Intra-party Polarization in American Politics

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Abstract: We know that elite polarization and mass sorting have led to an explosion of hostility between parties, but how do Republicans and Democrats feel toward their own respective parties? Have these trends led to more cohesion or more division within parties? Using the American National Election Studies (ANES) time series, we first show that intraparty polarization between ideologically extreme and ideologically moderate partisans is on the rise. Second, we demonstrate that this division within parties has important implications for how we think about affective polarization between parties. Specifically, the distribution of relative affect between parties has not become bimodal, but merely dispersed. Thus, while the mean partisan has become affectively polarized, the modal partisan has not. These results suggest polarization and sorting may be increasing the viability of third party candidates and making realignment more likely.

Keywords: Polarization, Party Coalitions, Realignment, Ideology

Supplementary materials are available in an online appendix, and materials necessary to replicate all analyses are available on Dataverse.
Recent studies demonstrate that the average Republican loathes the Democratic Party, and the average Democrat loathes the Republican Party, to a degree unprecedented in modern American politics (Abramowitz and Webster 2016; Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Iyengar and Krupenkin 2018; Iyengar and Westwood 2014; Mason 2018). But, how do Republicans and Democrats feel about their own respective parties? Is partisan and ideological sorting making parties more cohesive, or are these forces actually tearing party coalitions apart? We find evidence of intraparty polarization—increased dispersion in partisans’ feelings toward their own party—explained in part by divisions between moderate partisans and their more ideologically extreme counterparts.

How does this recognition of affective polarization within parties affect our understanding of affective polarization between parties? If partisans are dividing into more cohesive groups with stronger preferences for their own party, the distribution of differences between party feeling thermometers—a common indicator of affective polarization—should appear increasingly bimodal. But, if partisans are dividing without uniting, we should only see increased dispersion, not bimodality. This would indicate that elite polarization and mass sorting may be opening the door for third-party candidates and even realignment, not reinforcing our current party division.

*The Effect of Elite Polarization on the Electorate*

Research shows two very different yet logically compatible trends in how the masses have reacted to elite polarization. On one hand, the public seems to be following the lead of Congress. Although the electorate may not be particularly polarized on policy issues, it has sorted (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2011), bringing party identification and ideology into closer alignment (Levendusky 2009). This alignment has created a stronger sense of social identity among sorted partisans (Mason 2018), leading these individuals to become more engaged (Abramowitz 2010) and more disdainful toward the opposition (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012).
On the other hand, much of the public is frustrated with polarization. Studies show the uncivil nature of contemporary political discourse turns many people off to politics, leading to distrust (Mutz and Reeves 2005) and disengagement (Mutz 2006; Klar and Krupnikov 2016). Many individuals are embarrassed to even admit their partisan allegiances (Klar and Krupnikov 2016), and when exposed to media coverage of polarization, they report more moderate issue positions to distance themselves from the partisan fray (Levendusky and Malhotra 2016). In fact, despite sorting themselves into the ideologically “correct” parties, the average partisan has actually come to like her party a bit less over time (Groenendyk 2018; Klar, Krupnikov, and Ryan 2018).

Taken together, these works suggest that focusing on the mean partisan may obfuscate heterogeneity in partisans’ reactions to elite polarization over time. Although partisans’ feelings toward their party appear fairly stable on average (Abramowitz and Webster 2016; Iyengar et al. 2012; Iyengar and Krupenkin 2018), simple spatial logic predicts growing heterogeneity underlying this average. If voters’ reactions to elite polarization depend on their ideological self-identification (Rogowski and Sutherland 2016) ideologically extreme identifiers should approve of their party’s increased extremity while moderate identifiers should disapprove.

Our simple spatial model is illustrated in Figure 1. First, the polarization of party elites has provided all partisans with a reason to like the other party less. Regardless of personal ideological extremity, the other party is now farther from every partisan’s ideal point, leading to interparty polarization (i.e. disdain for the opposition). However, when we look at partisans’ feelings toward their own party, we should see increased heterogeneity or intraparty polarization. As party elites become more extreme, moderates should come to like their own party less compared to their more ideologically extreme counterparts. If one focuses only on means (represented by dashed lines),
the increase in negative feelings toward the opposition party will be quite apparent, but the increasing heterogeneity in partisans’ feelings toward their own party will be obfuscated.¹

**Figure 1: Intraparty Polarization Hypothesis**

![Figure 1: Intraparty Polarization Hypothesis](image)

**Hypothesis 1:** Over time, partisans’ feelings toward their own party will become more divided based on ideological extremity.

Figure 2 illustrates what happens when we shift focus to differences in partisans’ feelings toward the two parties—a concept commonly labeled affective polarization. An intuitive way to quantify affective polarization is to calculate the polarization of the average partisan. We do this by calculating the average absolute difference between party feeling thermometer ratings, essentially “folding” the distribution of party feeling thermometer differences at its midpoint and taking the mean.² By this measure, affective polarization has clearly increased (see Iyengar et al. 2012; Iyengar and Krupenkin 2018). However, there are two observationally equivalent

¹ Readers should not interpret our use of spatial terminology as indication that feelings must be rooted in substantive policy preferences. Our findings are likely driven by preferences over “style” more than “substance” (Lelkes 2018). Policy aside, moderate identifiers like their party less while strong ideological identifiers like it more (see appendix).

² Some researchers subtract partisans’ feelings toward the “other” party from their feelings toward their “own” party. This yields a measure virtually indistinguishable from ours (r=.99). See online appendix for additional details.
explanations for this pattern. To illustrate, Figure 2 shows three hypothetical distributions of differences in affect toward parties. In each case, we show where the mean falls after that distribution has been “folded.” Again, this is a typical way to quantify affective polarization.

The left panel illustrates a clear case of low polarization. In this scenario, partisans’ feelings are clustered around zero, indicating similar feelings toward the two parties. The middle panel illustrates a clear case of high polarization. Compared to the left panel, partisans have divided into two distinct groups, creating a bimodal distribution. Here the mean partisan and the modal partisan are both farther from the midpoint of the distribution. Notably, bimodality is the standard Fiorina et al. (2011) uses to evaluate policy-based polarization, concluding that the electorate is closely divided (i.e. symmetrically distributed) but not deeply divided over policy (i.e. not bimodally distributed). In the right panel, feelings toward the parties have polarized on average (as indicated by the higher average absolute difference in thermometer ratings compared to the low polarization panel), but the modal partisan remains near the midpoint of the distribution. This is the type of distribution that would result if strong liberals and conservatives were polarizing while moderate partisans were rating both parties more negatively over time, leaving them relatively unpolarized.

**Figure 2: Dispersion Hypothesis**

Note: The black vertical lines represent the mean after the distribution has been “folded” at its midpoint. The distance of this line from the midpoint of the distribution indicates the polarization of the mean partisan. Compared to the low polarization panel, we see mean polarization in both the bimodality panel and the high dispersion panels. However, it is only in the bimodality panel where the modal partisan is polarized.
Hypothesis 2: The distribution of relative affect toward the Republican and Democratic parties will become more dispersed, rather than bimodal, over time.

Evidence of Intraparty Polarization

We have hypothesized that, while ideological extremists should approve of the polarization of their party’s elites, self-identified moderates should be frustrated and have nowhere to sort. If this is true, over time, we should see divergence between the feelings that extreme ideological identifiers and moderates report toward their party. We test this prediction using the 7-point measure of ideological identification and the party feeling thermometers available in the ANES time series.³

Looking from left to right, the results displayed in the first two panels of Figure 3 support our prediction of divergence within both parties. Liberal Democrats now report more positive feelings toward their party, and moderate Democrats now report less positive feelings toward their party. Conservative Republicans’ feelings conform to expectations by rising through the 1980s, but then decline back to approximately their previous level. Nonetheless, we see divergence due to the steady decline in moderate Republicans’ feelings toward their party.

The third panel in Figure 3 reinforces this pattern. Here we plot the OLS regression coefficient associated with moderation in each year of the ANES time series:

\[ ownparty_i = \alpha + \beta \times moderation_i + \epsilon_i \]

³Analyses include partisan “leaners.” However, results appears quite robust to exclusion of leaners and inclusion of all independent (see appendix). All analyses exclude online respondents. Tests account for change in wording of party feeling thermometers by calculating the within-respondent effect during years when both versions were included and adding the mean difference to the corresponding feeling thermometer prior to the change. We analyze Republicans and Democrats separately to account for possible partisan asymmetry (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016).
where ideology is measured on the standard 7-point scale and moderation is operationalized as

$$-|\text{ideology}_i - 4|$$

And, ownparty represents one’s own party rating on a 100-point feeling thermometer.

The right panel shows downward trends in the coefficient on moderation for both Republicans’ feelings toward the Republican Party and Democrats’ feelings toward the Democratic Party. This indicates that moderates increasingly dislike their party relative to those who identify as more ideologically extreme.\(^4\)

Looking across the three panels, the most notable exceptions appear to “prove the rule.” In 1990, George H.W. Bush agreed to raise taxes to reduce the budget deficit, working across the aisle with Democrats. At this time point, we see a momentary drop in conservative Republicans’ feelings toward their party. We see a similar pattern among liberal Democrats in 2016, when the party nominated a moderate, Hillary Clinton, over a socialist, Bernie Sanders. Previous primary battles did not produce this sort of ideological fracturing within the party, which speaks to the increased influence of ideology, not just on feelings between parties but also within parties.\(^5\)

In attempt to gain causal leverage, we ran cross-lagged regression models using each of the ANES panel datasets that included the necessary variables (see online appendix). In two of the three datasets, moderate ideology is associated with large decreases in partisans’ feelings toward

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\(^4\) See appendix for discussion of differences between Republicans and Democrats in Figure 3.

\(^5\) Coefficients in Figure 3 are from separate regressions fit to each year of the ANES data. To test the significance of this trend, we modeled the interaction between moderation and time with year dummies included separately. The negative interaction terms for both Republicans \((p<.01)\) and Democrats \((p<.01)\) supports our theory that time is making the effect of moderation more negative (see appendix, Table 1). We have also replicated the patterns shown in Figure 3 with specifications including relevant controls (see appendix).
their own party from time 1 to time 2. We see weak and inconsistent evidence of feedback, with partisans’ feelings toward their party only affecting their ideology in one of the three periods.⁶

**Figure 3: Intraparty Polarization Explained by Ideological Extremity**

How Polarization Within Parties Affects Polarization Between Parties

Have Americans divided into more cohesive groups, or have they just divided? Using a common method of estimating affective polarization, we first calculate the average absolute difference between party feeling thermometers for each year (MEAN DIFFERENCE). However, this method has the potential to obfuscate the heterogeneity observed above, so we also employ Esteban and Ray’s (1994) axiomatically derived measure of polarization (BIMODALITY), which captures changes in the distribution of affect between parties (see appendix). Although we remain agnostic about the semantics, Esteban and Ray argue that, by definition, polarization requires bimodality.⁷

Figure 4 shows the trends in MEAN DIFFERENCE and BIMODALITY from 1964 to 2016. Trends were estimated using a simple polynomial regression model, where $t$ signifies year:

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⁶Due to space constraints, results are presented in the online appendix. All models included controls for party identification strength and feelings toward the other party. Effects noted are statistically significant at ($p<.05$). While cross-lagged analyses aid causal inference, it should be noted that they cannot establish definitive causality.

⁷Distributions of own party, other party, and difference between parties are plotted for each year in online appendix.
\[ \text{polarization}_t = \alpha + \beta_1 \cdot t + \beta_2 \cdot t^2 + \epsilon_t \]

Consistent with the polarization literature, the left panel shows that the average absolute value of the difference in partisans’ feelings toward the two parties has indeed grown over time. However, in the right panel, where we shift focus to the distribution of differences in party feeling thermometer ratings (see theoretical distinction explained in Figure 2), we see a very different pattern. Rather than seeing an upward trend in bimodality, as one might expect in a polarizing electorate, the bimodality of the distribution appears to have decreased from 1964 to 2000 and then risen back up to only about half of its prior level. Thus, while the average distance between Republicans’ and Democrats’ feelings toward one another has been growing (MEAN DIFFERENCE), there is little evidence to suggest that partisans’ feelings are consolidating into more distinctive groups (BIMODALITY). Some partisans are becoming more affectively polarized, driving up mean affective polarization as the distribution disperses. But the modal partisan remains near the midpoint of the scale, reporting similar feelings toward both parties. This suggest the existing literature is right to point out the growing mean distance between partisans’ feelings toward the two parties, but this pattern is clearly not representative of all partisans.

**Figure 4: Comparing Indicators of Polarization Between Parties**
**Discussion**

We believe these results have vital implications for understanding our political climate and the stability of the current party system. One might conclude from the extant literature that the current partisan and ideological cleavage is solidifying and growing deeper. Our findings suggest the opposite: The partisan divide may be growing more fluid. Despite partisan and ideological sorting, parties are becoming internally divided. Stronger ideological identifiers continue to express very positive feelings toward their party, but ideologically moderate partisans like their party less, and they have nowhere to sort. This lack of positive attachment leaves these partisans vulnerable to third parties and anti-establishment candidates, increasing the likelihood of electoral realignment.

**References**


Online Appendix

Changes in the Effect of Ideological Moderation Over Time

Table A1 illustrates the interactive effects of ideological moderation and time on own party feeling thermometer ratings. Ideological moderation is measured using the ANES ideological self-identification scale. The significant negative interaction effects within each party suggest that the effect of ideological moderation is becoming more negative over time. Thus, moderates are coming to like their party less and less relative to stronger ideological identifiers.

We also used a non-parametric bootstrap to test the significance of the trend. For each of 1,000 iterations, we resampled with replacement from the original pooled ANES data, reproduced the coefficients as in Figure 3 in the main text, regressed these coefficients on a linear time trend, and recorded the coefficient. We obtained negative trends for Democrats all 1,000 iterations, and we obtained negative trends for Republicans for all but 7 iterations. Note we block on year for our bootstrap procedure, though without blocking we obtain the same substantive results.

Table A1. The Effect of Ideology on Own Party Feeling Thermometer Over Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Republicans</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideological moderation</td>
<td>-4.43</td>
<td>-3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.46)</td>
<td>(2.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.016***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological moderation × Year</td>
<td>-0.20*</td>
<td>-0.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year fixed effects</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9,652</td>
<td>11,982</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Results come from an OLS regression with standard errors clustered at the year level. Data come from the ANES time series. Republicans include those who lean Republican and Democrats include those who lean Democrat. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
Variability Within and Between Party Feeling Thermometer Ratings

Figures A1-A3 provide visual evidence of how the distributions of partisan affect are changing. In Figure A1, one can clear evidence of intraparty polarization, as partisans’ feelings go from extremely positive to more dispersed and even a bit bimodal. Figure A2 shows partisans feelings toward the other party started out quite neutral, but overtime they spread out and become much more negative, on average. A3 shows how these trends affect the difference between feeling thermometers, or affective polarization. Here we see no evidence of bimodality, only spreading of the distribution.

**Figure A1. Distribution of Affect Toward Own Party by Year**
Figure A2. Distribution of Affect Toward Other Party by Year
Figure A3. Distribution of Difference in Affect Toward Parties by Year
**Difference and Bimodality Measures**

To illustrate the difference between measures of affective division within the American party system, the paper shows trends in mean *difference* in affect toward parties and *bimodality* of affect toward parties, side-by-side. First, we calculate the average absolute difference in affective toward the two parties:

\[
X_1 = \frac{1}{K} \sum_{k=1}^{K} |a_r - a_d|,
\]

where \(a_r\) represents affect toward the Republican Party, \(a_d\) represents affect toward the Democratic party, and \(K\) represents the total number of respondents. Again, affect toward the Republican and Democratic parties is measured using the ANES “feeling thermometer” questions.

Second, bimodality is defined as:

\[
X_2 = 4 \sum_{i=1}^{n} \sum_{j=1}^{n} \pi_i \pi_j^2 |i - j|,
\]

where \(i\) and \(j\) are possible values of the feeling thermometer difference \((a_r - a_d)\) and \(\pi_i\) and \(\pi_j\) are shares of respondents with the corresponding values. This formula belongs to the general class of polarization measures defined by Esteban and Ray (1994), and it has been used in a recent study of electoral polarization across ethnic lines (Huber 2012).
Replications of InterParty Polarization Test, Including Independents, Not Just Partisans

Inclusion of pure independents has very little influence on the pattern displayed in Figure 4. Here we see even less evidence of growing bimodality. The trends is generally downward (less bimodality) with only a very slight rise starting in recent decades.

Figure A4. Interparty Polarization Across All Americans (Not Just Partisans)
Regression Results Underlying Interparty and Intraparty Polarization Figures

Table A2 displays the results of a series of polynomial regressions models. Going from left to right, the first two columns illustrate the results underlying Figure A4. The next two columns illustrate the results underlying Figure 4.

Table A2. Estimates of InterParty Polarization and IntraParty Polarization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bimodality (All)</th>
<th>Difference (Partisans)</th>
<th>Bimodality (Partisans)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linear term</td>
<td>-.017 (.052)</td>
<td>3.67** (-.602)</td>
<td>.146** (.038)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Square term</td>
<td>.203** (.052)</td>
<td>-.602 (.755)</td>
<td>.175** (.038)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.43** (.052)</td>
<td>35.92** (.755)</td>
<td>1.94** (.038)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data come from the ANES time series. Partisans include those who lean toward the Republican or Democratic party.

** $p < .01$
Cross-Lagged Effects in ANES Panel Data

Figures A5, A6, and A7 present estimation results from three cross-lagged panel models for 1990--1992, 1992--1994, and 1994--1996 respectively. The goal was to estimate the directional influence that ideological moderation (measured using respondents’ self-assessed positions on the 7-point liberal--conservative scale folded at the middle point) and in-party affect (measured using the corresponding feeling thermometer) have on each other over time. Models were estimated using the 1990-1992 and 1992-1994-1996 ANES panel studies. For an application of a similar modeling technique to the same ANES dataset, see Carsey and Layman (2006) and Lelkes (2018).

Results demonstrate significant cross-lagged effects in 1990-1992 and 1994-1996. In both of these time periods ideological moderation led partisans to report less positive feelings toward their own party in comparison to their more ideologically extreme counterparts. Moreover, we only find a significant reciprocal effect in the 1990-1992 data. During this period, partisans with more positive feelings toward their party became more moderate.

Given the conservative nature of this test, we believe these results provide strong support for our theory. Elite polarization is an incremental process, so one might not expect the treatment effect over only a two-year span to be very powerfully. Nonetheless, we observe the predicted pattern in two of the three time periods analyzed. Additionally, polarization is at least partly attributable to generational replacement (Stoker and Jennings 2008), so it is noteworthy that we are able to detect conversion within respondents.
**Figure A5. Cross-Lagged Panel Model Results, 1990-1992**

Note. Control variables (not presented): partisanship strength in 1990 and out-party feeling thermometer in 1990  
\( N = 433 \)  
** \( p < .01 \), * \( p < .05 \), ^ \( p < .10 \)
Figure A6. Cross-Lagged Panel Model Results, 1992--1994

Note. Control variables (not presented): partisanship strength in 1992 and out-party feeling thermometer in 1992
N = 434
** p < .01, * p < .05, ^p < .10
Figure A7. Cross-Lagged Panel Model Results, 1994--1996

Note. Control variables (not presented): partisanship strength in 1994 and out-party feeling thermometer in 1994
N = 987
** p < .01, * p < .05, ^ p < .10
**Kolmogorov--Smirnov Tests for Differences Between Distributions**

Table A3 displays the results of a series of Kolmogorov--Smirnov tests for the equality of in-party feeling thermometers distributions. The tests show whether the change in distributions between each pair of years was significant or not. However, it does not indicate how the distribution changed.

**Table A3. Kolmogorov--Smirnov Tests for In-Party Affect Distribution Equality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>D-statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964, 1966</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966, 1968</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968, 1970</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>.454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970, 1972</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972, 1974</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>.767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974, 1976</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976, 1978</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978, 1980</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>.129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980, 1982</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982, 1984</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984, 1986</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>.766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986, 1988</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988, 1990</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990, 1992</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992, 1994</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>.371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994, 1996</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996, 1998</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998, 2000</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000, 2004</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004, 2008</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008, 2012</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>.568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012, 2016</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Bonferroni-adjusted threshold for significance on the 95% level is approximately .002
Controlling for Demographics and Composition

Results show that the trends displayed in Figure 3 are robust to inclusion of demographic controls, bolstering our conclusion that intraparty polarization is driven by ideology itself and not a demographic correlate or demographic composition effect.

Figure A8: Intraparty Polarization Based on Ideological Extremity (with Controls)

Note. This figure replicates Figure 3 in the main text. The left panel plots coefficients from regressions of own-party affect on moderation, adjusting for education, race, region, and age group. All variables are entered as indicators for each category. The right panel, which shows the r-squared, is still from the bivariate model.
**Ideological Identity versus Substantive Ideology**

These results suggest that the ideology effects observed in Figure 3 may not be solely attributable to substantive issue-based preferences. Instead, they may have more to do with identity and or preferences over style (Lelkes 2018).

**Figure A9:** Replication of Figure 3 using issue position measures.

(a) Using guaranteed jobs question.

(b) Using issue constraint.
Note: We rely on the measurement strategy employed by Abramowitz and Saunders (2008) and Lelkes (2018) to calculate constraint across 7 issues.

Replications with Leaners Excluded

Figures A10-A12 replicate the results presented in the paper excluding leaners from analyses. In the original figures, leaners were treated as partisans. Overall, this exclusion has little or no effect on the results, suggesting that our results are consistent across all partisans, including leaners.

Figure A10. Partisans’ Feelings Toward their Own Party Over Time (Figure 3)
Figure A11. Intraparty Polarization Explained by Ideological Extremity (Figure 3)
Figure A12. Comparing Indicators of Interparty Polarization
**Partisan Differences (Figure 3)**

Although we have insufficient room to note the distinction in the body of the paper, readers may notice subtle differences between Republicans and Democrats in Figures 3. Democrats appear to conform almost perfectly to expectations. Strong liberals appear to become slightly more fond of their party over time, and moderate Democrats clearly become less fond of their party. Moderate Republicans also conform quite well to expectations, reporting cooler feelings toward their party of time. Conservative Republicans are the only group who do not perfectly fit expectations. These individuals seem to grow increasingly fond of their party in the 70s and 80s, but then decline back to about their previous level over the next two decades. This could be attributable to the rise of conservative talk radio and talk radio hosts’ complaint that the party establishment was not sufficiently conservative, even as party elites polarized. The influence of these conservative Republicans can also be seen in the third panel. Trends among Democrats appear quite linear, whereas trends among Republicans decline at first but then flatten out.
**Measuring Mean Polarization**

We measure mean affective polarization by taking of absolute value of the difference between partisans’ feeling thermometer ratings of the Republican and Democratic parties. Another way to measure affective polarization is to subtract individuals’ feelings toward the opposition party from their feelings toward their own party. Below, we show that these methods yield nearly metrics ($r = .99$). In fact, as long as individuals rate their own party more positively than the other party, they are mathematically equivalent. The only difference is that our measure counts any type of difference between partisan feeling thermometers as polarization, whereas the other measure counts individuals who prefer the other party to their own party as negative polarization.

This means our measure provides a slightly more conservative test of our theory. Of course, because there are so few partisans who report more positive feelings toward the opposition party than their own party, there is almost no substantive difference. We use our measure for the sake of comparability with our bipolarity measure. In both cases, we examine the distribution of differences in partisan affect. In one case, we calculate the mean distance from the midpoint of this scale and in the other case we calculate the bimodality of this distribution.

**Figure A13.** Comparing Measures of Mean Polarization
References


