

THE POLLS—REVIEW

MASS POLARIZATION: MANIFESTATIONS AND MEASUREMENTS

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Abstract The debate on mass polarization is itself polarized. Some argue that the United States is in the midst of a culture war; others argue that the claims are exaggerated. As polarization is a multifaceted concept, both sides can be correct. I review four distinct manifestations of polarization that have appeared in the public opinion literature—ideological consistency, ideological divergence, perceived polarization, and affective polarization—and discuss ways in which each has been measured. Then, using longitudinal data from the American National Election Studies (ANES), I update past analyses in order to more clearly show the ways in which Americans have or have not polarized: Americans at the mass level have not diverged, nor have they become more consistent ideologically, but partisans have; perceptions of polarization have increased, but this change is driven by partisans, who increasingly dislike one another.

Ask a pundit or journalist if America is polarized, and you might be chided for asking an obvious question. After [Pew \(2014, 6\)](#) released a report that purported to show that “Republicans and Democrats are more divided along ideological lines ... than at any point in the last two decades,” [Vox’s Ezra Klein \(2014\)](#) dismissed the report’s punchline as a non-finding: “(E)veryone already knew that.” However, many political scientists were not so sure, and disagreed that the Pew findings (or any other) were indicative of a polarized public (e.g., [Fiorina 2014](#); [Dickinson 2015](#)).

Much of the disagreement between journalists and (some) political scientists over polarization comes down to varied definitions. Pew focused on polarization as ideological consistency, while in their reaction to the report,

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Fiorina and Dickinson defined polarization as ideological divergence. Both of these, I argue, are distinct manifestations of polarization. Since media outlets often do not clearly operationalize the concept when writing about polarization, the casual observer or even political pundit could be forgiven for misunderstanding the current state of affairs. The situation is further confused when outlets cite election outcomes, such as the red state/blue state narrative, as evidence of polarization (see [Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope \[2005\]](#); [Levendusky and Pope \[2011\]](#) for critiques).

To clear up this confusion, I review four distinct manifestations of polarization that have appeared in the public opinion literature—ideological consistency, ideological divergence, perceived polarization, and affective polarization—and discuss ways in which each has been measured. While some, most prominently Fiorina, Levendusky, and co-authors, may argue that consistency and its component—sorting—are distinct from polarization, both can increase political tension,¹ and therefore fit into the overall typology ([DiMaggio, Evans, and Bryson 1996](#); [Noel 2014](#)).

Polarization is often discussed as both a state and a trend. In this paper, I focus on the latter, and therefore utilize longitudinal data to illustrate the extent to which the mass public has polarized over time. Given space limitations, I focus on two sets of groups—the mass public and partisans.² Although these groups are the primary focus of the polarization literature, other groups are often compared, for example the politically engaged versus the unengaged (e.g., [Abramowitz 2010](#)) and the religious versus secular (e.g., [Baker 2005](#)).

If we refocus the debate from the umbrella term—polarization—to its components, we more clearly understand the ways in which Americans have become polarized: Americans at the mass level have not become more consistent ideologically, nor have they diverged, but partisans have; perceptions of polarization have increased among partisans; and partisans increasingly dislike one another.

Ideological Polarization

Perhaps the most prominent work in the polarization literature involves a debate between Alan Abramowitz and Kyle Saunders ([Abramowitz and Saunders 2005, 2008](#); [Abramowitz 2010](#)) on the one side, and Morris Fiorina, Samuel Abrams, Jeremy Pope, and Matthew Levendusky (e.g., [Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2005](#); [Fiorina and Levendusky 2006a](#); [Fiorina and Abrams](#)

1. For instance, [Mason \(2015\)](#) finds that the sorted individuals exhibit higher levels of interparty hostility and bias.

2. By mass partisans, I mean all Americans, regardless of partisan preferences and political engagement. Partisans refers to those who, in surveys, identify with the Republican or Democratic parties. As is typical, I include partisan leaners in this definition ([Keith et al. 1992](#)).

2008; Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2008) on the other. Relying on one set of measures, the former group believes that America is in the midst of a culture war; relying on another set of measures, the latter believes that claims of a culture war are exaggerated. Because the groups define polarization differently, the debate seems to go in circles.

With a more nuanced definition of ideological polarization, there is evidence in favor of both camps' arguments. On the one hand, polarization can be defined as *alignment*, which refers to the degree to which party identity increasingly matches ideology (sorting) and the degree to which attitudes become more internally consistent (see also Hill and Tausanovitch [2015]). On the other hand, polarization has been defined as *divergence* or the degree to which the distribution of ideology has moved apart. To Abramowitz and Saunders, polarization is consistency, while to Fiorina and colleagues, polarization is divergence.

Ideological Consistency

The Pew Report (2014) that purported to show increased polarization relied heavily on Abramowitz and Saunders's (2005) measure and operationalization of polarization. To these authors, it's not necessarily the degree of ideological difference that matters so much as the degree to which people consistently align themselves with one side or another. As Baldassarri and Gelman (2008, 409) put it, "political polarization constitutes a threat to the extent that it induces alignment along multiple lines of potential conflict and organizes individuals and groups around exclusive identities, thus crystallizing interests into opposite factions." By this definition, consistency consists of two components: sorting, or the degree to which ideology matches identity, and constraint, or the correlation between issue positions.

To measure ideological alignment, Abramowitz (2010), Abramowitz and Saunders (2008), and the Pew Research Center (2014) primarily rely on an issue consistency scale. These authors take policy items that have appeared in a number of waves of either the ANES or Pew surveys, and trichotomize them to indicate the liberal position (coded -1), the conservative position (coded 1), or the moderate/no-opinion position (coded 0). They then sum across items to form a 15-point consistency index (-7 indicates that a respondent gave a liberal response to all items; 7 indicates that a respondent gave a conservative response to all items). Using this scale, these authors find that scores on this scale have polarized over time, as indicated by higher standard deviations and increased bimodality. This increase has been slight among non-voters (6 percent increase between 1984 and 2004) and fairly large among the politically engaged (~25 percent increase; Abramowitz 2010).

This measure has been criticized for exaggerating polarization, however (Fiorina and Levendusky 2006b, 96–97), as the trichotomization of the 7-point scales equates those that are slightly liberal (or conservative) with those that

are extremely liberal (or conservative). [Baldassarri and Gelman \(2008\)](#) offer an alternative way of analyzing consistency using the same data, and come to different conclusions. They calculate correlations between forty-seven issues asked in the ANES between 1972 and 2004 (yielding 1,081 issue-pairs). They find that issue consistency has barely budged—correlations increased by roughly .06 points over thirty years. This modest increase applies both to correlations between items in the same domain (e.g., two questions about economic attitudes) and to correlations between items in different domains (e.g., a question about economic attitudes and a question about moral attitudes).³ Issue consistency has grown, however, among strong partisans ([Abramowitz and Saunders 2008](#); [Baldassarri and Gelman 2008](#); [Hare and Poole 2014](#)).

While findings in favor of increased issue alignment among the mass public are mixed, scholars in both camps agree that alignment between party identity and issue attitudes has increased, a phenomenon that has been labeled sorting ([Levendusky 2009](#)). One of the ways in which these scholars have shown evidence in favor of sorting is by looking at the correlation between the 7-point party identity measure and the ideological self-placement measure.⁴ This correlation has doubled from 1972 to 2012: from $r = .28$ in 1972 to $r = .58$ by 2012, if we look at the ANES. Similarly, scholars have calculated the proportion of partisans that align their party identity with their self-reported ideology. Here as well, sorting has increased substantially over the past forty years (from 39 percent sorted in 1972 to 57 percent sorted in 2012).

Researchers have also shown an increased correlation between party identification and a variety of issues ([Fiorina and Levendusky 2006b](#); [Baldassarri and Gelman 2008](#); [Levendusky 2009](#); [Abramowitz 2010](#)). [Baldassarri and Gelman \(2008\)](#), for instance, find that the average correlations between issues and party identification have increased by roughly .05 per decade. Sorting has increased the most on moral issues over the past four decades, although it should be noted that the relationship between economic issues and partisan identification has always been stronger than that of moral issues and partisan identification.

Ideological Divergence

Fiorina, Levendusky, and colleagues believe that changes in sorting and constraint are categorically different phenomena with potentially different roots than polarization. Much of the evidence against ideological divergence (in the mass public) utilizes the 7-point liberal–conservative scale. To Fiorina and colleagues, the mass public is polarized if the distribution of responses on this scale is bimodal (a feature that they eyeball).

3. Like [Abramowitz \(2010\)](#), they also find that consistency has increased primarily among the politically engaged.

4. See the appendix for question wording.

I update Fiorina's analysis by formally assessing bimodality over time. To assess whether the distribution of responses to this measure have diverged, I use the ANES Time Series Cumulative data file (1972–2012)⁵ and calculate the bimodality coefficient (BC) (Freeman and Dale 2013; Pfister et al. 2013) of the liberal–conservative measure for each year. This measure is calculated as

$$BC = \frac{m_3^2 + 1}{m_4 + 3 \cdot \frac{(n-1)^2}{(n-2)(n-3)}}, \quad (1)$$

where m_3 refers to the skewness of the distribution, m_4 refers to its excess kurtosis, and n is the sample size. A BC of 1 indicates that a distribution is completely bimodal, and a BC of 0 indicates that the distribution is completely unimodal. A BC greater than .56 can be categorized as bimodal. In the appendix, I simulate two distributions, one that is unimodal (BC = .33) and one that is just above the threshold (BC = .57; figure A1).

In the top panel of figure 1, I plot the BC from the ANES data over time (solid line); the horizontal line indicates the value of which we can consider a distribution bimodal. While no time point crosses the threshold, there is a march toward bimodality and, therefore, polarization. In 1972 the BC was .27, and by 2012 the BC had increased to .38. Regardless, at all points in time, the distribution of responses to this measure is clearly unimodal.

While the BC can be used to assess polarization in the mass electorate, it cannot be used to test divergence between two groups. Comparing means may be misleading, as ideological consistency can lead to significant mean differences (Baldassarri and Gelman 2008). A better indicator is the degree of overlap—or common ground—between two groups. To measure the degree of overlap between Democrats and Republicans on the ideological self-placement measure, I follow Levendusky and Pope (2011) and use Schmid and Schmidt's (2006) formula to estimate an overlap coefficient (OC):

$$1 - \frac{1}{2} \int_{-\infty}^{+\infty} |f(x) - g(x)| dx, \quad (2)$$

where $f(x)$, in this case, represents the distribution of ideology among Republicans, and $g(x)$ represents the distribution of ideology among Democrats. An OC of 1 indicates that the two distributions completely overlap, and are therefore not polarized, when an OC of 0 indicates complete separation of the two groups. Again in the appendix (Figure A2), I simulate two sets of distributions—ones that are not polarized (OC = .64) and ones that are (OC = .30).

The OC coefficients for each year in the ANES data are plotted in figure 1 (solid line). By this metric, the parties have become polarized. In 1972, the

5. I use this data set throughout this review. See the appendix for details on sample characteristics.

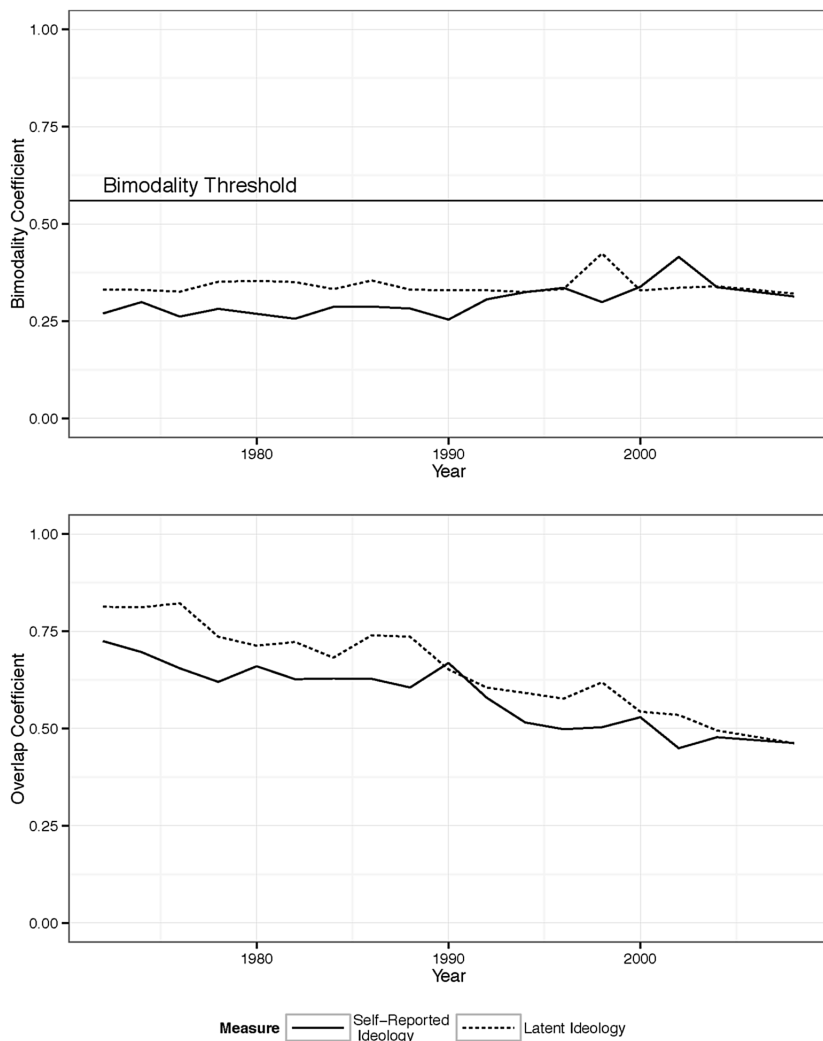


Figure 1. Ideological Divergence: Bimodality in the Mass Public and Overlap between Partisans.

two distributions were heavily overlapping (coefficient = .68), but by 2012, the degree of overlap had dropped by 45 percent (coefficient = .39).

However, the liberal–conservative scale may be a poor measure of ideological polarization. As discussed by Hare et al. (2015), a variety of response biases affect the validity of this scale, such as exaggerating the distance between oneself and the opposing candidate. Once Hare et al. correct for differential item functioning (DIF), the distribution of ideological self-placement among

the mass public is much more bimodal and the degree of overlap between partisans is smaller than if we use the uncorrected distribution. Additionally, the ideological self-placement measure may be devoid of ideological content, as many self-identified conservatives hold liberal attitudes (Malka and Lelkes 2010; Ellis and Stimson 2012).

Other scholars have relied on other methods to tap into ideology. For instance, a number of researchers have extracted latent ideology from a set of policy items through factor analysis and its extension—item response theory—from a set of policy attitudes (e.g., Treier and Hillygus 2009; Jacobson 2012; Ura and Ellis 2012). More sophisticated analyses come from Pierce (2015) and Hill and Tausanovitch (2015), both of whom use a Bayesian item response theory method to extract latent ideology from the almost complete set of policy items in the ANES, starting in the 1950s. I use Hill and Tausanovitch's (2015) estimates of ideology to assess bimodality in the mass public and overlap between Republicans and Democrats.

I calculate the bimodality coefficient in the mass public using the bimodality coefficient from 1972 to 2012 (top panel, figure 1, dotted line). Unlike the ideological self-placement data, bimodality has stayed entirely stable in the mass public, one bump aside in 1998. Latent ideology among the mass public is not currently polarized, nor has it been polarizing.

Next, I assess the amount of divergence between partisans using the overlap coefficient (bottom panel, figure 1, dotted line). This trend is very similar to that of the self-reported ideology measure. Partisans were actually more similar to one another in 1972 than the self-reported ideology measure shows (the degree of overlap was .82 using the latent ideology measure and .73 using the self-reported measure). By 2008, both measures show the same amount of overlap between the two parties (~.46).

Substantively, these results show that the mass public has not diverged ideologically; partisans, on the other hand, have diverged quite a bit.⁶ Methodologically, these results show that results from sophisticated methods are not much different from the results obtained from the traditional 7-point measure, with two minor exceptions—the latent measures show stability in bimodality and a somewhat larger drop in overlap between partisans (a 43 percent decrease in overlap using the latent measure versus a 36 percent decrease in overlap using the self-reported measure).

In sum, evidence in terms of increased ideological polarization among the mass public is, at best, mixed. The distribution of ideology among the mass public is unimodal, and the public is not becoming more ideologically consistent. Polarization, in terms of both divergence and consistency, has occurred among partisans.

6. It should also be noted that partisans have not only moved apart, but have often moved in parallel in response to political and economic changes (Soroka and Wlezién 2010; Ura and Ellis 2012).

Perceived Ideological Polarization

Another form of mass polarization is perceived ideological polarization, or the degree to which the mass public perceives the parties and their followers to be polarized (Hetherington 2008; Lachat 2008; Ahler 2014; Van Boven, Judd, and Sherman 2012; Levendusky and Malhotra 2015; Westfall et al. 2015). Perceived polarization may have effects on citizen attitudes that are independent from ideological polarization. For instance, Levendusky and Malhotra (2015) find that increasing perceptions of polarization cause people to moderate their issue positions while increasing interparty animosity.

To measure perceived polarization, Westfall et al. (2015) use a series of questions on the ANES that have asked respondents since 1970 to place each party on 7-point scales (1 = most liberal position; 7 = most conservative position) on a variety of issues. They then subtract the mean Democratic position from the mean Republican position, and find that the perceived difference has increased from slightly more than 1 point in 1968 to slightly less than 2 points in 2008 (roughly 17 percent of the full perceived polarization scale). However, the results are non-monotonic: perceived differences were equally as large in the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s as they were in 2008.

Given the aforementioned issues of using difference-of-means measures to assess polarization, I use the overlap coefficient to track perceived polarization in America. First, I assess the overlap in the mass public's placement of the Republican and Democratic parties on seven policy issues asked in the ANES, with lower values indicating that the two parties are farther apart than higher values. The thick, solid line in the top panel of figure 2, which is a loess-smoothed estimate across the seven issues, indicates that perceived polarization increased by about 10 percent. While the degree of overlap between the two parties has decreased by double digits on several issues between the first time and last time they were asked (aid to blacks—16 points; insurance—30 points; guaranteed jobs—23 points; women's role—16 points), on other issues, perceived differences have been stable.

Separating partisans from non-identifiers indicates that the trend is driven entirely by partisans. In panel 2 of figure 2, I plot the loess-smoothed overlap coefficients in perceived Democratic Party placement and perceived Republican Party placement by party identification. Independents perceive no more polarization today than they did thirty years ago. Regressing the overlap coefficient on year (rescaled so that 0 indicates 1972 and 1 indicates 2012), and allowing the intercept to vary by issue, indicates that perceived polarization has not budged among Independents ($b = .01$, $se = .04$) but has among Democrats ($b = -.12$, $se = .04$) and Republicans ($b = -.14$, $se = .04$).

There are reasons to be skeptical of these types of measures, however. Two recent studies (Bullock et al. 2015; Prior, Sood, and Khanna 2015) found that partisan differences in perceptions of objective economic conditions disappear once respondents are incentivized to give the right answer. One implication

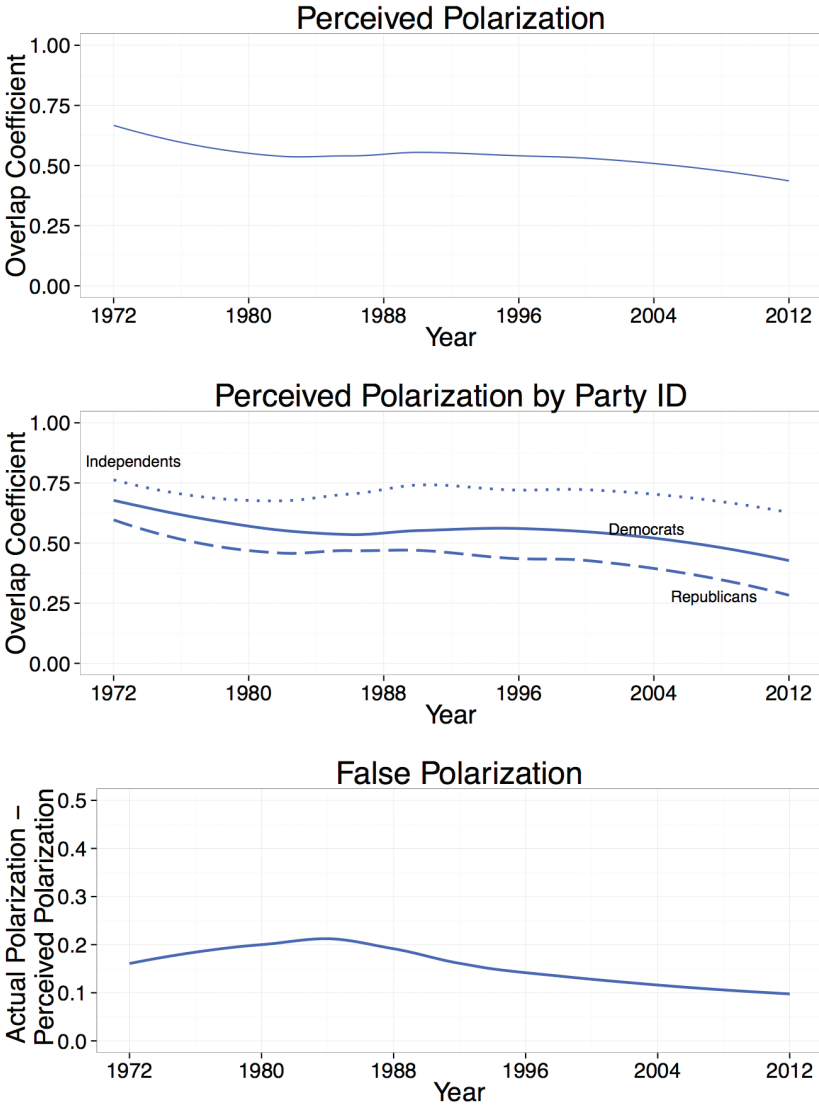


Figure 2. Degree of Overlap in Perceived Ideology.

of this work is that respondents exaggerate party extremity as a way to criticize the other side and engage in partisan cheerleading. Hence, the increase in perceived polarization among partisans may be an artifact of other forms of polarization.

A concept related to perceived polarization is false polarization, which is the difference between perceived polarization and “actual polarization,” which [Westfall et al. \(2015\)](#) define as the difference in average issue positions

between Democrats and Republicans. Using overlap coefficients to calculate the degree of actual polarization on these seven issues, I subtract the perceived polarization overlap coefficients from the actual polarization overlap coefficients.

While Americans have always overestimated the differences between partisans, false polarization has actually decreased over time (see bottom panel, [figure 2](#)). Regressing false polarization on year (rescaled so that 0 indicates 1972 and 1 indicates 2012), and allowing the intercept to vary by issue, indicates that, across issues, the gap closed by .11 (se = .03). This finding contradicts the notion that an increased focus on polarization by the media has increased (false) perceptions of polarization among the general public ([Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2005](#); [Ahler 2014](#); [Levendusky and Malhotra 2015](#)). While perceived polarization is on the rise in America, this trend seems to be increasingly grounded in reality.

Affective Polarization

Partisan identification has become an increasingly strong correlate of political attitudes and behavior ([Abramowitz and Saunders 1998](#); [Bartels 2000](#); [Hetherington 2001](#); [Bafumi and Shapiro 2009](#)). This, some believe, is at the root of growing interparty hostility, or affective polarization ([Haidt and Hetherington 2012](#); [Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012](#); [Iyengar and Westwood 2015](#); [Mason 2015](#)).

As one indicator of affective polarization, scholars have used “feeling thermometers,” measures that ask respondents to indicate on a 101-point scale how warm or cold they feel toward each party, and subtract feelings toward the out-party from feelings toward the in-party (see the appendix for wording). These studies show about an eight-point increase in affective polarization over time—from .64 points in 1978 to .72 in 2012. Furthermore, these changes have been driven almost entirely by feelings toward the out-party. In 1978, the average feeling thermometer score toward one’s own party was .74. In 2012, the average was .75. Meanwhile, the average feeling toward the out-party was .47 in 1978, and .30 in 2012.

However, feeling thermometers are often criticized. First, their underpinnings are unclear. Do respondents say they feel “cool” toward the other side because they do not like their policies? Or are these feelings based on increasing social distance, as [Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes \(2012\)](#) contend? Additionally, some have pointed out that feeling thermometers suffer from severe differential item functioning: for some, a warm glow envelops all groups; for others, the world is a much chillier place ([Wilcox, Sigelman, and Cook 1989](#)).⁷

7. [Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes \(2012\)](#) correct for this by focusing on difference scores rather than raw estimates.

Luckily, a number of other indicators of affective polarization have been proposed. To measure social distance, [Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes \(2012\)](#) use a variant of a measure first created by [Bogardus \(1925\)](#), and later used by [Almond and Verba \(1963\)](#). Respondents were asked whether they would be happy or unhappy if their son or daughter married a member of the other party. In 1960, only about 5 percent of partisans reported displeasure at the prospect of interparty marriage; by 2010, that number had increased tenfold, to about 50 percent. This measure is only one of the seven items that make up the original Bogardus scale, which also asks about accepting members of the opposite group as close personal friends, neighbors on the same street, coworkers in the same occupation, citizens in their country, visitors in their country, or whether they would exclude them from their country. While the last three might not be as relevant to measure partisan prejudice, combining the others might make a more reliable indicator of social distance than the single-item measure.

Second, [Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes \(2012\)](#) assess changes in partisan stereotypes. For instance, they compare perceptions that out-party members are intelligent and selfish overtime using data from [Almond and Verba \(1963\)](#) and more recent data. While these trait questions do not appear on the mainstay of polarization research—the ANES—other similar indicators do. For instance, the ANES has, since 1980, asked respondents to indicate whether they see the major party candidates as intelligent or moral.

These measures may be biased by social desirability concerns, as respondents may be hesitant to call anyone selfish or not intelligent.⁸ To tackle this concern, [Iyengar and Westwood \(2015\)](#) used a version of the Implicit Association Test, a measure designed to tap into implicit attitudes. In these types of studies, explicit measures tend to underestimate the extent of negative sentiment toward a group ([Hofmann et al. 2005](#)). The partisan bias shows the opposite. If we take the implicit measure to be indicative of a true attitude—a controversial statement ([Fazio and Olson 2003](#))—or at least an attitude that is less biased by social desirability, explicit attitudes tend to overestimate the extent of partisan sentiment. Hence, affective polarization, which is clearly on the rise, seems to be a unique form of prejudice. Social norms seem to pressure individuals to overstate their feelings of antipathy.

Discussion

This review described various manifestations of polarization, their operationalizations, and some trends over time. It shows that the motivating question—are Americans polarized—is impossible to answer without first specifying the form of polarization. I show that partisans have become more polarized on all fronts—ideologically (both in terms of divergences and alignment),

8. However, critics of self-reports may find comfort in recent behavioral findings that echo the survey measures ([Levendusky et al. 2015](#)).

perceptually, and affectively. While perceived polarization has increased in the aggregate, this trend is driven entirely by partisans.

Each of these manifestations has important implications for the practice and science of politics. For instance, while the lack of bimodality among the general public indicates that we should be concerned about representation, the increasing divergence between partisans indicates that elites are not necessarily out of step with their supporters. While the increased consistency between ideology and identity indicates that Americans are becoming less “innocent of ideology” (Kinder and Sears 1985) than in years past (Converse 1964), it also indicates that partisans are clearly divided into different ideological groups (even if the spatial distance between these groups is not far). The rise of perceived polarization may stimulate ideologues to vote, as more is at stake if they perceive the other side to be distant from their own. Increased affective polarization has the potential to increase incivility between citizens and decrease their support for compromise. Relatedly, Hetherington and Rudolph (2015) argue that the affectively polarized will not trust government when the other side is in power, thereby yielding the dysfunction we see today.

This is not an exhaustive review of mass polarization, as other forms have also been discussed that are not featured in this review. Some were omitted because they do not manifest as public opinion. For instance, I do not discuss geographic sorting, or the degree to which Americans are segregating themselves into ideologically homogeneous communities (Bishop 2009; Tam Cho, Gimple, and Hui 2013). Others were omitted because longitudinal public opinion data are not available. For instance, recent work on value polarization shows that “American society is characterized by extreme levels of value disagreement rather than broad adherence to a set of common fundamental principles” (Jacoby 2014, 762). The measure used to assess the rank-orderings of values has only recently been introduced. Finally, some were omitted because it is not clear whether they are independent constructs or, alternatively, caused by other forms of polarization. For instance, Jacobson (2003) has shown that partisans’ approval of presidents has increasingly polarized. In this case, polarized elite choices yield polarized mass opinions (Fiorina and Abrams 2012).

Future research should assess the causes and consequences of each manifestation. More work is needed that manipulates each form of polarization and gauges their effects on various political outcomes. For instance, Levendusky and Malhotra (2015) manipulate perceived polarization by exposing respondents to media coverage that exaggerated the extent of polarization in the public. Affective polarization is likely exacerbated by priming partisan identity. Bryan et al. (2009) manage to make people more or less ideological by priming schemas that underpin liberal and conservative ideologies.

In sum, polarization is a complex construct that requires nuanced discussion. To properly inform the public, researchers and journalists must more clearly specify their operationalization of mass polarization.

Appendix

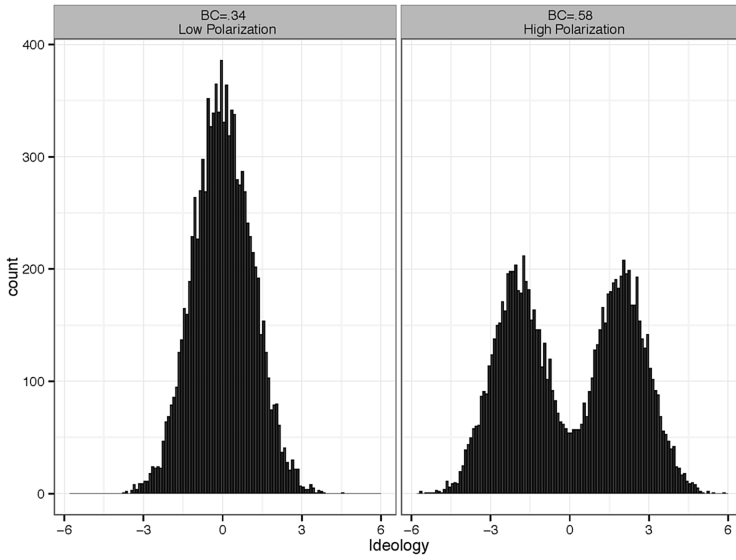


Figure A1. Simulated Distributions and Bimodality Coefficient Scores.

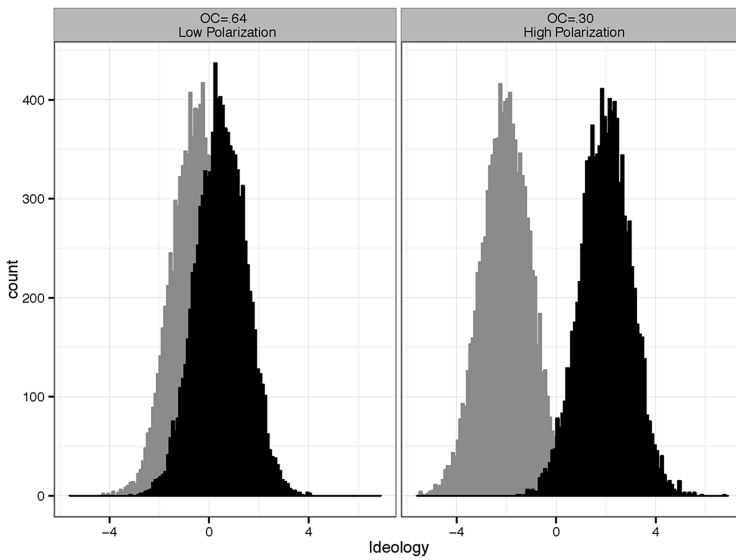


Figure A2. Simulated Distributions and Overlap Coefficient Scores.

Sample Characteristics

The American National Election Studies were conducted every two years between 1972 and 2004, and then in 2008 and 2012. Between 1972 and 2004, surveys were conducted in English. In 2008 and 2012, the surveys were also conducted in Spanish among some Latino respondents. In each year, the ANES utilized an equal-probability cross-section sample of the US population. The sampling frame of these studies includes all citizens who reside in the forty-eight contiguous states who are of voting age on or before Election Day. Washington, DC, residents were excluded from the sampling frame in 1978 and 1980. According to the cumulative file documentation, “the most common NES study design has been a cross-section, equal probability sample. These designs are typically ‘self-weighting’—i.e., the respondents do not need to be weighted to compensate for unequal probabilities of selection in order to restore the ‘representativeness’ of the sample. In several years, however, NES departed from this standard design and ‘oversampled’ certain groups (African Americans in 1964 and 1968, for example). In other years, the Election Study combined a panel re-interview with a cross-section design (as in 1974, for example).” The response rate (AAPOR RR1) and number of completed interviews, respectively, are the following: 1972 (75.0, 2,705), 1974 (70.0, 1,575), 1976 (70.4, 2,248), 1978 (68.9, 2,304), 1980 (71.8, 1,614), 1982(72.3, 1,418), 1984 (72.1, 2,257), 1986 (67.7, 2,176), 1988 (70.5, 2,040), 1990 (70.6, 1,980), 1992 (74.0, 2,485), 1994 (72.1, 1,795), 1996 (59.8, 1,714), 1998 (63.8, 1,281), 2000 (60.5, 1,807), 2002 (55.8, 1,511), 2004 (66.1, 1,212), 2008 (53.9, 1,212), and 2012 (38, 2,054).

For more information, visit <http://www.electionstudies.org/study/pages/cdf/cdf.htm>.

Question Wording

Party identification

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what? (IF REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT) Would you call yourself a strong (REP/DEM) or a not very strong (REP/DEM)? (IF INDEPENDENT, OTHER [1966 AND LATER: OR NO PREFERENCE; 2008: OR DK) Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party? (1. Strong Democrat 2. Weak Democrat 3. Independent–Democrat 4. Independent–Independent 5. Independent–Republican 6. Weak Republican 7. Strong Republican)

Ideological identification

We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. I’m going to show you (1996 AND LATER: Here is) a seven-point scale on which the

political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place the (Yourself/Democratic Party/Republican Party) on this scale? (1. Extremely liberal 2. Liberal 3. Slightly liberal 4. Moderate, middle of the road 5. Slightly conservative 6. Conservative 7. Extremely conservative)

Insurance

There is much concern about the rapid rise in medical and hospital costs. Some (1988, 1994: people) feel there should be a government insurance plan which would cover all medical and hospital expenses (1988, 1994: for everyone). Others feel that (1988, 1994: all) medical expenses should be paid by individuals, and through private insurance like Blue Cross (1988, 1994: or other company paid plans). Where would you place the (Yourself/Democratic Party/Republican Party) on this scale (1988 ONLY: or haven't you thought much about this)? (1. Government insurance plan 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. Private insurance plan)

Guaranteed jobs

Some people feel that the government in Washington should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living. (1972–1978: Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1). Others think the government should just let each person get ahead on his/her own. (1972–1978: Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2,3,4, 5, or 6.) Where would you place the (Yourself/Democratic Party/Republican Party) on this scale? (1. Government see to job and good standard of living 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. Government let each person get ahead on his own)

Aid to blacks

1988 FORM A, 1990 AND LATER: Some people feel that the government in Washington should make every possible effort to improve the social and economic position of blacks. Others feel that the government should not make any special effort to help blacks because they should help themselves. 1970–1984, 1988 FORM B: Some people feel that the government in Washington should make every possible effort to improve the social and economic position of blacks (1970: Negroes) and other minority groups (1980: even if it means giving them preferential treatment). Others feel that the government should not make any special effort to help minorities because they should help themselves (1970: but they should be expected to help themselves). ALL YEARS: Where would you place the (Yourself/Democratic Party/Republican Party) on

this scale? (1. Government see to job and good standard of living 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. Government let each person get ahead on his own)

Government services

Some people think the government should provide fewer services, even in areas such as health and education, in order to reduce spending. (1996 AND LATER: Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1). Other people feel that it is important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending. (1996: Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6.) Where would you place the (Yourself/Democratic Party/Republican Society) on this scale? (1. Government should provide many fewer services: reduce spending a lot 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. Government should provide many more services: increase spending a lot)

Defense spending

Some people believe that we should spend much less money for defense. (1996, 2004: Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1.) Others feel that defense spending should be greatly increased. (1996, 2004: Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6.) Where would you place the (Yourself/Democratic Party/Republican Party) on this scale? (1. Greatly decrease defense spending 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. Greatly increase defense spending.)

Women's rights

Recently there has been a lot of talk about women's rights. Some people feel that women should have an equal role with men in running business, industry, and government. (2004: (Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1.)) Others feel that a women's place is in the home. (2004: (Suppose these people are at the other end; at point 7.)) And of course, some people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6.) ALL YEARS EXC. 2000 VERSION 2: Where would you place yourself on this scale or haven't you thought much about this? Where would you place the (Yourself/Democratic Party/Republican Society) on this scale? (1. Women and men should have an equal role 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. Women's place is in the home)

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