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Ideological self-identification and party identification in Serbia

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Introduction. In the political science literature, party identification is considered to be one of the main determinants of voting behaviour. In the classic Michigan model (Campbell et al., 1960), party identification is described as a sort of psychological affinity towards a political party, a stable and long-term orientation. It is assumed that party identification is acquired during the socialization process in the early years of one's life as a form of social identity. Changes in party identification are considered to be relatively rare and caused by some major personal or societal events. Although there is no one-to-one relationship between party identification and voting, the probability that a person would vote for the party with which he/she is identified is highly likely.

However, the standard model of party identification is not without its shortcomings in terms of comparative relevance. The essentially different nature of the political process in the two-party in comparison with the multi-party political system is but one example. Many argued that party identification is not simply a matter of affects, group identification and early socialization, and also not an unmoved mover as originally proposed. Some

scholars argue that party identification is a consequence of cumulative party performance evaluations (Fiorina, 1981). According to this view, party identification is a changeable, rational and political orientation; it is not the standard for political evaluations, but its consequence instead. Others propose that party identification is related to different aspects of political self-determination and ideological identification in a more general sense (Green et al., 2002). People know who they are, where they belong socially, which groups they (dis)like and which parties those groups support. In such a way, party identification is an amalgam of cognition and affects, a form of socially rooted self-identification.

Objectives. The multi-party political system was introduced in Serbia in the beginning of 1990s, after almost half a century of communist rule. Modern political life in Serbia has been marked by large changes in party support and sudden shifts in party preferences. Furthermore, the majority of Serbian citizens are “older” than the political parties, i.e. they were born before the introduction of the multi-party system. Hence, if party attachments play an important role in voting, the linkage between party identification and vote choice cannot be explained by the standard model. Thus, the aim of this article is twofold: (1) to determine the relevance of party identification for vote choice and (2) to analyse the possible ideological sources of party identification.

Method and procedure. The data used in the analysis were collected in a post-election survey conducted on the representative national sample of eligible voters in Serbia in 2012 (N=1.568). The probability-based sample with multiple stages of selection and face-to-face interviews was used. Several measures/variables were used in the analysis for present purposes.

Party identification. A standard one-item question was used as a measure of party identification: “Are you close to any political party? Which one?”. Additionally, respondents were asked how much they (dis)liked

several relevant political parties on an 11-point scale (0 – strongly dislike, 10 – strongly like).

Ideological self-identification. Respondents were asked to estimate how well each of the offered ideological labels described his/her political views on an 11-point scale (0 – not at all, 10 – completely). The following labels were offered: Socialist, Conservative, Nationalist, Traditionalist, Liberal, Patriot, Social-democrat, and Communist.

Vote choice. Respondents were asked whether they had voted in parliamentary elections that had been held earlier that year and which party they had voted for.

Results. Our analysis has yielded several important findings. The relationship between party identification and vote choice proved to be very prominent. The vast majority of those identified with one of the six most relevant political parties voted for the party they were identified with. Additionally, the most liked political party is the party one was identified with.

There are coherent structures in ideological self-labelling. Factor analysis of the respondents' estimates of eight ideological labels yielded three underlying dimensions. The Nationalist, Patriot, Traditionalist and Conservative labels showed positive factor loadings on the first factor. The Communist and Socialist labels were loaded on the second factor, while the Liberal and Social-democrat labels showed positive factor loading on the third component. In other words, there appear to be three general dimensions of ideological self-identification in Serbia: the traditional-conservative, social-communist and liberal-democrat identification.

These dimensions of ideological self-identification are significantly correlated to party (dis)like measures. Those with a more intense traditional-conservative ideological identification show greater preference for parties which are usually described in similar terms in Serbian public discourse

(Serbian Progressive Party, Democratic Party of Serbia). Similarly, the socialist-communist ideological identification is related to greater likeability of the Socialist Party of Serbia, while those who more intensely like the Democratic Party and Liberal-democratic Party are most prominent in the liberal-democratic ideological identification.

Conclusions. Present results indicate that party identification is a very important determinant of vote choice in the Serbian political context. However, when interpreting such a finding one must bear in mind the peculiarities of political life in the post-communist Serbian society. Great inter-party supporters' flow and fluctuation, as well as fragmentation of political life and, above all, the mere fact that the multi-party political system is relatively young, imply the need for alternative explanations of the sources and role of party identification in Serbia.

One possible interpretation will be demonstrated here. General ideological identification is undoubtedly a determinant of person's overall political outlook. Party identification could, in that sense, be viewed as a manifestation of ideological identification and sort of a mediator between ideology and vote choice. These ideological identities are relatively inclusive and broad.

A citizen with traditional identification could, for example, express it by choosing to vote for one political party out of pool of similar political parties. In other words, the same ideological identification could manifest itself through different party identification, but within the limits it sets. This gains additional relevance having in mind the fact that the political "market" in Serbia is relatively saturated but that political agendas of political factors are poorly differentiated. In such a way, the relative fluctuation in voting patterns among voters can be more fully grasped. Changing party identification would then simply be a manifestation of concrete political choice switching, but without changing the underlying ideological identity.

Finally, this line of reasoning could imply that (early) socialization is still important for party identification but in a different way than originally proposed. Although there were no modern political parties during early or adolescent socialization for the majority of Serbian citizens, the attitudes, beliefs and values instilled during the socialization process are but one of the sources or constituencies of ideological identity. In other words, party identification might not be a direct product of early socialization, but the socialization in the pre-pluralist period set the ground for later political choices and preferences.

Self-improvement, an incentive to recycle

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Introduction. Recycling behavior is a voluntary action of separating waste into categories (paper, plastic, glass and bio waste). Educational campaigns targeted towards changing people's attitude towards recycling have often been fruitless because changing one's attitude does not always imply a change in behavior (Burn, 1991). Designs based on operant conditioning are often criticized because they infringe people's liberties and at the same time they can bring out behaviors opposite to the desired ones (Geller, 1989).

Campaigns based on raffles, lottery, coupons etc. as means of positive reinforcement, have shown that people did not develop an intrinsic motivation for recycling but rather performed an action for extrinsic gratification (Burn, 1991). Pardini and Katzev (1983 - 1984) have coined a