POLI 100M: Political Psychology

Lecture 8: Polarization
Taylor N. Carlson
tfeenstr@ucsd.edu
Announcements

• Final project is due Saturday, Sept. 9, 11:30am
  – Submit to Turn it In on TritonEd
  – Review the rubric and detailed assignment guidelines on TritonEd

• Office hours next week Tuesday and Thursday 2:30-4:30

• If you want feedback on a rough draft, please send it to me by Monday, 9/4 at 5:00pm
Last Time

• Voters sometimes reward or punish politicians for things beyond their control
  – Natural disasters, “acts of God”
  – Sports outcomes

• Mood affects our evaluations
What questions do you have?
Today: Driving Questions

• What is affective polarization?
• What are the consequences of affective polarization?
• How (and why) are liberals and conservatives different on apolitical dimensions?
Today: Learning Outcomes

• Define the following key terms: polarization, affective polarization, social polarization, sorting, moral foundations theory, apolitical differences
• Compare and contrast liberals and conservatives on both political and apolitical dimensions
• Explain the main theories about why liberals and conservatives are different
• Describe some of the consequences of affective polarization
Polarization
What is polarization?

• Dictionary: division into two sharply contrasting contrasting groups or sets of opinions or beliefs

• Issue Polarization: individuals have more extreme policy preferences; Democrats’ and Republicans’ policy preferences are farther apart, less similar

• Affective Polarization: the divergence in affect toward one’s “in” and “out” parties
  – Democrats have increasingly negative affect toward Republicans, positive affect toward Democrats
  – Republicans have increasingly negative affect toward Democrats, positive affect toward Republicans
Polarization in the Public?
Issue Polarization?

• Not really.
• On most major policy issues, *most* Americans have moderate opinions
Example: Abortion

• Should it be possible for a pregnant woman to get a legal abortion if:
  – There is a strong chance of a serious defect in the baby
  – She is married and doesn’t want more children
  – Her health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy
  – Her family has a very low income and can’t afford more children
  – She became pregnant as a result of rape
  – She is not married and does not want to marry the father
WHEN SHOULD ABORTION BE LEGAL?

Percentage Believing Abortion Should Be Legal

- Married - Wants No More Children
- Any Reason
- Pregnant as a Result of Rape
- Low Income - Can't Afford More Children
- Woman's Health Seriously Endangered
- Strong Chance of Defect
- Not Married

Source: General Social Survey

Source: Seth Hill
ABORTION BY PARTISANSHIP

Source: General Social Survey
Note: Partisans include strong and weak identifiers.
Sorting?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Independents</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period I</td>
<td>60 liberals, 40 conservatives</td>
<td>100 moderates</td>
<td>40 liberals, 60 conservatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 2</td>
<td>90 liberals, 10 conservatives</td>
<td>100 moderates</td>
<td>10 liberals, 90 conservatives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Seth Hill
Proportion of Liberals Identifying as Democrat, by Year

Source: American National Election Studies Cumulative File

Source: Seth Hill
Proportion of Democrats and Republicans Liberal, by Year

- Democrats
- Republicans

Source: American National Election Studies Cumulative File

Source: Seth Hill
Proportion of Democrats and Republicans Conservative, by Year

- Democrats
- Republicans

Source: American National Election Studies Cumulative File

Source: Seth Hill
Affective Polarization
Affective Polarization

• The divergence in affect toward the “in” and “out” parties
  – “in” party is the party with which you identify
  – “out” party is the party opposite yours

• Out-party hostility is stronger than in-party favoritism
Why does affective polarization occur?

• Social Identity Theory:
  – Tajfel & Turner
  – Groups to which people belong are an important source of self-esteem. Groups give us a sense of belonging to the social world
  – In order to increase our self-image, we enhance the status of the group to which we belong
    • Cheering for our in group
    • Disparaging the out group
SIT: 3 Mental Processes

1. Social Categorization: categorize objects in order to understand them; organize people into groups

2. Social Identification: adopt the identity of the group we categorize ourselves as belonging to

3. Social Comparison: Compare our group with other social groups; want our group to compare favorably
How strong is affective polarization?
Figure 1. Thermometer Ratings of Parties.

Source: Iygenar, Sood, & Lelkes 2012
Figure 4. Dissatisfaction with Inter-Party Marriage. Source: Iygenar, Sood, & Lelkes 2012
Nicholson et al. (2016)

• Find individuals who support the opposite presidential candidate as less attractive
  – Democrats thought Romney supporters were less attractive
  – Republicans thought Obama supporters were less attractive
Iyengar & Westwood (2015)

• Partisanship is a political and social divide
• Partisanship and partisan affect are strong cues for nonpolitical judgments and behaviors
• Partisan discrimination rivals racial discrimination
Implicit Attitudes

• Implicit attitudes: traces of past experience that mediate favorable or unfavorable feeling, thought, or action toward social objects (Greenwald & Banaji 1995)

• What is the key advantage of implicit measures?
Sample Partisan BIAT Screenshot

Democrats
or
Good

Press the I key for Democrats or Good
Press the E key for anything else
Go as fast as you can

Partisan BIAT Stimuli
Democrats

Republican

Note: The state of California and the “(D)” are colored blue, and the state of Texas and the “(R)” are colored red.
FIGURE 2 Implicit Partisan Affect among Partisan and Ideological Group

Implicit Partisan Affect by Partisan Strength

Strong Republican
Weak Republican
Independent
Weak Democrat
Strong Democrat

Implicit Partisan Affect by Ideology

Very Conservative
Conservative
Moderate
Liberal
Very Liberal

Partisan D-Score

Note: The dots are the means for each group, and the bars are 95% confidence intervals for the mean.
Do partisans discriminate against out-partisans on non-political things?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicant Highlights</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Wolfe</td>
<td>Jeremy O’Neill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic achievements</strong></td>
<td><strong>Academic achievements</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0 GPA</td>
<td>4.0 GPA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community involvement</strong></td>
<td><strong>Community involvement</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer park ranger</td>
<td>Volunteer middle school math tutor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitat for Humanity volunteer</td>
<td>Red Cross volunteer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extracurricular activities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Extracurricular activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowling team</td>
<td>President of the Young Democrats</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President of the Young Republicans</td>
<td>Member of the marching band</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honor Society</td>
<td>Art Club</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do partisans discriminate against out-partisans?

• Yes.
• Party cue exerted the strongest impact on selection for most participants
• 80% of participants chose their in party candidate
• Probability of selecting an out-party candidate never rose above 0.3, even if the out-party candidate was more academically qualified
Polarization Summary

- Elites are polarized, unclear whether the public is polarized on issue attitudes
- Public is increasingly sorted
- **Affective polarization** is powerful
Questions?
Why are liberals and conservatives so different?

*Moral Foundations Theory*
The Moral Roots of Liberals and Conservatives

- **TED Talk**
MFT: Five Foundations

1. Care-Harm
2. Fairness-Cheating
3. Loyalty-Betrayal
4. Authority/Respect-Subversion
5. Sanctity/Purity-Degradation
MFT: 5 Foundations and Ideology

**Liberals**
- Care
- Fairness

**Conservatives**
- Loyalty
- Authority
- Sanctity

Because members of two political camps are to a degree blind to one or more of the moral foundations of the others, they may perceive morally driven words or behavior as having another basis – at best self-interested, at worst, evil, and thus demonize one another.
Apolitical Differences Between Liberals and Conservatives
Liberals or Conservatives?

- Au Bon Pain
- Schlotzky’s Deli
- Whataburger
- California Pizza Kitchen
- O’Charley’s
- Cracker Barrel
- Whole Foods
- Trader Joe’s
- Piggly Wiggly
- Budweiser
- Miller
- Guinness
- Heineken

- Google Chrome
- Internet Explorer
- Simple Art
- Dogs
- Cats
- Cultural fusion food
- Documentaries
- Action movies
- Tide
- Great Value Detergent
- Abstract art
Whose Bedroom?

- Variety of books
- Travel books
- Classic and modern rock music
- Art supplies
- Maps
Whose Bedroom?

• Calendars
• Stamps
• Sports items
• American flags
• Alcohol bottles
• Cleaning supplies
Whose desk?
Whose desk?
Can we accurately infer ideology from apolitical cues?
Confidence in Guessing Partisanship Based on Different Cues

Confidence

Informational Cue

Demog  Social Media  Friend Cand.Prefs.  Religiosity  Home  Regular News Sources
Average Comfort Discussing Politics by Participant Partisanship Among Those Who Accurately Identified Discussant Partisanship

- Democrat Participant
- Republican Participant
MFT and Apolitical Cues Summary

• Liberals and conservatives have different moral foundations, which could explain part of why they talk past and demonize each other

• *Perhaps* as a consequence of moral foundations, personality, socialization, etc. liberals and conservatives are different on *apolitical* dimensions too

• These apolitical differences are noticeable and affect how comfortable we are discussing politics with someone described with these characteristics
Questions?