

Does the Measurement of Party Identification Matter?

Experimental Evidence from Latin America

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Abstract: The existing literature suggests that partisanship in Latin America is relatively weak. However, these findings have largely been based on a survey methodology that systematically underestimates partisanship. This study provides caution about measuring party identification when it is framed in a short-term time horizon and includes a filter question—as most comparative surveys do—since this tends to result in an underestimation of levels of partisanship in the region. In turn, surveys that rely on a question wording that is more consistent with early theories of voting behavior show that the proportion of voters who self-identify with a political party is larger than the literature assumed. The findings of this paper have broader implications for studies in comparative politics. They suggest that the existing literature on parties and party systems has underestimated the ability of political parties in Latin America to recruit and create strong linkages with the electorate.

The conventional wisdom in comparative political behavior, particularly in Latin America, posits that in new democracies, in which party systems are young, party roots in the electorate tend to be weak (Baker, Ames and Renno 2006; Samuels 2006; among others). However, based on original data from experimental and non-experimental surveys conducted in Latin American countries including Mexico, Argentina, Panama, and Honduras, this research provides evidence that previous findings of low levels of partisanship in Latin American countries are artifacts of question wording. This research finds that when the party identification survey question relies on a filter question (Schuman and Presser 1981) and is framed in a short-term time horizon—rather than in a long-term time horizon as early theories of voting behavior propose (Campbell et al. 1960; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008)—less people are willing to identify as partisan. This survey method strategy seems to tap a different aspect of partisanship, lacking a long-term component, underestimating the proportion of partisans by an average of 21 percentage points.¹

These findings of this research are consistent with previous research in American politics that find that some voters do not want to admit they identify with the political party they do (Petrocik's 2009; Klar and Krupnikov, 2016). These findings have important implications for studies in comparative politics, particularly for the literature on political parties and party systems. Some measures tap a different aspect of partisanship (short-term identification) which tends to be more responsive to short-term evaluations (Abramson and Ostrom 1991). For example, regarding the case of a new democracy such as Mexico—discussed in this study—major comparative surveys report that between a third and half of the electorate identifies with a

¹ This paper mostly compares original data about party identification with the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) data. Latinobarómetro uses very similar wording but measures partisanship during fewer years and for fewer countries. The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) conducts electoral surveys in only four Latin American countries: Mexico (data referred to in subsequent sections of this paper), Chile, Brazil, and Peru.

political party (CSES 2006, 2012, and 2009; LAPOP 2006 and 2012; Latinobarómetro 2015). In turn, measures that avoid filtering and frame party identification in a long-term time horizon find that—during the same period of time—two-thirds of the electorate consistently identified with a political party, which leads to a different characterization of the way a party system evolves and institutionalizes.

This paper is structured as follows. The first section presents an overview of the survey research literature in American politics and survey research literature. The next section presents testable hypotheses, as well as observational survey data that suggest that major comparative surveys tend to underestimate levels of partisanship in the region. The last sections analyze which features create this dampening effect on party identification and presents the results of survey experiments conducted in Mexico providing evidence how question wording shapes the outcome.

1. Partisanship and Survey Research Methodology

Party identification represents the most important variable for understanding individual-level electoral behavior (Campbell et al. 1960; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008, Green, Palmquist and Schikler 2002). Partisanship is conceived by early theories of voting behavior as a psychological attachment which is developed relatively early in adulthood. This enduring attachment does not merely come and go with election cycles or campaign ephemera; it is highly stable and constitutes the screen through which citizens make sense of the political world (Campbell et al. 1960; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; Green, Palmquist, and Schikler 2002).

Scholars of voting behavior highlight the importance of partisanship for individual electoral behavior because partisans tend to behave in a rather different way compared to non-partisans. Partisans are more likely to be more informed (Converse 1962; Delli Carpini 1996),

participate in politics and elections (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008), and report more stable electoral attitudes and behavior throughout political campaigns (Campbell et al. 1960; Zaller 1992). This partisan behavior is not confined to partisans in advanced industrial democracies like the U.S.; partisans in new democracies in Latin America also behave in a similar way. Latin American partisans tend to be more experienced, more informed, more attentive, and more engaged (Lupu 2015). Moreover, at the aggregate level, partisanship gives regularity and stability to electoral competition and, more broadly, helps stabilize the party system (Converse 1969; Mainwaring and Zucco 2007; Lupu 2015). Partisanship thus offers an important characterization of both the way voters behave at election time and the way a party system evolves and institutionalizes.

A clear measurement of partisanship—the focus of this study—should not only offer an accurate estimate of the proportion of partisan voters in a particular party system, but also allow a clear conceptual differentiation from voting behavior (Sanders, Burton, and Kneeshaw 2002). This means that partisanship is not defined in terms of voting behavior, but constitutes an exogenous variable, which strongly affects respondents' attitudes and voting behavior. From this perspective, party identification can potentially change in the long-term but mostly as a result of major party realignments and party system breakdowns, and not as part of the flow of politics.

Previous research in American politics has found that the party identification survey question is susceptible to question-wording effects. In other words, the choice of words or the structure of a particular question can affect the results of the survey (Borrelli, Lockerbie, and Niemi 1987). For example, Abrahamson and Ostrom (1991) show that when the party identification question is framed in a long-term time horizon—e.g. the wording used by the American National Election Study (ANES): “*Generally speaking, do you usually think of*

yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?”—more voters identify as partisans than when it is framed in a short-term time horizon (e.g. Gallup framing: *“In politics, as of today, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?”*). The short-term wording does not allow a clear conceptual difference between party identification and voting behavior and is very responsive to voters’ short-term economic and political evaluations. This is why electoral studies that use the short time horizon have found party identification to be less stable over time. However, these findings are mostly driven by the wording of the party-identification survey question and not by the apparent instability of respondents’ partisan allegiances over time (Abrahmson and Ostrom 1994).

Moreover, studies in American Politics have also highlighted that the structure of the question also makes some voters less likely to self-identify as partisans. For example, Blais et al.’s (2011) study on partisanship finds that relying on filter questions makes respondents less likely to self-identify as partisans even though many of them think of themselves as close to a political party. Instead of directly asking the question (e.g. *do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?*), filter questions inquire first if voters identify with a political party; if the respondent answers “yes,” the interviewer asks a follow-up question, asking with which political party the respondent most closely identifies. As suggested by Blais et al. (2011), filtering makes it “too easy” for respondents to say “no,” and this tendency might be particularly important regarding topics in which a negative response is socially desirable (e.g. self-identifying as “independent” might be socially desirable, Keith et al. 1992; Klar and Krupnikov, 2016). These findings speak to broader literature in American Politics that has found that leaners (who initially do not identify as partisans) hold partisan opinions that may be even more partisan than those who report they weakly identify with a party (Petrocik 2009).

Likewise, survey research studies highlight that, while filtering might be necessary when surveys analyze obscure topics (filtering avoids having respondents who do not have an opinion be pushed by the interviewer to take a position on a given topic), it might have an undesirable outcome in less obscure topics: it significantly increases “no” responses even when respondents have a formed opinion (Schuman and Presser 1981; Bishop et al. 1983). Moreover, in some cases, respondents may become bored or find the interview getting too long, thus, increasing respondents’ tendency to choose the response option that does not prompt any follow-up questions (e.g. survey burden effect;² Eckman et al. 2014).

In comparative studies, particularly works on Latin America, most of the literature has assumed that few voters tend to identify with a political party (Samuels 2006; Lupu 2015, among others). One common feature of this group of studies is that they rely upon comparative survey studies that 1) frame partisanship in a short-term time horizon and 2) include a filter question (e.g. do you identify with a political party: YES/NO). While it is not an uncommon survey strategy (table 1 present survey wordings in different election studies), this paper argues that this survey method strategy is tapping a different aspect of partisanship—lacking a long-term component that does not allow a clear conceptual difference between party identification and voting behavior—which results in an underestimation of partisanship in electoral surveys. While the paper is focused primarily on Latin America, its findings generalize to other world regions in which electoral studies have used a similar survey strategy to measure partisanship.

² With later filter questions, respondents may select the response option that does not trigger the follow-up questions in order to shorten the interview (Eckman et al. 2014)

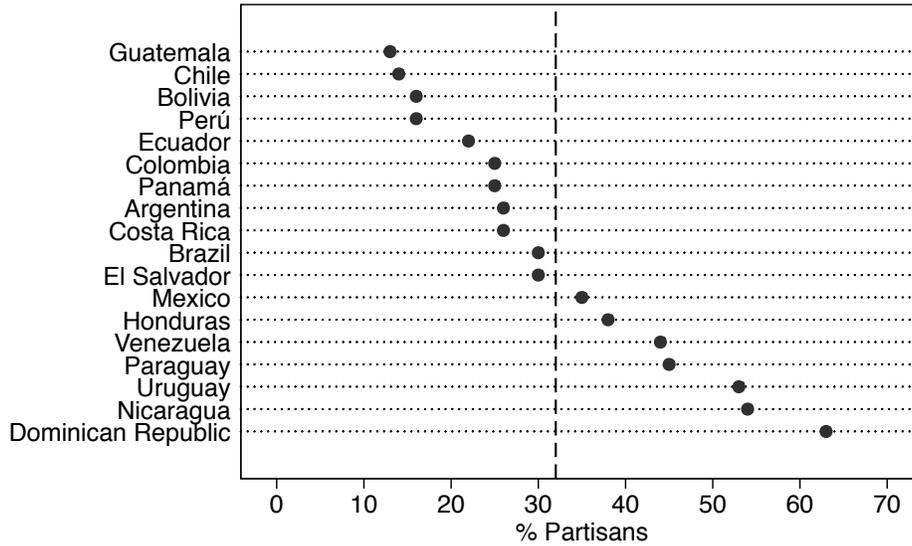
Table 1. Question Wordings in Different Election Studies

Survey	PID Wording
ANES	Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent, or what?
British Election Study	Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, or what?
German Election Study	Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?
Italian Election Study	Is there a party (or political movement) that you feel closer to?
French Election Study	In general, is there a party or a political movement that seems closer to you than others?
Australian Election Study	Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as Liberal, Labor, National, or what?

2. Review of Polls: Filtering and Time Horizon

Figure 1 presents the level of partisanship in Latin American party systems according to the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP). LAPOP constitutes the most important and comprehensive public opinion project covering Latin American countries. LAPOP surveys are the source of the highest quality comprehensive survey data on parties in Latin America, and its data has been used in the most important studies analyzing political behavior and party systems in the region. Although there is important variation, on average, only one in three Latin American voters reports party identification, which represents a lower proportion of partisans compared to more advanced, industrialized democracies (Samuels, 2006; Lupu, 2015).

Figure 1. Level of Partisanship in Latin America (2012)



Source: LAPOP (2012)

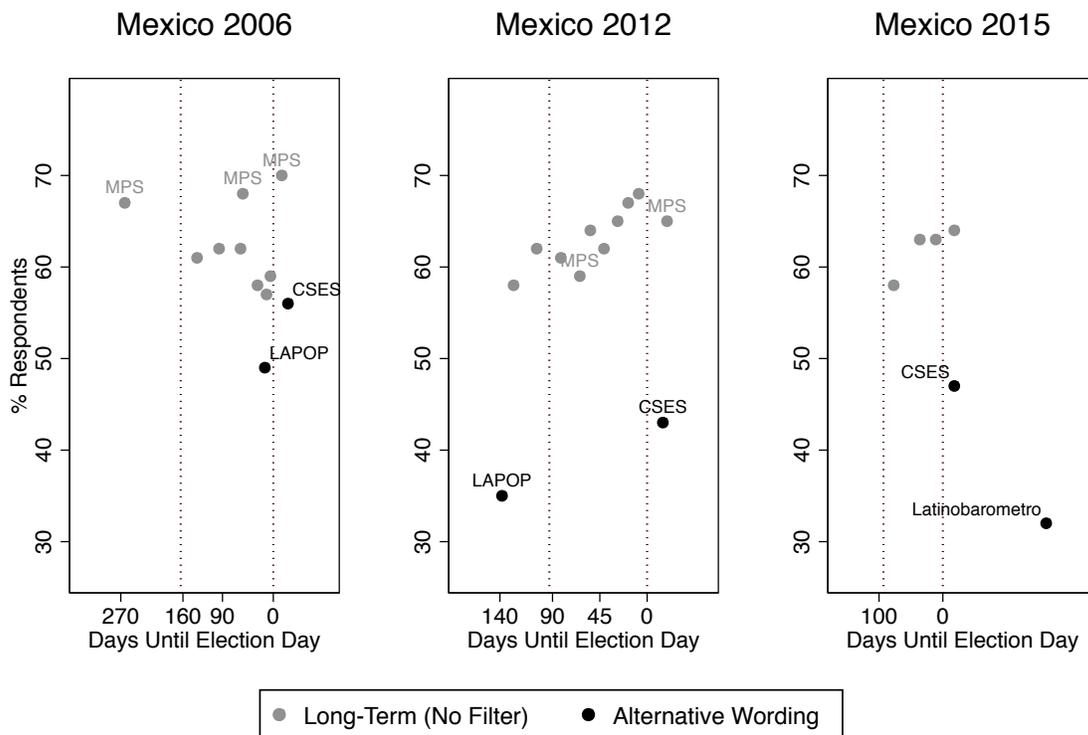
When measuring party identification, the LAPOP wording—similar to the Gallup wording—tends to emphasize a short-term time horizon: “*Do you currently identify with a political party? IF YES: Which political party do you identify with?*”. This particular survey method strategy (emphasizing “currently”) seems to invite the respondent to think along the lines of short-term identification to a political party, which as previous studies suggest, might be more responsive to voters’ short-term economic and political evaluations. Although LAPOP is not an electoral survey, their studies have coincided with other survey projects conducted during the same period of time in a given country, so it is possible to compare their results. For those purposes, figure 2 presents levels of partisanship in Mexico during the last presidential (2006 and 2012) and legislative campaigns (2015) based not only on LAPOP data, but also on the Mexico Panel Surveys (Lawson, Chappell, et. al. 2006; Lawson, Chappell, et. al. 2013) as well as national electoral polls³ conducted during the same period of time (see table A1 in the Appendix

³ The survey research firm BGC Beltrán, Juárez y Asocs conducted the 18 national electoral polls during the 2006, 2012, and 2015 campaigns. Each survey had an average sample of 1,200 respondents. This polling firm also conducts the National Electoral Study (CSES) in Mexico.

for complete wordings in English and Spanish).

If we only focus on LAPOP, we can observe that less than half of the electorate self-identify with a political party. Moreover, the data show that partisanship in Mexico declined between 2006 and 2012 from 49% to 35% (a decrease of 14 percentage points⁴). However, when comparing LAPOP data with the alternative measures, the interpretation is slightly different. Data from the Mexico Panel Surveys, as well as national electoral polls (in gray, figure 2), report that two-thirds of the electorate self-identify as partisans, and this rate has tended to be fairly stable during the last 10 years in Mexico (2006–2015). What factors account for this difference?

Figure 2. % of Partisans across Electoral Cycles



No Label = Electoral Polls measuring PID with a long-term time horizon, without filtering
 Note: Table A2 of the Appendix reports % for each category (partisan, non-partisan, and don't know).

⁴ LAPOP tends to underestimate partisanship at the beginning of the campaign. A plausible interpretation might be related to LAPOP's time horizon, which seems more responsive to short-term events. At the beginning of the campaign, when respondents are not yet immersed in the campaign and partisanship has yet to be activated, the gap between LAPOP and other studies is larger (2012). As election day approaches, the campaign seems to activate partisanship among voters, and the gap between LAPOP and other studies narrows (2006). However, with only two data points, this observation is only tentative.

A possible interpretation of this variation relates to the particular wording of questions. The Mexico Panel Surveys and the national electoral polls follow a different survey research strategy compared to LAPOP. These surveys frame partisanship as a long-term attachment and their wording conceptually differentiates between voting behavior and partisanship (see table 2 below). As opposed to the emphasis on the word “currently” in the LAPOP version, the phrasing “in general” seems to broaden the time reference inviting respondents to think of a long-term partisan attachment. Moreover, in the case of the national electoral polls (“*regardless of the party you vote for*”) the question wording explicitly invites the respondent to differentiate between voting behavior and partisanship as proposed in early theories of voting behavior.

Table 2. Different Wordings in the 2006, 2012, and 2015 Campaigns (Mexico)

Survey	PID Wording
LAPOP	(1) Do you <i>currently</i> sympathize with a political party? IF YES: (2) Which political party do you sympathize with?
Mexico Panel Surveys	<i>Generally</i> , would you consider yourself panista, priista, or perredista?
National Electoral Polls	<i>Regardless of the party you vote for</i> , would you consider yourself panista, priista, perredista, or any other political party?

However, while it is possible that time horizon explains the variation on the percentage of voters who self-identify with a political party, observational data cannot establish cause and effect. In light of this discussion, the first hypothesis of this paper—tested via an experimental design as detailed in the next section of this paper—is the following:

H1 (Time Horizon): Respondents will be less likely to self-identify as partisan when the party identification question is framed in a short-term time horizon.

Figure 2 also reports data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES)—collaborative, cross-national survey research data collection—conducted by election study teams around the world. The CSES National Electoral Studies also report an unstable estimate of partisanship across elections (a decrease of 13 percentage points between 2006 and 2012) and underestimate the proportion of partisans compared to alternative measures—particularly during the 2012 and 2015 elections. Even though the CSES frames party identification in a long-term time horizon (“*regardless of the party you voted for in the last election*”), it follows a similar strategy to LAPOP when relying on a filter question and asks whether a respondent sympathizes with a political party (see table 3 below).

In order to evaluate the effect of filtering on the probability of self-identifying with a political party, the 2015 National Electoral Study (CSES) conducted during the midterm election in Mexico included two different wordings throughout the same interview.⁵ While they share a similar time horizon they differ in the inclusion of a filter question (see table 3 for complete wording below). When a filter question was included, 48 percent of respondents declared a party identification. When the filter question was not included and the interviewer directly asked respondents about their party identification, 63 percent was willing to declare his/her party identification. In other words, filtering seems to contribute to a 15 percent gap between estimates of the proportion of partisans.

⁵ Ideally, it would be better to include each question wording in a split sample experiment. However, since it was not possible to exclude the traditional CSES measure from any part of the questionnaire, both wordings were included. The alternative measure was located in the first part of the questionnaire (9th question), so it is unlikely that the higher estimation of partisans is driven by a potential activation of partisanship as the interview unfolds. The traditional CSES measure was the 23rd question of the survey interview (and several battery questions that counted as a single question were included between both measures). In the next section, instead of having two measures of partisanship asked during the same interview, I discuss the association between the different wordings and political attitudes (e.g. presidential approval) relying on an experimental design. The results do not differ: while turning out different results in terms of percent of voters who identify as partisans, the two different questions wordings are strongly connected to presidential approval.

The 2015 CSES allows us to analyze the connection between partisanship (with two different wordings) and other variables such as vote choice. Table 3 shows that different measures of partisanship—while turning out different results in terms of percent of voters who identify as partisans—do not differ much on the connection with vote choice. For example, table 3 reports the percentage of voters that supported their co-partisan candidate during the 2015 midterm campaign. For both measures researchers may conclude that the connection between party identification and vote choice is strong: 95 percent of partisans voted for their co-partisan candidate (88 percent in the case of the traditional CSES measure). However, if we rely on the CSES measurement, it is only possible to measure the connection between party identification and vote choice among a subset of partisans, since a fourth of partisans (23 percent, 14 percent of the sample, N=237) failed to self-identify as partisan when asked with the traditional CSES wording (even though we know they are partisan with the unfiltered wording since the two measures were included in the same interview). In other words, when the survey question filters we seem to mischaracterize some respondents as independents. Equally importantly, we lose important pieces of information about the way partisanship informs voters' electoral behavior (table A3 in the Appendix presents the connection between the different measures of partisanship and other political attitudes e.g. presidential approval and retrospective evaluation of the economy; the results are fairly similar⁶).

⁶The connection between different measures of partisanship and other political attitudes (e.g. presidential approval and retrospective evaluation of the economy) is similar: they are both strongly connected (pro-incumbent voters hold a positive connection while opposition voters hold a negative connection) when relying on different measurements of partisanship.

Table 3. Connection between PID and Vote Choice (Mexico 2015) [N=1,200]

	Mexico CSES Wording (filter): Regardless of the party you voted for in the last election, do you sympathize with any particular political party? IF YES: Which party?	Alternative Wording (no filter): Regardless of the party you vote for, do you consider yourself panista, priista, perredista, verde-ecologista, Morena, or any other political party?
% Partisans	48 % [N=581]	63 % [N=764]
Support for Co-partisan Candidate	89% [N=581]	95% [N=764]
[Sample N=764]	56% ⁷ [N=764]	95% [N=764]

Note: Table A4 of the Appendix reports % of partisans, non-partisans, and don't know).

However, as in the previous case, observational data cannot establish cause and effect. In light of this discussion, the second hypothesis of this paper is the following which will be also tested via an experimental design:

H2 (Filter question): Respondents will be less likely to self-identify as partisan when the party identification question includes a filter-question.

When the question wording includes a filter question, it is not clear what the mechanism behind the lower rates of partisanship is. While prior studies suggest that filtering makes it easier for respondents to say “no” (Blais et al. 2011), it is not clear if it is driven by respondents’ survey-taking behavior, or the fact that the list of options (e.g. parties) are listed explicitly. On

⁷ 257 respondents failed to self-identify as partisan with the CSES wording but did identify as partisans with the alternative wording (without filtering). That means that we know that, with the CSES measure, 56% of partisans supported their co-partisan candidate. However, we cannot know the connection between party ID and vote choice of the remaining partisans since they fail to self-identify as partisans with the CSES measure.

the one hand, due to survey fatigue,⁸ respondents may be more inclined to reply “no” to the filter question hoping to finish the survey interview as soon as possible. On the other hand, given that the unfiltered version includes the list of potential parties with which voters might self-identify, it is plausible that respondents might have an easier time choosing an option explicitly referred to by the interviewer. This effect would be consistent with evidence from the survey research literature comparing open-ended and closed-ended questions: respondents are more likely to select an option when it is explicitly included in the survey question (Schuman and Presser, 1981). For those purposes, this study considers the following two secondary hypotheses:

H2a (Survey Taking-Behavior Effect): As a result of survey fatigue, respondents will be less likely to self-identify as partisan.

H2b (Explicit Options): When the partisan options are not explicitly listed by the interviewer, respondents will be less likely to self-identify as partisan.

Finally, this study also considers an alternative hypothesis. One plausible interpretation of the variation of results among survey projects might be driven by the variation of the conceptualization of partisanship: an “identification” or an “attachment.”⁹ In some survey projects, the question asks respondents if they “sympathize” with a political party (LAPOP),

⁸ In order to test a survey burden effect, it would be ideal to include several filter questions throughout the interview. However, it was not possible to add several filter questions in the questionnaire (testing if, with later filter questions, respondents may select the response option that does not trigger the follow-up questions). For that reason, hypothesis 2a tests respondent’s survey fatigue by placing the party ID question either near the beginning of the survey (second questions) or at the end (last question but before sociodemographic questions). It is expected that, if filtering makes respondents more likely to say “no” due to survey fatigue, respondents who receive the party ID question by the end of the interview would be more likely to underreport partisanship than those respondents who are inquired at beginning of the interview. As opposed to other type of surveys (e.g. Mechanical Turk), respondents in the studies reported in this research do not have incentives to stay or continue the interview to get money.

⁹ Figure 2 also presents data from Latinobarómetro—annual survey project in Latin America. Their 2015 study estimates that only 32% of the Mexican electorate identifies with a political party (a gap of 30 percentage points vis-à-vis long-term measures that avoid filtering). Their wording strategy also includes a filter question, although it does not frame their survey question along any particular time horizon. Instead, the question inquires if the respondent “feels closer” to any political party.

while other projects ask respondents if they “consider” themselves “panista, priista, or perredista” (e.g. similar to the ANES when asking if respondents consider themselves to be “Republican” or “Democrat”) or “identify” as “panista, priista, or perredista” (Mexico Panel Surveys). In this particularly case, there are no clear expectations about the effect of each conceptualization of partisanship. In light of this discussion, the last hypothesis of this study is the following:

H3 (Conceptual Difference): As a result of a conceptual difference of partisanship, respondents will be less likely to self-identify as partisan.

The following section presents the experimental design that allows the establishment of cause and effect to be sure that confounding variables are not driving the likelihood of voters’ disposition to self-identify as partisan in response to variations in question wording.

3. Empirical Strategy and Data

This paper presents original data from nationwide survey experiments in omnibus surveys conducted in Argentina, Panamá, and Honduras, which represent cases with levels of party identification around average for the region, according to LAPOP data (26, 40, and 45 percent, respectively; the mean of the region = 35 percent according to LAPOP 2014). In Honduras and Panamá, the survey experiments were fielded face-to-face by the polling firm Borge y Asociados and each survey had a sample of 1,000 respondents. Each sample was divided into three randomly assigned groups, which vary the wording of the party identification question. In Argentina, the polling firm Isonomía conducted a telephone survey experiment (CATI System) and had a sample of 1,200 respondents. Randomization guarantees that all of the treatment groups in the sample were identical on average for both observable and unobservable characteristics. Accordingly, any systematic difference in the answers to each of the party identification questions provides an estimate of the differing impact that the alternative wording

has on respondents' probability of declaring their party identification. The treatments appear balanced across observed covariates (see table A5 in the Appendix).

In particular, the survey experiment randomly varies the inclusion of a filter as well as the time horizon of the question (table 4). Given the LAPOP's importance as the major comparative survey in the region, the first treatment relies on the LAPOP wording, which is framed along a short time horizon and includes a filter question. The second treatment constitutes an intermediate version, which includes a filter question but is framed in a long-term time horizon. The third treatment relies on the alternative wording included in the 2015 CSES survey as well as in the electoral polls conducted in Mexico, which mirrors the ANES wording by excluding a filter question and framing the question in a long-term time horizon (see table 4 for question wordings). The difference between the first and second treatments estimates the impact of the time horizon (H1), while the difference between the second and third treatments estimates the impact of filtering on the probability that a respondent will declare party identification (H2).

In addition, this paper presents original data from a nationwide telephone survey experiment conducted in Mexico. The survey was conducted by the polling firm BGC Beltrán, Juárez y Asocs with a sample of 2,223 respondents (CATI System). The survey experiment was divided into six treatment groups in order to understand why the filter question makes respondents less likely to self-identify as partisan as well as testing the alternative hypothesis of this study (complete information on treatment groups, see tables A6 in the Appendix). The party identification question was included as the second question of the interview. In the rest of the interview, survey respondents were asked about their opinion about political events in Mexico.

4. Results

Table 4 presents the mean response to each treatment condition. Comparing across each treatment, the data shows support for hypotheses 1 and 2 of this paper showing that voters do not declare partisan identification equally. The LAPOP version (treatment 1) tends to underestimate the proportion of partisans in every case (Panamá, Honduras, Argentina, and Mexico). For example, the difference between wordings 1 and 2 is, on average, 9 percentage points, while the difference between the LAPOP version and the long-term version without filtering is, on average, 21 percentage points. The differences are sizable and not due to random chance ($p < 0.01$, table A7 in the Appendix reports the logistic regressions for each country).

Table 4. Declared Partisans across Treatment Groups

Country	Treatment 1. Short-term (with filter): Do you currently sympathize with a political party? (YES/NO) Which political party do you identify with?	Treatment 2. Long-term (with filter): Regardless of the party you voted for in the last election, in general, do you sympathize with any particular political party? (YES/NO) Which party?	Treatment 3. Long-term (without filter): Regardless of the party you vote for, would you consider yourself [LIST OF PARTY ID] or any other political party?
Panamá 2016	44% [N = 333]	55%*** (+11) [N = 338]	67%*** (+23) [N = 341]
Honduras 2016	35% [N = 336]	42%** (+7) [N = 334]	56%*** (+21) [N = 346]
Argentina 2016 ¹⁰	35% [N = 604]		54%*** (+19) [N = 605]
Mexico 2017 ¹¹	16% [N = 801]	26%*** (+10) [N = 197]	38%*** (+22) [N = 607]
Average Difference		+9	+21

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$ (statistical significance compared to treatment 1). Difference between treatment 1 and the other treatments in parentheses. Table A8 of the Appendix reports % for each category (partisan, non-partisan, and don't know). Table A9 includes the translation in Spanish.

¹⁰ In Argentina, the survey interview only included two treatments because of budget considerations.

¹¹ Party identification in Mexico has decreased after the 2015 legislative election. According to the Buendía & Laredo polling firm in Mexico, partisanship decreased sharply by the end of 2015 coinciding with major corruption scandals that the incumbent government faced. In 2016, partisanship decreased significantly after the Mexican government stopped subsidizing oil prices. These sharp declines were driven mostly by the decline of identification with the PRI according to the same data source.

Similar to the observational data reported in the last section, in Mexico I analyzed the connection between the different wordings and political attitudes (e.g. presidential approval). The different measures of partisanship—while turning out different results in terms of percent of voters who identify as partisans—do not differ much on the connection with presidential approval¹² (see table A3 in the Appendix). Consistent with the previous section, the question filters lead to mischaracterizing some respondents as independents therefore losing important pieces of information about the way partisanship informs voters’ political attitudes.

While the time horizon explains the difference between treatments 1 and 2, it is not clear what is driving the underestimation of partisanship when a filter question is included. It is possible that voters are less likely to self-identify as partisan due to a respondents’ survey-taking behavior. However, it is also plausible that the structure of the question makes it easier for respondents to self-identify as partisan since the options are explicitly listed by the interviewer. To test both mechanisms, the following treatment groups isolate these two elements.

The first treatment includes a question wording that explicitly lists the partisan options (see table 5, “*identify yourself as panista, priista, perredista, verde ecologista, de Morena, or another party?*”). In turn, the second treatment shares the same question structure—including the time horizon—but excludes the list of partisan options. Regarding voters’ survey-taking behavior, while it is not possible to directly measure respondents’ tendency to shorten the interview, this study follows an indirect strategy and focuses on respondents’ survey fatigue. If there is a survey-taking behavior effect, respondents will be less likely to self-identify as partisan at the end of the survey interview than they would at the beginning. For those purposes, respondents that are part of the third treatment are inquired about their party identification at the

¹² Vote choice was not available since the surveys were conducted during a non-electoral season.

beginning of the survey, while those that are part of the fourth treatment are asked about their party identification at the very end of the survey interview.

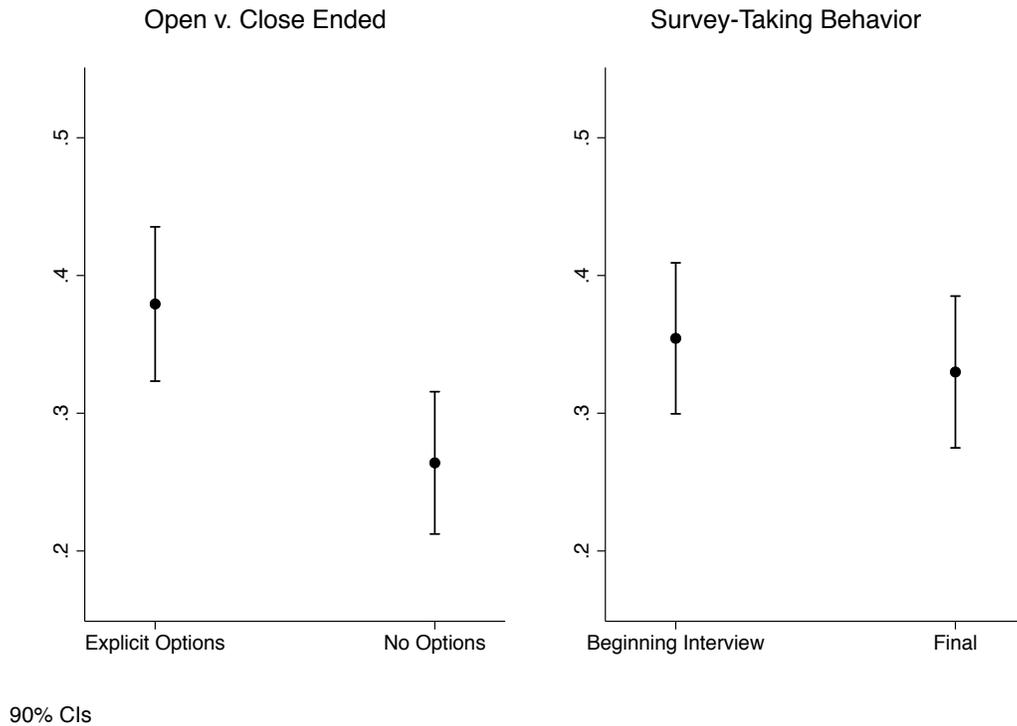
Table 5. PID and Filter Questions

Explicit Options	Survey-Taking Behavior
<p>Treatment 1 (N=203) (Explicit Options) Regardless of the party you vote for, do you normally <i>identify</i> yourself as a panista, priista, perredista, green, Morena, or any other political party?</p>	<p>Treatment 3 (N=206) (Beginning of the survey interview) Regardless of the party you vote for, do you normally <i>consider</i> yourself as a panista, priista, perredista, green, Morena, or any other political party?</p>
<p>Treatment 2 (N=197) (No Options) Regardless of the party you vote for, do you normally identify with any political party?</p>	<p>Treatment 4 (N=197) (End of the survey interview) Regardless of the party you vote for, do you normally <i>consider</i> yourself as a panista, priista, perredista, green, Morena, or any other political party?</p>

Note: Table A10 includes the translation in Spanish.

Figure 3 reports the probability of self-identifying as partisan based on multinomial logistic models (DV = partisan, non-partisan, and don't know; table A11 in the Appendix reports the multinomial logistic regression). Respondents are more likely to self-identify as partisan when options are explicitly listed than when they are not: the difference between both treatment groups is 12 percentage points (38 percent vs. 26 percent, $p < 0.01$). However, respondents are not significantly less likely to answer the party identification question when it is located at the end of the survey than when it is located at the beginning (a difference of 3 percentage-points, $p > 0.10$). These results, overall, suggest that filtering does make respondents less likely to self-identify as partisan and that this underestimation is driven by the structure of the question that makes it easier for respondents to choose their partisan option (since they are listed explicitly)—and not by an apparent tendency to move on in order to finish the survey interview.

Figure 3. Filter Questions and PID
 (Probability of Self-Identifying as Partisans)



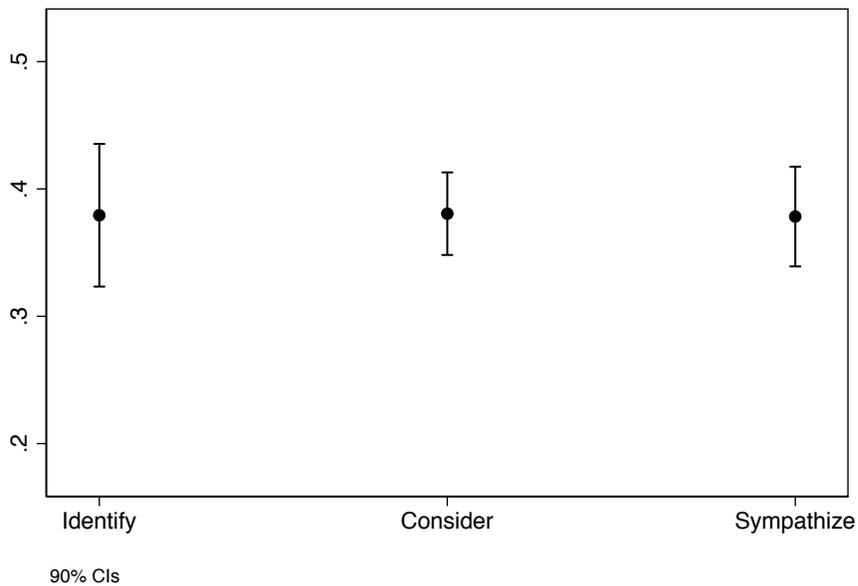
Finally, as advanced earlier, question wording in comparative surveys is not consistent in how partisanship is measured. There is a conceptual distinction since in some cases partisanship is measured as an identification and in some other cases as an attachment (or sympathy). To evaluate if those conceptual distinctions explain variation in the probability of self-identifying as partisan, three additional treatment conditions were included in the survey experiment as reported in table 6: neither the time horizon nor the structure of the question change; only the verb included in the question wording changes: “consider yourself,” “identify yourself,” and “sympathize with.”

Table 6. PID Conceptualization

Treatment 1 (N=203)	Treatment 2 (N=607)	Treatment 3 (N=415)
Regardless of the party you vote for, do you normally <i>identify</i> yourself as a panista, priista, perredista, green, Morena, or any other political party?	Regardless of the party you vote for, do you normally <i>consider</i> yourself as a panista, priista, perredista, green, Morena, or any other political party?	Regardless of the party you vote for, do you normally sympathize with the PAN, the PRI, the PRD, the Green Party, Morena, or any other political party?

Figure 4 reports the probability of self-identifying as partisan based on multinomial logistic models (table A12 in the Appendix reports the multinomial logistic regression). Respondents do not seem to be responsive to question variation: the differences between treatment conditions are not statistically significant ($p > 0.10$). In other words, the evidence presented in this study suggests that filtering has a substantive negative effect on the probability of respondents self-identifying as partisan, and this effect is not driven by respondent’s survey-taking behavior or the variation on the conceptualization of partisanship.

Figure 4. Conceptualization of Partisanship (Probability of Self-Identifying as Partisans)



5. Discussion

This study provides caution about the use of filter questions and wordings that frame partisanship in a short-term time horizon. Based on survey data conducted in four countries in Latin America, this study makes the case that electoral surveys should rely on measurements that are more consistent with early theories of partisanship that conceptually distinguish between voting behavior and partisanship. These findings have important implications for survey research literature on Latin America and elsewhere. Election studies around the world use a similar survey strategy to measure partisanship and may be underestimating the percentage of voters who identify with a political party. This study encourages further replication of this analysis. However, the logic of the findings of this paper (e.g. experimental and non-experimental evidence) is sufficiently compelling that it would be extremely surprising if question wording does not play any role in the rest of Latin America and elsewhere.

The findings of this paper also speak to broader literature, for example, campaigns studies. Wordings that rely on short-term partisanship might lose valuable information when analyzing, for example, partisan behavior at campaign time. During political campaigns, as a result of the campaign information flow, voters become increasingly capable of connecting their partisanship to vote intention (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, 1954; Gelman and King 1993). Voters become enlightened as election day approaches, activating their pre-campaign predispositions, which constitutes the most important mechanism of campaign influence on voter behavior (e.g. campaign activation; Gelman and King 1993). In such contexts, researchers identify voters who defect from their partisanship when supporting a candidate of an opposite party or support their co-partisan candidate. However, if some partisans are not willing to self-identify as a consequence of question wording, it is impossible to evaluate the connection

between partisanship and vote choice as highlighted in this study.

The findings of this research also contribute more broadly to the literature in comparative politics (e.g. the political parties literature). For example, in the case of the Mexican party system, it was puzzling that while electoral data reported low levels of electoral volatility compared to the region's average¹³ (Mainwaring, 2017), major comparative surveys pointed out that only between a third and up to half of the electorate declared party identification (LAPOP 2006 and 2012; Latinobarómetro 2015). As this study finds, an alternative wording—in line with the original conceptualization of party identification as a long-term identification—reveals data that are more consistent with the way the Mexican party system has evolved since the nation's transition to democracy: a party system with a high proportion of partisans (two-thirds of the electorate) and low levels of electoral volatility.

Future studies may also consider alternative explanations of the conditions under which respondents are less likely to reveal their party identification due to questionnaire design effects. For instance, it is plausible that respondents' survey-taking behavior analyzed in this paper may affect voters in comparative surveys (LAPOP, CSES, and Latinobarómetro, among others), which are usually longer than most electoral polls. These studies include comprehensive modules limited not only to electoral behavior, but also to broader attitudes about democracy and the party system. Respondents in these surveys may be more likely to choose answers that shorten the interview, particularly when the structure of the question allows them to be let off easily.

¹³ In the 1990–2015 period, the Mexican system, along with Uruguay, the Dominican Republic, and Chile, registered almost perfect stability in the main contenders in Latin American presidential elections. When additional indicators are added (interparty electoral competition and stability of parties' ideological positions), Uruguay, Mexico, and Chile constituted the most stable systems in Latin America (Mainwaring, 2017).

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Table A1. Alternative Wordings in English and Spanish

Survey	English	Spanish
CSES (2006, 2012 and 2015)	Regardless of the party you voted for in the last election, in general, do you sympathize with any particular political party? IF YES: “Which party?”	Independientemente de por cuál partido votó en la elección pasada, en general, ¿simpatiza usted con algún partido político en particular? Sí: ¿Con cuál partido?
Alternative CSES measure (2015) and Electoral Polls (2006, 2012 and 2015)	<i>Regardless of the party you vote for, would you consider yourself panista, priista, perredista, or any other political party?</i>	Independientemente por el partido por el cual usted vota, usted se considera panista, priista, perredista o de algún otro partido?
LAPOP 2006 and 2012	Do you currently sympathize with a political party? IF YES: Which political party do you sympathize with?	¿En este momento, simpatiza con algún partido político? Sí: ¿Con cuál partido político simpatiza usted?
LATINOBARÓMETRO 2015	Is there any political party you feel closer to than others?	¿Hay algún partido político hacia el cual se sienta usted más cercano que hacia el resto de los partidos?

Table A2. Percent of Partisans during Presidential and Legislative Campaigns in Mexico (2006/2012/2015)

Month/Year	Survey Mode	Survey	Partisan	Non-partisan	Don't Know
10/2005	Face-to-face	Mexico Panel Survey	67	30	3
02/2006	Face-to-face	Electoral Poll	61	35	3
03/2006	Face-to-face	Electoral Poll	62	37	1
05/2006	Face-to-face	Electoral Poll	62	37	1
05/2006	Face-to-face	Mexico Panel Survey	68	28	4
06/2006	Face-to-face	LAPOP	49	50	1
06/2006	Face-to-face	Electoral Poll	58	40	2
06/2006	Face-to-face	Electoral Poll	57	42	1
06/2006	Face-to-face	Electoral Poll	59	39	2
07/2006	Face-to-face	Mexico Panel Survey	70	29	2
07/2006	Face-to-face	CSES	56	43	1
02/2012	Face-to-face	LAPOP	35	63	2
02/2012	Face-to-face	Electoral Poll	58	40	2
03/2012	Face-to-face	Electoral Poll	62	36	2
04/2012	Face-to-face	Electoral Poll	61	39	1
05/2012	Face-to-face	Electoral Poll	64	35	1
05/2012	Face-to-face	Electoral Poll	62	37	1
06/2012	Face-to-face	Electoral Poll	65	35	1
06/2012	Face-to-face	Electoral Poll	67	31	1
06/2012	Face-to-face	Electoral Poll	68	29	3
04/2012	Face-to-face	Mexico Panel Survey	59	39	3
07/2012	Face-to-face	Mexico Panel Survey	65	33	2
07/2012	Face-to-face	CSES	43	56	1
04/2012	Face-to-face	Electoral Poll	58	41	
05/2012	Face-to-face	Electoral Poll	63	34	3
05/2012	Face-to-face	Electoral Poll	63	36	1
06/2012	Face-to-face	CSES	48	51	1
06/2012	Face-to-face	CSES (alternative)	62	35	3
11/2015	Face-to-face	Latinobarómetro	32	67	1

Table A3. Connection between Partisanship and Presidential Approval / Evaluation of the Economy

Mexico 2015 (CSES): different measures of partisanship on the same interview

	Incumbent		Opposition					
	PRI		PAN		PRD		Morena	
	Filter [N=242]	No Filter [N=343]	Filter [N=162]	No Filter [N=191]	Filter [N=65]	No Filter [N=123]	Filter [N=35]	No Filter [N=48]
Disapprove	17	21	60	70	84	82	71	65
Approve	83	78	38	28	12	15	26	33
Worsen	20	16	27	32	51	41	37	27
Same	37	37	44	39	33	38	49	43
Improve	40	43	26	26	16	19	14	27

Chi2 level of significance = 0.00 in every case.

Presidential Approval: En general, ¿está usted de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con la manera como está gobernando el presidente Enrique Peña Nieto? / In general, do you approve or disapprove the way President Enrique Peña Nieto is governing?

Retrospective Evaluation of the Economy: Durante el último año ¿considera usted que su situación económica personal ha mejorado o ha empeorado? / In the last year, do you think that your personal economic situation has improved or gotten worse?

Table A3 (continuation). Connection between Partisanship and Presidential Approval

Mexico 2017: different measures of partisanship in different subsamples

	Incumbent			Opposition					
	PRI			PAN			Morena		
	Wording 1 [N=46]	Wording 2 [N=13]	Wording 2 [N=65]	Wording 1 [N=27]	Wording 2 [N=15]	Wording 3 [N=72]	Wording 1 [N=33]	Wording2 [N=11]	Wording2 [N=52]
Disapprove	26	31	35	85	87	83	97	91	88
Approve	74	69	65	14	13	17	3	9	12

Chi2 level of significance = 0.00 in every case.

Note: PRD had less than 10 observations in each cell so it was excluded from the analysis

Table A4. Percent of Partisans with Alternative Wordings (CSES 2012/2015)

Country	Month/Year	Survey Mode	Treatments (Alternative PID Wordings)					
			Long-term (w/ filter)			Long-term (w/o filter)		
			%P	%NP	%DK	%P	%NP	%DK
Mexico	2015	Face-to-face	47	51	1	64	34	3

Table A5. Balance across Survey Experiment Treatments

Base Category = Short Term with Filter (LAPOP Version)

	PANAMÁ		ARGENTINA	HONDURAS	
	Short-term (Without filter) (1)	Long-term (Without filter) (2)	Short-term (Without filter) (3)	Short-term (Without filter) (4)	Long-term (Without filter) (5)
Female	-0.01 (0.15)	-0.01 (0.15)	0.09 (0.12)	-0.11 (0.16)	-0.19 (0.15)
Age	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.01** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Education	0.05 (0.13)	-0.10 (0.13)	-0.05 (0.09)	-0.17 (0.13)	-0.03 (0.12)
Constant	-0.23 (0.41)	0.21 (0.40)	0.24 (0.25)	0.75** (0.35)	0.50 (0.35)
Observations	1,012	1,012	1,209	1,016	1,016
Pseudo R-sq	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 Standard errors in parentheses

Table A5 (Continuation). Balance Across Treatments Groups (Mexico 2017)

Base Category = Treatment 1

	Treatment Groups:				
	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Age: 26-40	0.35 (0.33)	0.10 (0.30)	-0.12 (0.23)	-0.19 (0.29)	-0.28 (0.23)
Age: 41-60	0.14 (0.31)	-0.19 (0.28)	-0.26 (0.21)	-0.27 (0.27)	-0.32 (0.21)
Age: 61+	0.07 (0.32)	-0.29 (0.29)	-0.44** (0.22)	-0.47 (0.29)	-0.20 (0.22)
Education: High School	-0.14 (0.20)	-0.18 (0.20)	-0.12 (0.15)	-0.05 (0.20)	-0.02 (0.15)
Education: College+	-0.06 (0.20)	-0.19 (0.20)	-0.26* (0.16)	0.05 (0.20)	-0.23 (0.16)
Constant	-1.50*** (0.30)	-1.14*** (0.27)	-0.32 (0.20)	-1.12*** (0.26)	-0.36* (0.20)
Observations	2,222	2,222	2,222	2,222	2,222
Pseudo R-sq	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Category Omitted: Age (18-25) and Education (Elementary School)

Table A6. Treatment Groups in Mexico

Treatment	N	Table 4.	Table 5. Explicit Options	Table 5. Survey Taking Behavior	Table 6. Concept
1 - (LAPOP: Short-term, with filter) Do you currently sympathize with a political party? (YES/NO) Which political party do you identify with?	801	Treatment 1			
2 - (Long-term, with filter: no options) Regardless of the party you vote for, do you normally identify with any political party?	197	Treatment 2	Treatment 2		
3 - (Long-term, without filter: identify) Regardless of the party you vote for, do you normally <i>identify</i> yourself as a panista, priista, perredista, green, Morena, or any other political party?	203		Treatment 1		Treatment 1
4 - (Long-term, without filter: consider) Regardless of the party you vote for, do you normally <i>consider</i> yourself as a panista, priista, perredista, green, Morena, or any other political party?	410	Treatment 3		Treatment 3	Treatment 2
5 - (Long-term, without filter: consider) At the end of the survey Regardless of the party you vote for, do you normally <i>consider</i> yourself as a panista, priista, perredista, green, Morena, or any other political party?	197	Treatment 3		Treatment 4	Treatment 2
6 - (Long-term, without filter: sympathize) Regardless of the party you vote for, do you normally sympathize with the PAN, the PRI, the PRD, the Green Party, Morena, or any other political party?	415				Treatment 3

Table A7. Logistic Regression Models

DV (1: Partisan; 0: Nonpartisan; 2: “Don’t Know”)
 Base Category = Wording 1

	Panamá		Honduras		Argentina		Mexico	
	Non-Partisan	DK	Non-Partisan	DK	Non-Partisan	DK	Non-Partisan	DK
Wording 2	-0.34** (0.16)	-0.97*** (0.33)	-0.34** (0.16)	1.54** (0.78)			-0.59*** (0.19)	-1.37 (1.06)
Wording 3	-1.00*** (0.17)	-0.81*** (0.29)	-1.02*** (0.16)	1.79** (0.75)	-0.90*** (0.12)	1.07** (0.43)	-1.24*** (0.13)	0.88** (0.37)
Constant	0.04 (0.12)	-1.49*** (0.19)	0.62*** (0.11)	-4.07*** (0.71)	0.61*** (0.09)	-3.40*** (0.38)	1.61*** (0.10)	-2.58*** (0.33)
Observations	997	997	1,014	1,014	1,209	1,209	1,605	1,605
Pseudo R-sq	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.06	0.06

Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Category Omitted (Wording) = Wording 1

Table A8. Percent of Partisans across Survey Experiment Treatments

Country	Treatments (alternative PID wordings)								
	Short-term (w/filter)			Short-term (w/o filter)			Long-term (w/o filter)		
	%P	%NP	%DK	%P	%NP	%DK	%P	%NP	%DK
Argentina	35	64	1	-	-	-	54	41	5
Panama	44	46	10	55	41	5	67	26	7
Honduras	35	65	1	42	55	3	56	38	6
Mexico	16	82	1	26	73	1	38	52	7

Table A9. Question Wording
(in Spanish)

	Treatment 1. Short-term (with filter)	Treatment 2. Long-term (with filter)	Treatment 3. Long-term (without filter)
Panamá	En este momento, ¿simpatiza con algún partido político? (SÍ/NO) ¿Con cuál partido político simpatiza usted?	Independientemente del partido por el que usted vota, ¿usted normalmente simpatiza con algún partido político? (SI/NO) ¿Con cuál partido político simpatiza usted?	Independientemente del partido por el que usted vota, ¿usted normalmente se considera del partido Cambio Democrático, Partido Revolucionario Democrático, Partido Panameñista, Unión Patriótica, Movimiento Liberal Republicano Nacionalista, o de algún otro partido?
Honduras	En este momento, ¿simpatiza con algún partido político? (SÍ/NO) ¿Con cuál partido político simpatiza usted?	Independientemente del partido por el que usted vota, ¿usted normalmente simpatiza con algún partido político? (SI/NO) ¿Con cuál partido político simpatiza usted?	Independientemente del partido por el que usted vota, ¿usted normalmente se considera del partido Nacional, Liberal, del Libre, Anticorrupción, Demócrata Cristiano o de algún otro partido?
Argentina	En este momento, ¿simpatiza con algún partido político? (SÍ/NO) ¿Con cuál partido político simpatiza usted?		Independientemente del partido por el que usted vota, ¿usted normalmente se considera Justicialista, del Frente para la Victoria, del Peronismo Federal, de Unión Cívica Radical, de Coalición Cívica, de Propuesta Republicana o de algún otro partido?
Mexico	En este momento, ¿simpatiza con algún partido político? (SÍ/NO) ¿Con cuál partido político simpatiza usted?	Independientemente del partido por el que usted vota, usted normalmente se identifica con algun partido político? ¿Con cuál partido político se identifica usted?	Independientemente del partido por el que usted vota, ¿usted normalmente se considera panista, priista perredista, verde ecologista, de Morena o de otro partido?

Table A10. PID and Filter Questions
(in Spanish)

	Explicit Option	Survey Taking Behavior
Treatment 1	(Explicit Options) Independientemente del partido por el que usted vota, usted normalmente se identifica como panista, priista, perredista, verde ecologista, de Morena o de otro partido?	(Beginning of the survey interview) Independientemente del partido por el que usted vota, usted normalmente se considera panista, priista, perredista, verde ecologista, de Morena o de otro partido?
Treatment 2	(No Options) Independientemente del partido por el que usted vota, usted normalmente se identifica con algún partido político?	(End of the survey interview) Independientemente del partido por el que usted vota, usted normalmente se considera panista, priista, perredista, verde ecologista, de Morena o de otro partido?

Table A11. Mechanisms (Filter Question)

Multinomial Logistic Regression

DV (0 = Nonpartisan, 1 = Partisan; 2 = Don't Know)

Base Category = Partisan

IV = No Options / Explicit Options

	(1) Nonpartisan	(2) Don't Know
No Options	0.68*** (0.22)	-2.50** (1.04)
Constant	0.34** (0.15)	-1.45*** (0.26)
Observations	400	400
Pseudo R-squared	0.04	0.04

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 Standard errors in parentheses

IV = End of the Questionnaire / Beginning of the Questionnaire

	(1) Nonpartisan	(2) Don't Know
End of the Questionnaire	0.06 (0.21)	0.52 (0.41)
Constant	0.51*** (0.15)	-1.81*** (0.31)
Observations	403	403
Pseudo R-squared	0.00	0.00

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 Standard errors in parentheses

Table A12. Alternative Hypothesis

Multinomial Logistic Regression

DV (0 = Nonpartisan, 1 = Partisan; 2 = Don't Know)

Base Category = Wording 1

	(1) Nonpartisan	(2) Don't Know
“Consider yourself”	0.03 (0.17)	-0.25 (0.31)
“Sympathize with”	0.02 (0.18)	-0.08 (0.32)
Constant	0.34** (0.15)	-1.45*** (0.26)
Observations	1,225	1,225
Pseudo R-squared	0.00	0.00

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Standard errors in parentheses

Category Omitted = “Identify With”