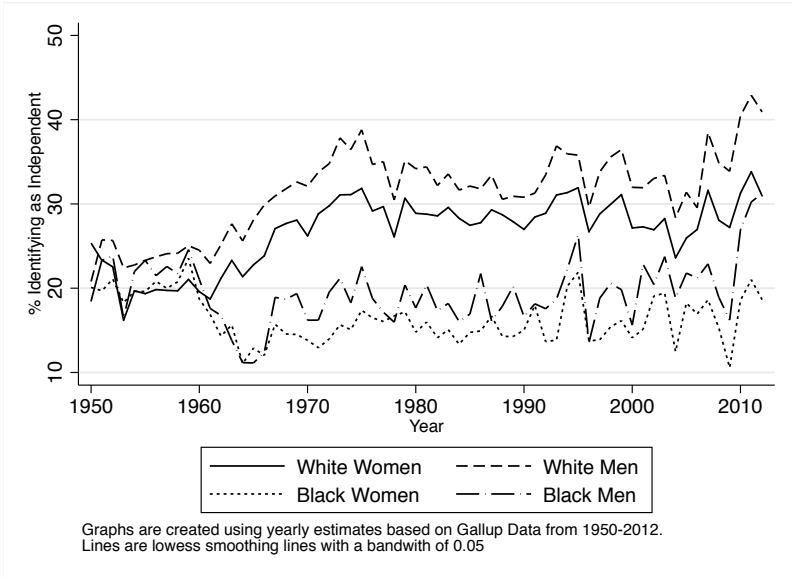
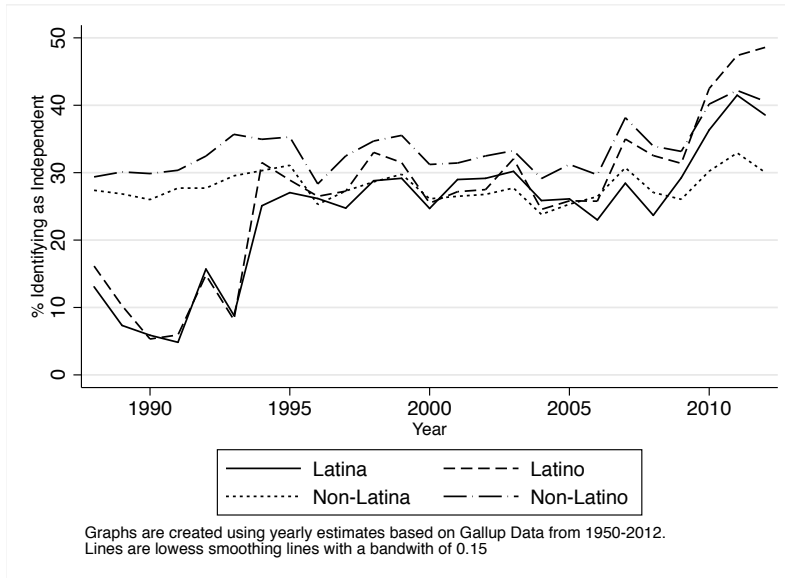Figure 8: Identification and Independent by Race and Sex

Figure 9: Identification and Independent by Lantix and Sex
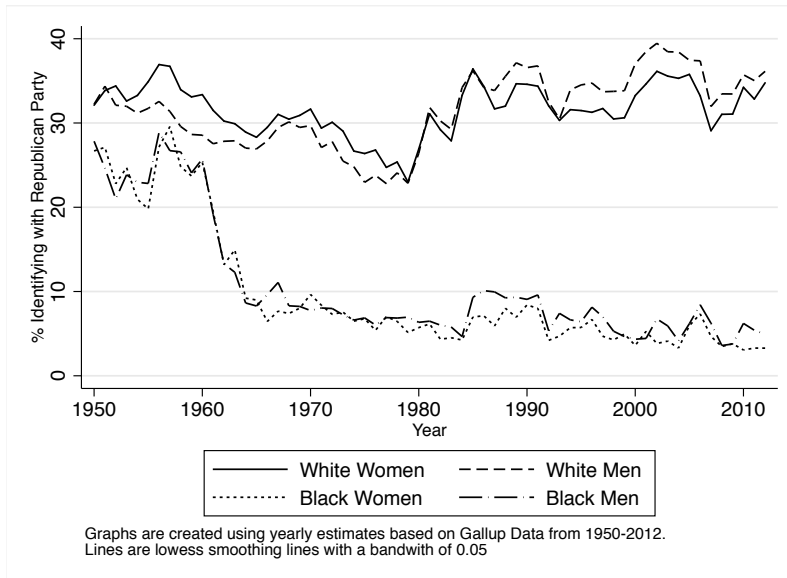
B   Republican Identification

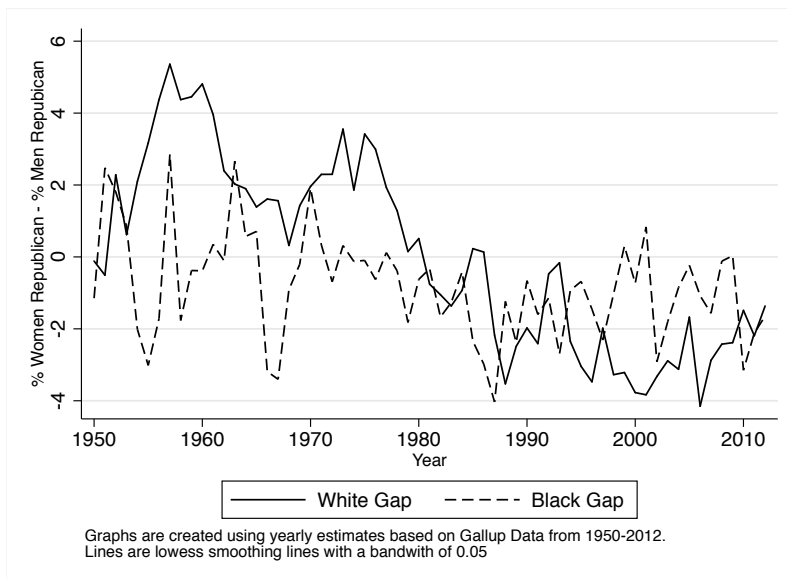Figure 10: Republican Party Identification by Race and Sex

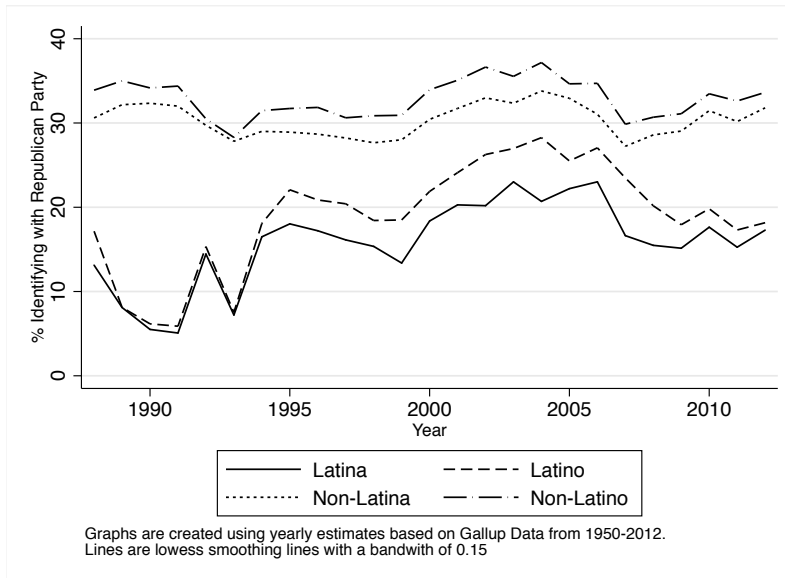Figure 11: Republican Gender Gap for Whites and Blacks
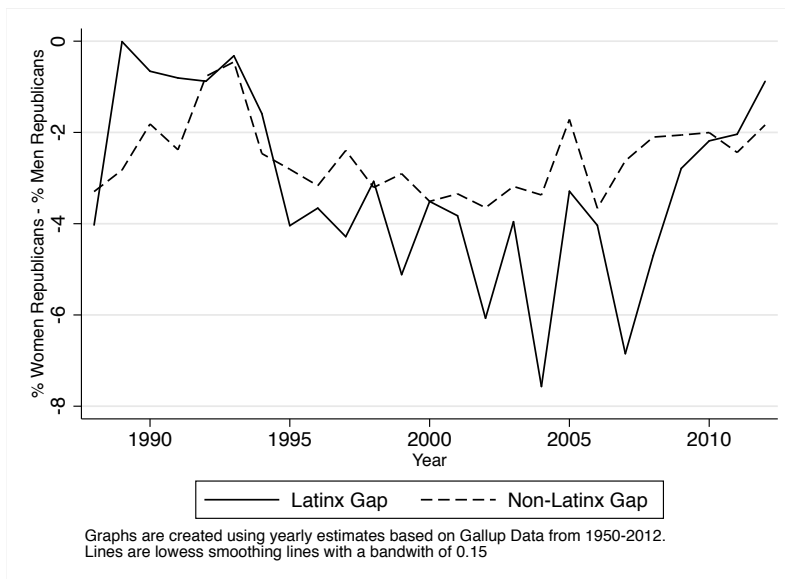
Figure 12: Republican Identification by Sex and Latinx

Figure 13: Republican Gender Gap for Latinx and Non-Latinx