

National Institute of Civil Discourse Research Brief 6: Political Polarization¹

Key Issues:

Has political polarization increased in recent U.S. history?

How is elite party polarization related to mass polarization?

What are the consequences of political polarization?

Is incivility in political discourse associated with political polarization?

Overview

While political polarization has no one universally accepted definition, it typically invokes both substantial ideological distance *between* political actors, such as political parties, and substantial ideological consensus *within* them. *Elite* party polarization is the term political scientists use to discuss the degree of partisanship that exists among political party leaders, candidates for, and occupants of, elected positions in Congress and the Executive Branch. There is general agreement that current U.S. party politics are polarized. However, elite party polarization is the usual state of affairs historically. Current elite party polarization is much higher than it was forty years ago, but the early 1970s stands out as one of the most bipartisan eras in American history. Many studies have shown increased Democratic and Republican Party polarization between the late 1960s-early 1970s and the late 1990s-2000s.

Questions of mass polarization sometimes refer to the state of political partisanship within the electorate, but the term also is used with reference to divergence of opinions on issues or policies or divergence of cultural values among social groups that themselves can be defined with reference to similarity on a characteristic such as, for example, race, gender, education, income or place of residence. In part because the term mass polarization does have multiple referents, there is substantially more debate about levels of mass polarization than there is about elite party polarization. Researchers agree that there has been increased polarization between Democratic Party and Republican Party identifiers since the early 1970s, but pundits and commentators have fostered an exaggerated sense of polarization in the broader societal realm. From 1972-2002, there was *convergence* in issue opinions over time by age, education, race, religion and region. Elite party polarization and mass polarization now feed on each other, but evidence suggests that partisan activists were the original instigators of this reciprocal polarization dynamic.

Increased polarization is blamed for declining civility in U.S. political discourse. While we know that incivility has increased at the same time as elite party polarization has risen, we do not know whether polarization *produces* incivility, incivility *produces* polarization, or there is a reciprocal relationship between the two. Elite party polarization has led to increased recognition of party differences and a heightened sense that electoral outcomes matter. Empirical research suggests that elite party polarization exacerbates the negative impact of divided control of Congress and the Executive Branch on federal government capacity for policy making. There is little evidence that polarization is decreasing trust in government. There is substantial evidence that increased elite party polarization since the 1970s has been accompanied by *increased*, rather than decreased, political engagement, although some attribute this increased engagement to enhanced political party *mobilization* rather than to increased polarization itself.

Argument and Findings

A survey conducted jointly by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press and the Washington Post found that 72 percent of the American public described the summer 2011 debt ceiling negotiations as “ridiculous,” “disgusting” and/or “stupid.”² Press commentary attributed political leaders’ ongoing stalemate to increased party polarization due to the progressive elimination of moderates from one or both of the major political parties.³ Liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats “have largely become a thing of the past,”⁴ and “[a]lthough ordinary Americans profess to dislike the polarization in Washington, the political system is rigged such that it is nearly impossible to remove its most polar

elements. Ideologically less moderate members tend to run in the safest of districts. To the extent that competition occurs in those districts, it is most likely to come in primary elections, which feature an ideologically extreme sample of voters from a district.”⁵ Current concern about heightened polarization stems from its *hypothesized* pernicious consequences, including poor public policies, incapacity to govern and solve pressing national problems, a decline of civility in U.S. politics, widespread public frustration and declines in public trust and in the legitimacy of government and its leaders.⁶

Elite Party Polarization

There is general agreement that current U.S. party politics are polarized.⁷ But as Geoffrey Layman, Thomas Carsey and Juliana Horowitz pointed out, “the current spotlight on party polarization seems to suggest that it developed only recently [but] the fact is that the major American parties have been relatively far apart on some set of issues for most of our political history.”⁸ Further,

The Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans were polarized over tariffs, the national bank, and more generally, federal versus state and citizen power in the 1790s. The Whigs and Democrats took up similar battles in the 1830s and 1840s. The Democrats and Republicans were polarized on slavery in the 1850s, agrarian and currency issues in the 1890s, the social welfare issues surrounding the New Deal in the 1930s, and civil rights in the 1960s.⁹

Colorful anecdotes abound to accompany the more systematic data on partisanship and polarization:

Party leaders during the founding era sought to settle debates with lethal duels, and Representative Preston Brooks famously caned Senator Charles Sumner in the antebellum Congress. In the late nineteenth century, the aptly named sergeant at arms busily disarmed members on the House floor and the two parties used their platforms to exchange slurs...For much of American history, the two parties have been distant from each other in the policy positions they took, and the party coalitions have been relatively cohesive in acting out their party platforms.¹⁰

Since a major function of political parties is to organize differences among political factions, identifying what is different now than in the past—and when in the past—requires examining both elite party polarization and the polarization of mass political partisanship over time.¹¹

With respect to elite polarization, “[t]he congressional literature demonstrates a growing homogeneity in policy positions within each party’s caucus and increasing divergence between the two of them.”¹² **Many studies have shown increased elite Democratic and Republican Party polarization and partisanship between the late 1960s-early 1970s and the late 1990s-2000s.** These studies assess polarization by examining change over time using the following measures:

- *The percentage of party votes*, that is, votes in which a majority of one party votes against a majority of the other party;¹³
- *Party unity scores*, that is, the percentage of members voting with a majority of their party on votes in which a majority of one party opposed a majority of the other party;¹⁴
- *Interest group ratings* of voting records of members of Congress;¹⁵
- *Measures of Congressional member ideology* referred to as D-NOMINATE scores.¹⁶

Party polarization in Congressional support for Presidential initiatives and on Congressional committees also has increased in recent years.¹⁷

Current elite party polarization is much higher than it was forty years ago, but the current period is not anomalous historically.¹⁸ Polarization in the Civil War era was so high that “political institutions [were] unable to achieve compromise and adapt to shifting preferences.”¹⁹ The situation today resembles the 1890s, when both ideological disparities *between* the parties and *within*-party unity were very high. As assessed using ideological distance between the median Democrat and median Republican in Congress, **from 1867-2003, “political parties in Congress have been polarized for much of the time.”**²⁰ **The current period follows one of the most bipartisan eras in American political history.**²¹ In the 1970s, average party unity scores for both Republicans and Democrats were in the “low 70 percent region,” whereas in more recent years, “party unity scores have been in the vicinity of 90 percent.”²² Ideological roll call votes too have increased.²³

Scholars suggest that, although the New Deal era was polarized around economic issues, today’s elite party polarization patterns are more general.²⁴ An influential view of *party realignment* argues that party conflict has a dominant policy dimension and that party change entails the emergence of new cross-cutting issue dimensions on which the parties progressively grow more polarized, while “they converge on the previously dominant line of cleavage.”²⁵ Party realignment then involves *displacement* of the old conflict by the newer one. Today’s polarization patterns came about first through the emergence of racial and civil rights issues starting in the 1960s, and then from emerging cultural and moral issues including abortion, gay rights and school prayer starting in the 1970s, that cut across economic issues brought to the fore by the New Deal.²⁶

However, Layman, et al., argue that **the current era is characterized better by “conflict extension” than by “conflict displacement.”**²⁷ When racial and cultural issues first emerged, they created greater divisions *within* the two political parties than between them. Where conflict displacement suggests that “increases in party polarization on racial and cultural issues should have coincided with a decline in party conflict on social welfare, and that the more recent growth of cultural polarization also should have led to decreasing party differences on racial matters... the degree of partisan divergence on the venerable social welfare agenda has remained as large as ever, and by many accounts, has actually grown in recent years... In fact, party polarization has grown not only on domestic concerns, but also, since the Vietnam War, on defense and foreign policy issues.”²⁸

Marc Hetherington and Joseph Weiler go further to argue that one underlying worldview dimension—which they term authoritarianism (while distinguishing their use of the term from its older discredited use in the literature)—increasingly organizes issue conflicts that are apparently unrelated in any concrete sense, between a Republican “Daddy” Party and a Democratic “Mommy” Party. This renders the conflicts as a “visceral” clash of incompatible styles of moral reasoning.²⁹

Mass Polarization

There is substantially more debate about levels of mass polarization than there is about elite party polarization.³⁰ Some of the debate involves different subjective assessments about how large the divergence in attitudes between the median Republican and median Democratic voter would need to be to count as “polarized,” with respect to electoral partisanship. But much of it is accounted for by the different types of evidence various scholars have brought to bear on the question. Scholars have examined not just differences in voting preferences between those who identify themselves as Democrats or Republicans, but also whether those who identify as Democrats and those who identify as Republicans have different ideologies or issue preferences and/or different socio-cultural values. Researchers have also examined the degree to which people cluster geographically according to their political partisanship or ideology, opinions on issues or socio-cultural preferences.³¹ Based on analyses of trends in the General Social Survey and National Election Studies³² from 1972-2004, Morris Fiorina and Samuel Adams concluded that “whether the analysis focuses on particular issues or general ideological categorizations,

there is little indication of polarization, namely the middle losing people to both extremes. Rather, we see a largely centrist public drifting slightly rightward on some issues, slightly leftward on others, but with only very small declines (of 2-5 percentage points) in the number of moderates.”³³ In contrast, based on analysis of the *same* National Election Studies data from 1972-2004, Geoffrey Layman and Thomas Carsey emphasized the “marked (and statistically significant) increases in mass *party* polarization.”³⁴

Catch phrases such as “the two Americas,” “red state/blue state” and America’s “culture wars” employed by politicians, media commentators and academics have fostered an exaggerated sense of the *scope* of mass polarization.³⁵ That is, there is evidence that increases in mass polarization around issues or ideologies are confined to political party identification.

- With respect to group polarization based on *demographic characteristics, as well as party identification*, a 1996 study using National Election and General Social Survey data from 1972 to 1996, and a follow up to that study that extended the analysis through 2002, applied four measures of polarization to thirty-five different opinion scales. **The researchers found convergence of opinion over time by age, education, race, religion and region. They found increased polarization of opinion over time only by party identification.**³⁶

Indeed, **researchers agree that ideology and opinions on policy issues have become more polarized between those who identify as Republicans and those who identify as Democrats.**³⁷

The Relationship between Elite Party Polarization and Mass Partisan Polarization

With respect to how elite party polarization and mass partisan polarization inter-relate, researchers typically assume that, when party leaders take distinct stands on new sets of issues, voters switch their party ties in response to the new issues, rather than changing their attitudes on the issue based on prior party identification. Meanwhile, the new issues mobilize new partisans, and younger voters, who are progressively replacing older cohorts, are more likely to choose their party based on the new issues.³⁸ But substantial scholarship also “shows that party identification is at least as deep-seated and stable as are attitudes toward even the most powerful political issues, that partisanship structures attitudes toward policy issues, and that individuals often change their issue positions in response to changes in the stands of elites who share their political predispositions.”³⁹ Because *some* party identifiers are moving their own attitudes toward the very liberal or very conservative positions of party elites, this too increases the polarization of mass partisanship.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, mass response to elite party mobilization will be limited not just to party identifiers, but to *those identifiers who are aware of party differences on policy issues*. Similarly, party-based conversions will be limited by *issue salience*.⁴¹

In short, **there is little support for the idea that the whole of American society and not just U.S. politics has gotten more polarized.**⁴² But when “religious experiences help link orthodox or progressive values to politics, when policy issues are logically connected to those values and when parties and candidates emphasize their distinct positions on such issues,” to that extent “culture wars” *do* contribute to mass polarization.⁴³

Morris Fiorina and Matthew Levendusky suggested that the agreed-upon increase in polarization of ideology and issue positions among party identifiers is *better characterized as “party sorting” than as polarization.*⁴⁴ As Hetherington and Weiler put it:

Polarization of elites has *not* led to a polarization of opinion among mass partisans, at least in the strict definitional understanding of the word. Instead, those ordinary people have sorted themselves better into the correct party given their existing ideological proclivities. To be sure,

the average distance between the average Republican and the average Democrat has increased significantly on an increasing number of issues and mass partisans are more tightly constrained than before, but opinions on the major issues of the day do *not* cluster nearer the ideological poles as they now do in Congress.⁴⁵

Other researchers verify the trends toward *party sorting*, but see these as *a major contributor to mass polarization, rather than distinct from it*.⁴⁶ Alan Abramowitz points out that by 2004:

[T]he ideological orientations of politically engaged partisans are very similar to the ideological orientations of Democratic and Republican candidates and officeholders. Among active citizens and campaign activists, very few Democrats are found to the right of center and very few Republicans are found either in the center or to the left of center. There is almost no overlap between the two distributions. Nor are these politically engaged partisans a small and unrepresentative fringe group—they constitute a substantial proportion of the American electorate. In 2004, active citizens made up 46 percent of all Democratic identifiers and 49 percent of all Republican identifiers. Campaign activists made up 25 percent of all Democratic identifiers and 24 percent of all Republican identifiers. They are the citizens who vote in primaries, contribute money to parties and candidates, work on campaigns, and pay attention to the actions of their elected representatives. While their support may not be enough to win an election, no candidate or elected official can afford to ignore them.⁴⁷

Clearly, the relationship between elite party polarization and mass partisan polarization is reciprocal with voters responding to party elites and those elites making assumptions—or investigating via polls—and then responding to the views of their partisans and of voters more generally.⁴⁸ There are debates about where the origins of this currently reciprocal dynamic lie. But Layman, et al., make a compelling argument that, *if we have to choose either elites or mass partisans as “instigators,” elites are the more likely culprit because “increased consistency in citizens’ attitudes toward disparate issue agendas would be unlikely in the absence of elite-level cues.”*⁴⁹ It is elites who tend to develop new issues and increase their salience to a mass audience, much of which is inattentive to politics.⁵⁰ Apparently cinching the argument,

[T]he elite-level change *predated* the mass-level change... The initial increase in overall ideological polarization between the two parties occurred in the 1970s in Congress, but did not become evident in the electorate until the 1980s. Moreover, the realignment of the white South—the preeminent electoral explanation for the growth of congressional polarization—*followed* the development of clear differences on civil rights issues between the Republican and Democratic congressional parties and presidential candidates. The growing religious and cultural divide between the parties’ mass coalitions occurred *after* increases in elite-level party differences on cultural concerns.⁵¹

However, **substantial scholarship points *neither to party elites nor to mass partisans, but rather to partisan activists as the original instigators of the reciprocal polarization dynamic.***⁵²

- Political party nominees no longer are selected by a small circle of the party elite in the proverbial smoke-filled room, but rather through caucuses and party primaries. Partisan activists participate disproportionately in these venues, and they contribute more financially, while also holding more extreme positions on issues than do other voters, including party identifiers overall.⁵³
- In closed party primaries, more moderate candidates of both parties can expect to be challenged by other candidates who are more ideologically extreme.⁵⁴
- Over the last 40-50 years, activists have become substantially more polarized in their issue positions and more general ideology, with “pragmatists” giving way to ideological “purists.”⁵⁵

- In the same period, “the presidential nominating process has become more open and participatory. Initiated mainly by the Democratic Party’s reforms of its candidate selection process between 1968 and 1972, this openness has greatly increased the influence of issue-oriented activists over the selection of party candidates and the parties’ policy agendas.”⁵⁶

In short, **institutional change in the American political system has incentivized party candidates, leaders and office holders to stake out more, rather than less, extreme positions.** If elite party polarization and mass polarization are of concern, *institutional remedies that lessen the influence of party activists or re-incentivize pragmatism over ideological purity among party activists may be required.*

Incivility

Some researchers argue that, as political polarization has grown, civility in American politics has diminished:

- More “emotionally extreme” rhetoric exhibiting lack of mutual respect on televised political talk shows may increase political polarization “by helping partisans think even less of their opponents than they already did.”⁵⁷
- During the time period that polarization has risen, uncivil discourse on the floor of the House of Representatives has increased, as measured by words ruled out of order and demands that something spoken on the floor be removed from the record.⁵⁸
- The Senate is characterized by more civility than the House, but incivility in the Senate too has grown as political polarization has increased.⁵⁹

While “[i]ncreased party polarization . . . receives much of the blame for a perceived decline in the civility of American public debate,”⁶⁰ **we lack the needed research to show whether polarization produces incivility, incivility produces polarization, or—as seems most plausible—there is a reciprocal relationship between the two.**

Other Impacts

Scholars and commentators have hypothesized many other *potential* negative consequences of elite political polarization, including legislative gridlock, citizen alienation, decreased citizen interest in politics, and decreased trust in government.⁶¹ Some have hypothesized “declines in party identification, political participation, and electoral turnout among American citizens, particularly those who occupy the political center . . . polarization also may make political moderates more likely to support and vote to achieve divided government.”⁶² *What does the empirical evidence suggest?*

- “Elite polarization has led to increased recognition of party differences and a heightened sense that the [election] outcome matters.”⁶³
- Empirical research converges to suggest that polarization exacerbates the negative impact of divided control of Congress and the Executive Branch on federal government capacity for policy making.⁶⁴

However, **scholars strongly debate the impact of polarization in the absence of divided government.** Abramowitz notes that “dramatic changes in domestic policy generally occur during . . . those relatively brief and infrequent interludes during which a party with a clear policy agenda dominates the political landscape” and he identifies divided party control of Congress and the Executive Branch as the major impediment to federal policy-making.⁶⁵ But Layman, et al., point to some research suggesting that

party polarization in Congress itself is “strongly associated with legislative gridlock and policy inaction...ideological divergence between the parties has a stronger negative effect on government’s legislative productivity than does divided party control of government.”⁶⁶

Evidence about the implications of polarization for citizen attitudes is mixed. *Some* voters surely are repelled by such polarization, and trust in particular judges may be adversely affected by the intense confirmation battles accompanying polarization. But **there is little evidence that polarization is decreasing aggregate trust in government**, and there is substantial evidence that increased elite party polarization in the United States since the 1970s has been accompanied by *increased, rather than decreased citizen political engagement*:

- **“Vicious judicial confirmation fights” are associated with “polarized elite politics”** and an experiment embedded within a survey showed that “trust in a judge varies significantly with whether respondents are told that his confirmation vote was conflictual or unanimous. The effect is particularly strong among independents.”⁶⁷
- “Confidence in Congress has a slight negative relationship to polarization [measured by member ideology scores], but confidence in the Supreme Court has a significantly positive relationship—the institution perceived as *least* partisan fares better during a highly partisan period.”⁶⁸
- Using data from the American National Election Studies between 1962 and 2004 to analyze trends in citizen political engagement, including interest in elections, following public affairs, caring which party wins Congress or the Presidency, political knowledge, and political activity beyond voting, researchers found that, contrary to fears, **“as the leaders and the Democratic and Republican parties have become increasingly polarized along ideological lines, interest in politics and participation in political activities have been increasing among the public.”**⁶⁹ Other scholars attribute this increased political engagement, including increased voter turnout, to *“a sharp increase in party mobilization,” rather than to enhanced polarization itself.*⁷⁰
- **Voter turnout in Presidential elections declined through the 1970s, when elite party polarization was unusually low, and reached its lowest points in 1988 and 1996 (after an uptick in 1992). It has been increasing since 1996**, especially among self-declared liberals and conservatives, but even among non-ideologues. The voting of self-described moderates increased substantially between 1996 and 2000 and remained relatively stable between 2000 and 2004.⁷¹
- Based on data from the National Election Studies, *political trust declined* from 1964–1980, including years when elite party polarization was *low*, then between 1980 and 2004, when elite party polarization *increased*, “political trust among all ideological groups has waxed and waned in tandem.”⁷² Only in 2004 was there a substantial correlation between ideological self-identification and trust with the level of trust among conservatives rising substantially while that of liberals declined substantially.⁷³
- “Extensive” analysis of survey items addressing perceived citizen political efficacy and perceived government responsiveness in the American National Election Studies over time, showed that “[perceived] **efficacy has generally declined as elite politics has become more polarized, although it has risen among self-identified conservatives since 1996 [and up through 2004].**”⁷⁴ Meanwhile, **“perceptions of government responsiveness generally have risen as national polarization has increased, although liberals and conservatives moved in opposite directions in 2004.”**⁷⁵

Even as their sense of political efficacy was declining, U.S. citizens reported higher levels of perceived efficacy and of government responsiveness relative to their peers in most other economically advanced democracies, in response to comparable survey questions asked between 2001 and 2005 by the International Social Survey Program or in the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. Compared to respondents from 18 other economically advanced democracies, U.S. respondents ranked second (to

Denmark) in perceiving that elections “ensure that the views of the voters are well represented,” second (again to Denmark) in *disagreeing* with the statement that “politicians don’t care what voters like me think,” and fourth (to France, Japan and Switzerland) in *disagreeing* with the statement that “people like me don’t have any say about what the government does.”⁷⁶

In Sum

Institutional change in the American political system has incentivized party candidates, leaders and office holders to stake out more, rather than less, extreme positions. If elite party polarization and mass partisan polarization are of concern, then institutional remedies that lessen the influence of party activists or re-incentivize pragmatism over ideological purity among party activists may be required. However, as Layman et al., point out: “[I]t remains somewhat ironic that political observers and political scientists have offered a primarily negative account of it [polarization]. It is ironic because they have long argued that the parties *should* be more programmatic, ideologically cohesive and distinct from each other on policy issues.”⁷⁷

Nonetheless, even if polarization is not associated with many of its “hypothesized dire consequences,”⁷⁸ **there still may be cause for concern to the extent that polarization is accompanied with greater incivility in political discourse.** This is because some [though not all] of the studies examining the impact of exposure to uncivil discourse in the media and in political campaigns find that such exposure can increase voters’ emotional responses, diminish their trust and lead them to have more negative evaluations of political institutions.⁷⁹ While current research suggests that increased political polarization is associated with decreased civility in politics, we need additional research to show whether polarization *produces* incivility, whether incivility *produces* polarization, or whether, as seems most plausible, each exacerbates the other in a dynamic spiral.

¹ Robin Stryker, Department of Sociology and Research Director, National Institute for Civil Discourse, The University of Arizona, prepared this research brief (September 1, 2011).

² Pew Research Center, “Public Sees Budget Negotiations as ‘Ridiculous,’ ‘Disgusting,’ ‘Stupid.’” August 1, 2011, at <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2078/debt-ceiling-limits> (accessed August 28, 2011).

³ See, for example, “On Capitol Hill, The Deal May No Longer Be King,” *Arizona Daily Star*, Tuesday, July 26, 2011, p. A11, reprinted from the *Washington Post*; “With Washington at Impasse, Worry over Reaction,” *New York Times*, Monday, July 25, 2011, pp. A1, A10. See also Frank Rich, “The Tea Party Wags the Dog,” *New York Times, Sunday Opinion*, January 30, 2011, p. 8. Rich prefigured the summer’s debt ceiling impasse.

⁴ Marc J. Hetherington and Jonathan D. Weiler, *Authoritarianism & Polarization in American Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 190.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 190, citations omitted.

⁶ Geoffrey C. Layman, Thomas M. Carsey and Juliana M. Horowitz, “Party Polarization in American Politics: Characteristics, Causes, and Consequences,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 9, 2006, pp. 83-110; Sarah Sobieraj and Jeffrey M. Barry, “From Incivility to Outrage: Political Discourse in Blogs, Talk Radio, and Cable News,” *Political Communication* 28, 2011, pp. 19-41; William A. Galson and Matthew S. Levendusky, “Delineating the Problem,” in *Red and Blue Nation? Vol.1: Characteristics and Causes of America’s Polarized Politics*, ed. P. S. Nivola and D. W. Brady, Hoover Institution and Brookings Institution, 2006, pp. 49-71; Richard Fleisher and John R. Bond, “Polarized Politics: Does It Matter?” in *Polarized Politics: Congress and the President in a Partisan Era*, ed. J. R. Bond and R. Fleisher, *Congressional Quarterly Press*, 2000, pp. 1-8; Marc J. Hetherington, “Turned Off or Turned On? How Polarization Affects Political Engagement,” in *Red and Blue Nation? Vol. 2: Consequences and Correction of America’s Polarized Politics*, ed. P.S. Nivola and D. W. Brady, Hoover Institution and Brookings Institution, 2008, pp. 1-33; Barbara Sinclair, “Spoiling the Sausages? How a Polarized Congress Deliberates and Legislates,” in *Red and Blue Nation? Vol. 2: Consequences and Correction of America’s Polarized Politics*, ed. P. S. Nivola and D. W. Brady, Hoover Institution and Brookings Institution, 2008, pp. 55-87; David W. Brady, John Ferejohn and Laurel Harbridge, “Polarization and Public Policy: A General Assessment,” in *Red and Blue Nation? Vol. 2: Consequences and Correction of America’s Polarized Politics*, ed. P. S. Nivola and D. W. Brady, Hoover

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- ⁷ Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6; David W. Brady and Hahrie C. Han, "Polarization Then and Now: A Historical Perspective," in *Red and Blue Nation? Vol. 1: Characteristics and Causes of America's Polarized Politics*, ed. P.S. Nivola and D. W. Brady, Hoover Institution and Brookings Institution, 2006, pp. 119-151; Marc J. Hetherington, "Review Article: Putting Polarization into Perspective," *British Journal of Political Science* 39, 2009, pp. 413-448; McCarty et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6, p. 1; Fiorina and Abrams 2008, *supra* n. 6.
- ⁸ Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6, p. 85. See also Hetherington, 2009, *supra*, n. 7; Brady and Han, 2006, *supra*, n. 7.
- ⁹ Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6, p. 85, citations omitted.
- ¹⁰ Brady and Han 2006, *supra* n. 7, p. 121.
- ¹¹ See Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6; Hetherington 2009, *supra* n. 7; Brady and Han 2006, *supra* n. 7.
- ¹² Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6, p. 87.
- ¹³ Richard Fleisher and Jon R. Bond, "Congress and the President in a Partisan Era," in *Polarized Politics: Congress and the President in a Partisan Era*, ed. J.R. Bond and R. Fleisher, 2000, Congressional Quarterly Press, pp. 1-8; Jeffrey M. Stonecash, Mark D. Brewer and Mack D. Mariani, *Diverging Parties: Social Change, Realignment, and Party Polarization*, Westview Press, 2003; Brady and Han, 2006, *supra* n. 7.
- ¹⁴ Fleisher and Bond 2000, *supra* n. 13; Barbara Sinclair, "The Dream Fulfilled? Party Development in Congress 1950-2000," in *Responsible Partisanship?* ed. J.C. Green and P.S. Hernsson, University of Kansas Press, 2002, pp. 181-200; Stonecash et al. 2003, *supra* n. 13; Brady and Han, 2006, *supra* n. 7.
- ¹⁵ Stonecash et al. 2003, *supra* n. 13.
- ¹⁶ D-NOMINATE scores were created by Keith T. Poole and Howard Rosenthal. See Keith T. Poole and Howard Rosenthal, *Congress: A Political-Economic History of Roll Call Voting*, Oxford University Press, 1997; Keith T. Poole and Howard Rosenthal, "D-NOMINATE after 10 Years," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 26, 2001, pp. 5-29; Gary C. Jacobson, "Party Polarization in National Politics: The Electoral Connection," in *Polarized Politics: Congress and the President in a Partisan Era*, ed. J.R. Bond and R. Fleisher, Congressional Quarterly Press, 2000, pp. 9-30; Richard Fleisher and Jon R. Bond, "The Shrinking Middle in the U.S. Congress," *British Journal of Political Science* 34, 2004, pp. 429-451; Brady and Han 2006, *supra* n. 7.
- ¹⁷ George C. Edwards III and Andrew Barrett, "Presidential Agenda Setting," in *Polarized Politics: Congress and the President in a Partisan Era*, ed. J.R. Bond and R. Fleisher, Congressional Quarterly Press, 2000, pp. 109-133; Barbara Sinclair, "Hostile Partners: The President, Congress and Lawmaking in the Partisan 1990s," in *Polarized Politics: Congress and the President in a Partisan Era*, ed. J.R. Bond and R. Fleisher, Congressional Quarterly Press, 2000, pp. 134-153; Richard Fleisher and Jon R. Bond, "Partisanship and the President's Quest for Votes on the Floor of Congress," in *Polarized Politics: Congress and the President in a Partisan Era*, ed. J.R. Bond and R. Fleisher, 2000, pp. 154-185; John H. Aldrich and David W. Rohde, "Congressional Committees in a Partisan Era," in *Congress Reconsidered*, ed. L. C. Dodd and B. I. Oppenheimer, *Congressional Quarterly Press*, 8th ed., 2005, pp. 249-270.
- ¹⁸ Hetherington 2009, *supra* n. 7, p. 417.
- ¹⁹ Brady and Han 2006, *supra* n. 7, p. 123.
- ²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 130.
- ²¹ *Ibid*.
- ²² John Campbell, "Polarization Runs Deep, Even by Yesterday's Standards," in *Red and Blue Nation? Vol.1: Characteristics and Causes of America's Polarized Politics*, ed. P. S. Nivola and D. W. Brady, Hoover Institution and Brookings Institution, 2006, pp. 152-170.
- ²³ See citations *supra*, n. 14.
- ²⁴ Brady and Han 2006, *supra* n. 7; Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6; Hetherington and Weiler 2009, *supra* n. 4.
- ²⁵ Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6, p. 85, citing Elmer E. Shattschneider, *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America*, Dryden, 1960; James L. Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States*, Brookings Institution, 1983; Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics*, Princeton University Press, 1989; Jerome M. Clubb, William H. Flanigan and Nancy H Zingale, *Partisan Realignment*, Sage, 2nd Ed, 1990; Gary Miller and Norman Schofield, "Activists and Partisan Realignment in the United States," *American Political Research* 32, 2003, pp. 285-309.

²⁶ Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6, citing, for example, Carmines and Stimson 1989, *supra* n. 25; Sundquist 1983, *supra* n. 25, Byron E. Shafer and William JM Claggett, *The Two Majorities: The Issue Context of Modern American Politics*, John Hopkins University Press, 1995; Alan Abramowitz, "Issue Evolution Reconsidered: Racial Attitudes and Partisanship in the U.S. Electorate," *American Journal of Political Science* 38, 1994, pp. 1-24; Greg D. Adams, "Abortion: Evidence of Issue Evolution," *American Journal of Political Science* 41, 1997, pp. 718-737; Geoffrey C. Layman, *The Great Divide: Religious and Cultural Conflict in American Party Politics*, Columbia University Press, 2001; David C. Leege, Kenneth D. Wald, Brian S. Krueger and Paul D. Mueller, *The Politics of Cultural Differences: Social Change and Voter Mobilization Strategies in the Post-New Deal Period*, Princeton University Press, 2002; Kara Lindaman and Donald P. Haider-Markel, "Issue Evaluation, Political Parties, and the Culture Wars," *Political Research Quarterly* 55, 2002, pp. 91-110.

²⁷ Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6.

²⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 86-87, citations omitted.

²⁹ Hetherington and Weiler 2009, *supra* n. 4, p. 191.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Fiorina and Adams 2008, *supra* n. 6; see also Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6; Morris P. Fiorina and Matthew S. Levendusky, "Disconnected: The Political Class Versus the People," in *Red and Blue Nation? Vol. 1: Characteristics and Causes of America's Polarized Politics*, ed. P. S. Nivola and D. W. Brady, Hoover Institution and Brookings Institution, 2006, pp. 49-71; Alan I. Abramowitz, "Disconnected or Joined at the Hip? Comment," in *Red and Blue Nation? Vol. 1: Characteristics and Causes of America's Polarized Politics*, ed. P.S. Nivola and D. W. Brady, Hoover Institution and Brookings Institution, 2006, pp. 72-85; Hetherington and Weiler 2009, *supra* n. 4.

³² The General Social Survey, run by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) provides substantial data to assess demographic, behavioral and attitudinal change over time in the United States. For more information, see <http://www3.norc.og/GSS+Website/> (accessed Sept. 24, 2011). The American National Election Studies (ANES, sometimes NES) is a collaborative research program between the University of Michigan and Stanford University, producing comparable data on voting and political participation at regular intervals. For more information, see <http://www.electionstudies.org/> (accessed September 22, 2011).

³³ Fiorina and Abrams 2008, *supra* n. 6, p. 574.

³⁴ Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6, p. 90, citing George C. Layman and Thomas M. Carsey, "Party Polarization and 'Conflict Extension' in the American Electorate," *American Journal of Political Science* 46, 2002, pp. 723-250, emphasis mine.

³⁵ Morris Fiorina with Samuel Abrams and Jeremy C. Pope, *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*, Third Edition, Longman, 2011. These scholars argue that four factors contribute to the misperception that the mass electorate is equally as polarized as are elites. These are: 1) presuming that close elections represent deep divisions; 2) presuming that party activists, who take more extreme positions on issues than do party identifiers, are representative of the entire electorate; 3) presuming that vote choices that are polarized between Republican and Democratic identifiers represent extreme positions on the issues themselves; and 4) the tendency of media commentators to highlight conflict. "[S]tories that can be framed in terms of battles and wars; victories and defeats, unbridgeable gulfs and irreconcilable differences are more attractive [for the media], especially if they portend even more serious consequences—splits, disruptions, even (hopefully?) violence" (Fiorina 2011, p. 22).

³⁶ Paul DiMaggio, John Evans and Bethany Bryson, "Have Americans' Social Attitudes Become More Polarized," *American Journal of Sociology* 102, 1996, pp. 690-775; John Evans, "Have Americans Attitudes Become More Polarized: An Update," *Social Science Quarterly* 84, 2003, pp. 71-90.

³⁷ Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 92, citations omitted.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*; Fiorina 2011, *supra* n. 35; Fiorina and Adams 2008 *supra* n. 6; Fiorina and Levendusky 2006, *supra* n. 31.

⁴³ Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6, p. 93.

⁴⁴ Fiorina and Levendusky 2006, *supra* n. 31; see also Fiorina and Abrams 2008, *supra* n. 6; Fiorina 2011, *supra* n. 35.

⁴⁵ Hetherington and Weiler 2009, *supra* n. 4, p. 191, citations omitted, emphasis mine; see also Hetherington 2009, *supra*, n. 7.

⁴⁶ Abramowitz 2006, *supra* n. 31, Abramowitz, 2010, *supra* n. 6; Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6.

⁴⁷ Abramowitz 2006, *supra* n. 31, p. 85; see also extended analyses in Abramowitz 2010, *supra* n. 6.

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- ⁴⁸ See discussion in text and Abramowitz 2010, *supra* n. 6; Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6; Fiorina and Adams 2008, *supra* n. 6; Hetherington 2009, *supra* n. 7.
- ⁴⁹ Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6, p. 95.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 95, citations omitted, emphases mine.
- ⁵² See Carmines and Stimson 1989, *supra* n. 25; Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6; Abramowitz 2010, *supra* n. 6.
- ⁵³ Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6.
- ⁵⁴ Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6 p. 97 citations omitted.
- ⁵⁵ Abramowitz 2006, *supra* n. 31; Abramowitz, 2010, *supra* n. 6; Morris Fiorina, “Whatever Happened to the Median Voter?” Paper presented at MIT Conference on Parties in Congress, Cambridge, MA, 1999; Gary C. Jacobson, “Party Polarization in National Politics: The Electoral Connection,” in J. R. Bond and R. Fleisher, *Polarized Politics: Congress and the President in a Partisan Era*, Congressional Quarterly Press, 2000, pp. 9-30; Kyle L. Saunders & Alan I. Abramowitz, “Ideological Realignment and Active Partisans in the American Electorate,” *American Political Research* 32, 2004, pp. 285-309; Fiorina 2011, *supra* n. 35.
- ⁵⁶ Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6, p. 97.
- ⁵⁷ Diana C. Mutz, “How the Mass Media Divide Us,” in *Red and Blue Nation? Vol. 1: Characteristics and Causes of America’s Polarized Politics*, ed. P. S. Nivola and D. W. Brady, Hoover Institution and Brookings Institution, 2006, pp. 223-262, 240.
- ⁵⁸ Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Erika Falk, “Continuity and Change in Civility in the House,” in *Polarized Politics: Congress and the President in a Partisan Era*, ed. J. R. Bond and R. Fleisher, Congressional Quarterly Press, 2000, pp. 96-108.
- ⁵⁹ Eric M. Uslaner, *The Decline of Comity in Congress*, University of Michigan Press, 1993; Eric M. Uslaner, “Is the Senate more Civil than the House? In *Esteemed Colleagues: Civility and Deliberation in the Senate*, ed. B. Loomis, Brookings Institution, 2000, pp. 32-56.
- ⁶⁰ Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6, p. 101.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 101.
- ⁶³ Fiorina and Abrams 2008, *supra* n. 6, p. 582, citations omitted.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁵ Abramowitz 2010, *supra* n. 6, p. 168.
- ⁶⁶ Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6, p. 101
- ⁶⁷ Fiorina and Adams 2008, *supra* n. 6, p. 583.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 583, emphasis mine.
- ⁶⁹ Abramowitz 2010, *supra* n. 6, p. 33 and data displayed in Table 2.1.
- ⁷⁰ Fiorina and Adams 2008, *supra* n. 6, p. 583.
- ⁷¹ Hetherington 2008, *supra* n. 6, pp. 5-6.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁴ Fiorina and Abrams 2008, *supra* n. 6, p. 583.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 583.
- ⁷⁶ Deborah Jordan Brooks and John G. Geer, “Comment,” in *Red and Blue Nation? Vol. 2: Consequences and Correction of America’s Polarized Politics*, ed. P. S. Nivola and D. W. Brady. Hoover Institution and Brookings Institution, 2008, pp. 34-51, 47, Table 1-11. However, the average country-level percentage of *disagreement* with the statement “politicians don’t care what people like me think,” was only 26 percent, and the U.S. percentage was 39 percent.
- ⁷⁷ Layman et al. 2006, *supra* n. 6, pp. 101-102, emphasis mine.
- ⁷⁸ Fiorina and Adams 2008, *supra* n. 6, p. 583.
- ⁷⁹ See Sarah Sobieraj and Jeffrey M. Barry 2011, *supra* n. 6, p. 21; Richard Forgette and Jonathan S. Morris, “High Conflict Television News and Public Opinion,” *Political Research Quarterly* 59, 2006, pp. 447-456; Kim L. Fridkin and Patrick J. Kenny, The Dimensions of Negative Messages. *American Politics Research* 36, 2008, pp. 694-723; Diana C. Mutz, “Effects of In-Your-Face Television Discourse on Perceptions of a Legitimate Opposition,” *American Political Science Review* 101, 2007, pp. 621-635; Diana C Mutz and Bryon Reeves, “The New Videomalaise: Effects of Televised Incivility on Political Trust,” *American Political Science Review* 99, 2005, pp. 1-15. For more discussion, see Jerry W. Lee and Robin Stryker, *National Institute for Civil Discourse Research Brief No. 4: Classical Rhetoric, Modern Science and Contemporary Civil Discourse*, August 3, 2011; Taylor Danielson

and Robin Stryker, *National Institute for Civil Discourse Research Brief No. 5: Political Knowledge, Persuasion and Campaign Rhetoric*, August 30, 2011, and Robin Stryker, Carli Brosseau and Zachary Schrank, *National Institute for Civil Discourse Research Brief No. 7: Negative Campaigning*,” September 12, 2011. Mutz and Reeves (2005) conducted an experiment in which some subjects were shown a candidate debate that was civil, whereas other subjects were shown the same substantive debate, but conducted in an uncivil fashion. Incivility was operationalized by having the debaters sigh, roll their eyes and interrupt each other. Participants who viewed the civil debate exhibited increased trust in government and Congress, whereas those who viewed the uncivil debate exhibited decreased trust. Using the same strategy to operationalize civility vs. incivility, Mutz (2007) also found that the combination of incivility in political debate with a close-up camera perspective increased viewers’ emotional arousal and diminished their perceptions of the legitimacy of issue arguments that these viewers already were predisposed to dislike. But a 2007 experiment conducted by Deborah Jordan Brooks and John G. Geer found that “it is not even incivility that offends people but incivility directed at personal traits rather than political positions. Contrary to the Mutz and Reeves finding, however, even incivility directed at a candidate’s person [did] not lead to lower trust or efficacy” (Fiorina and Abrams 2008, *supra* n. 6, pp. 582-583, emphasis mine, citing Brooks and Geer, "Beyond Negativity: The Effects of Incivility on the Electorate," *American Journal of Political Science*. 51(1), 2007, pp. 1-16).