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Partisanship, Ideology, and the Sorting of the American Mass Public

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PARTISANSHIP, IDEOLOGY, AND THE SORTING
OF THE AMERICAN MASS PUBLIC

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DEDICATION

To Mb: ever an adventure

Acknowledgments

"True happiness is to enjoy the present, without anxious dependence upon the future, not to amuse ourselves with either hopes or fears but to rest satisfied with what we have, which is sufficient, for he that is so wants nothing. The greatest blessings of mankind are within us and within our reach. A wise man is content with his lot, whatever it may be, without wishing for what he has not."

~Seneca

Pursuing a doctoral degree is an extraordinarily selfish exercise. You spend a great deal of time burning through the assistance and goodwill of your peers and colleagues as you stumble, oftentimes blindly, toward an end shrouded in uncertainty. It is difficult to complete this work without kind, though honest, professional mentors, much less the support of your friends and family. The modal experience of an academic is rejection, and, without the right support system, this endeavor is difficult and lonely. I was blessed, however, with a network of people who made this possible.

Jim Garand is an excellent tutor. Ever (sometimes frustratingly) optimistic, Jim's training and friendship set the foundation for this achievement. He let me swim upriver on my own, yet was always willing to pull me out of unhappy waters when I floundered. Martin Johnson provided a serious and thoughtful voice to my training. This dissertation and my approach to research would poorer if not for his input. Matt Hitt has been like a brother to me. Although his stay was short in Baton Rouge, his friendship endures, as do his pleas for greater economy in my writing (he will, of course, not begrudge me in this instance). Bill Clark is the consummate bureaucrat (and friend). Bill encouraged me to submit the manuscript that would eventually turn into my first publication, and he was always willing to plug me into teaching when my requests to do so turned up tragically late. Mike Henderson, though a late addition to this group, is an excellent scholar and encouragement. Mike read through numerous drafts of my market materials (a laborious and boring task), and they were much better for it.

Outside of these committee members, I am grateful for a close-knit group of colleagues and friends. Johanna Dunaway allowed me to partner with her very early on and taught me how to be a good coauthor. I often chafed at her preparedness and meticulous record-keeping, but she taught me to be less careless in the small tasks—an invaluable

Abstract

This dissertation is a story about the divisions that characterize the mass public. Specifically, it explores how Americans think about politics, and, in particular, how citizens connect their attitudes, beliefs, and, vitally, ideological identity to their partisan affiliation—a phenomenon known as sorting. Practically, this project proceeds in two parts. In Part 1, I investigate the nature of partisan sorting in the mass public. Chapter 2 reviews the extant scholarly literature regarding partisanship and ideology, or the raw materials of sorting. Drawing on this research, I operationalize two types of sorting in Chapter 3 and compare how different measurement protocols affect the characterization of public opinion. This distinction culminates in Chapter 4, which provides a series of empirical tests that justify partitioning sorting into identity- and policy-based constructs.

The second part of this dissertation is devoted to the study of identity-based sorting. Chapter 5 takes up the question of *why* individuals' identities converge and conveys that sorting is related to asymmetric perceptions of out-group dissimilarity rather than relative perceptions of between-group differences. Chapter 6 explores how this sorting affects compromise. I discover that, even in the absence of consistent policy preferences, identity sorting is sufficient to decrease an individual's willingness to accept bipartisanship. Finally, Chapter 7 examines how identity sorting alters the decisional criteria that voters utilize to select political candidates. Here, I show that sorting produces a disconnect between the perceived and objective ideological congruence between voters and their preferred candidate. Sorting, then, is a sufficient condition for pushing citizens toward more extreme candidates—even when individuals' issue preferences suggest that their "best" candidate is considerably more moderate.

Taken as a whole, this dissertation both refines the extant logic of sorting and pushes this research into new territory. In demonstrating that identity-based sorting constitutes a unique and particularly powerful political phenomenon, I reveal why concern over the systematic coherency of mass opinion is, perhaps, misplaced. Instead, it is this *identity* sorting that contributes to the intemperate and polarized atmosphere that characterizes the state of American politics.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Sort (sôrt) *v.* 1. To arrange systematically in groups; separate according to type, class, etc.

-Oxford Dictionary

"We are increasingly moving toward two entirely separate Americas, a liberal one and a conservative one."
-Chris Clizza[1]

1.1   Introduction

Americans are divided. Among the indicators that bear witness to the extent of their disunity, a sampling of recent headlines is particularly striking. *The New York Times* argues that "Polarization is dividing American society, not just politics."[2] *The Washington Post* writes that "Urban and rural America are becoming increasingly polarized."[3] Apparently, neither gastronomical fare, "Americans just as polarized on food as they are on politics,"[4] nor sports "Our polarized nation interprets one 84 Lumber Super Bowl ad two completely different ways,"[5] have remained unsullied. Taking these divisions into account, the *Scientific American* aptly titles this state of affairs, "The hyper-polarization of America."[6]

The election of Donald J. Trump to the United States Presidency has amplified these divisions—indeed, for only the fourth time in the country's history, the results of the popular vote didn't match the Electoral College one. Yet, while *Time Magazine*'s byline for their annual "Person of the Year" story captures this milieu, describing Donald Trump as "President-elect of the divided States of America," what do these divisions *really* portend?[7] Is the mass public deeply and intractably divided on the major issues of the day?

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[1] www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2014/07/28/America-really-is-two-different-political-countries-these-days

[2] https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/12/upshot/polarization-is-dividing-american-society-not-just-politics.html

[3] https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/politics/2016-election/urban-rural-vote-swing/

[4] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/gmos-organic-food-poll_us_5840761be4b09e21702d7190

[5] http://www.forbes.com/sites/willburns/2017/02/08/our-polarized-nation-interprets-one-84-lumber-super-bowl-ad-two-completely-different-ways/#2fcbd9438e29

[6] https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/the-hyper-polarization-of-america/

[7] http://time.com/time-person-of-the-year-2016-donald-trump/

Or, could it be, according to yet another headline, that "Americans aren't polarized, just better sorted?"[8]

This dissertation is a story about the divisions that characterize the mass public's political preferences. Specifically, it explores how Americans think about politics, and, in particular, how citizens connect their attitudes, beliefs, and, vitally, group memberships to their partisan affiliation—a phenomenon known as sorting. Much has been written recently about sorting and, by extension, polarization, and, yet, the two concepts are frequently misunderstood and, worse, thoroughly muddled in their application. Breaking from the work of Levendusky (2009) in *The Partisan Sort*, this project provides a new investigation into the nature of sorting within the mass public. Over the coming chapters, I outline the first cohesive theoretical and empirical justification for disaggregating the sorting of the mass public into separate issue- and identity-based domains. While the relationship between attitudes and partisan memberships is modest, it is the sorting of political identities that has had profound effects on the transformation of American politics. Building on this distinction, I present a new account of when and under what circumstances sorting occurs and why identity sorting, in particular, has serious ramifications for American politics.

1.2   Sorting and the coherency of public opinion

For a vast majority of the 20th Century, the mass public was not particularly adept, much less principled, at enunciating its political preferences (Achen and Bartels, 2004; Cohen, Noel and Zaller, 2004; Snyder and Stromberg, 2010). During the era of the first systematic studies of public opinion, scholars observed that politics was not only a remote concept for much of the electorate, but that individuals' political preferences were often shallow, vague, and inconsistent. Although the average person could generally identify and differentiate between the parties, individuals struggled to convey particular or unique features about them. In fact, in perhaps the most important work from this period, *The American Voter*, Campbell and his colleagues (1960) found evidence that less than six percent of their interviewees used ideological labels "liberal" or "conservative" to describe the American political parties.

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[8] https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/01/21/americans-arent-polarized-just-better-sorted/?utm_term=.454eb4ba2ae8

Converse's (1964) subsequent inquiry into the mind of the American citizen buttressed these findings. He estimated that less than 10 percent of individuals grounded their political decisions in any sort of substantive ideological preferences, while a paltry two percent of people utilized he described as "constrained" thinking, or the ability to logically connect and extrapolate attitudes across separate issue areas. Although it was true that particular events occasionally captured individuals' attention to the extent that they developed meaningful opinions, their political attitudes, when subjected to further empirical scrutiny, were largely idiosyncratic and only weakly related to those of political elites. In other words, it was impossible to claim "that the mass public shares ideological patterns of belief with relevant elites at a specific level any more than it shares the abstract conceptual frames of reference" (Converse 2000, pg. 34).

This lack of coherent ideological thinking within the electorate dovetailed with a meaningful decline in differences between party elites during the 1960s and 1970s, a period noted for its unique legislative bipartisanship. As both the Republican and Democrat Parties embraced postwar liberalism, the share of liberal Republicans and conservative Democratic legislators reached historic levels (Brady, Han, and Pope, 2007).[9] While perhaps advantageous for the production of policy in that gridlock, which stymies legislation, was comparatively low, both scholars and political observers lamented that this ideological convergence by elites had severe, negative implications for the wider party system itself (Broder, 1972; APSA Task Force, 1950). According to Nie, Verba, and Petrocik (1976) in *The Changing America Voter*, the issues of the day had ceased to correspond with party positions. In the absence of perceived distinctions between the parties, citizens began to disengage and dealign from them (Clarke and Suzuki, 1994).

Such ideological naiveté and partisan disinterest, however, were relatively short-lived (Wattenberg, 1981; Lewis-Beck et al., 2008). By the late 1990s, a new partisan voter had manifested (Miller and Shanks, 1996; Bafumi and Shapiro, 2009)—one that was not only more ideological than its forebears, but whose issue preferences were more strongly rooted within a liberal-conservative framework (Baldassarri and Gelman, 2008). By taking

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[9] Theriault (2008) reports on the breadth of this overlap in the 93rd Congress: better than 90 percent of Republicans were more liberal than the most conservative Democrat, while about a third of Democrats were more conservative than their liberal Republican counterparts.

positions on matters of public policy that corresponded to those preferred by their party, partisans had sorted (Levendusky, 2009).

At its core, the concept of sorting reflects the ordering or coherency of individuals' preferences—long a central interest in studies of public opinion. In fact, while scholars have puzzled over the stability (Feldman, 1988; Lenz, 2012) and consistency of individuals' political attitudes (Sniderman and Bullock, 2004; Achen, 1975; Zaller and Feldman, 1992), the ordering of preferences within belief systems has received special consideration (Converse, 1964, 2000; Zaller, 1992; Kinder and Kalmoe, 2017). Why this interest? Aside from academic curiosity in the nature of mass opinion, there are serious implications regarding whether or not a mass public's preferences adhere to some sort of overarching framework. As Feldman (2003, pg. 478) ominously warns, "Politics doesn't seem to "work" without some structure that allows broad sets of policies to somehow go together. And democratic representation may depend on people having some understanding of that structure." Indeed, a lack of such coherence is troubling for well-established theories of political representation and electoral choice, which demand that citizens' ideal preferences can be arrayed within a common dimensional space (Gerber and Lewis, 2004). If citizens' preferences are effectively nonideological or only weakly tied to a particular party, then the representational fit between citizens and legislators is likely to be poor and voting a quasi-random exercise (Downs, 1957; Enelow and Hinich, 1984).

Yet while Americans' political preferences are not known for the quality of their structure (e.g. Myers, Lupton, and Thornton, 2015; Kinder and Kalmoe, 2017), the fault lines that demarcate Republicans and Democrats have crystallized over the previous two decades (Pew, 2014). Recent polling, for example, indicates that the political values that separate Democrats from Republicans segregate them into historically-divided "liberal" and "conservative" groups—by 2014 the share of persons who expressed ideologically-consistent opinions across a range of issues including the environment, foreign, and the scope of government had doubled from only 10 years previous (Pew Research Center, 2014). In turn, the scholarly attention to the coherence of public opinion has shifted from the interdependence of political beliefs—which has, perhaps, always been difficult to expect from the average, politically-disinterested citizen—to the extent to which ideological preferences simply map onto partisan affiliation (i.e. partisan sorting).

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In part, the scholarly interest in sorting has grown because this concept represents something of a common middle ground between warring interpretations of mass opinion that simultaneously present the public as both principled and intractably divided (Abramowitz and Saunders, 2008) and strikingly moderate (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope, 2006).[10] On the one hand, scholars find that Americans respond differently toward scandal (Blais et al., 2010), economic events (Bartels, 2009; Popescu, 2013), and disregard factual information based on partisan affiliation (Nyhan and Reifler, 2010)—even preferring their family members not intermarry with individuals belonging to opposing political groups (Kandler, Bleidron, and Riemann, 2012). On the other hand, the distribution of aggregate ideological identification and policy attitudes within the mass public has remained relatively consistent, stable, and moderate over time (Fiorina and Abrams, 2008; Kinder and Kalmoe, 2017). In the words of a recent Pew Research Center report, "The way that the public thinks about poverty, opportunity, business, unions, religion, civic duty, foreign affairs, and many other subjects is, to a large extent, the same today as in 1987" (2012, 17).

Remaining agnostic about the extremity of citizens' attitudes, the conventional conceptualization of sorting simply implies that there is greater matching between ideology and partisanship. On this point, there is broad agreement. Yet, this consensus masks two acute problems. First, extant research confuses consistency among political *attitudes* and *identities* (e.g. Levendusky, 2009). Why is this distinction important? Identities are critical to how an individual thinks and evaluates, providing the "perceptual screen" through which the larger socio-political environment is filtered (Campbell et al., 1960). These group memberships are fundamentally different from the particularistic views, attitudes, or values that individuals possess, which are often diverse and uncorrelated to the symbolic ideological self-concept (Conover and Feldman, 1981; Malka and Llekes, 2010, pg. 180). Conceptualizing sorting as some sort of omnibus concept that simultaneously accounts for both of these facets—as prior research does—is similarly problematic.

Second, the interpretation of what sorting conveys remains a significant point of conflict. For some, sorting is a fundamental component of the narrative that the mass public

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[10] One point of agreement, however, is that "social" polarization, or the degree to which individuals negatively rate their political opponents relative their own party, not only exists but has meaningfully increased (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes, 2012; Mason, 2015; Hetherington, 2001).

has become more polarized (Abramowitz and Saunders, 2008). For others, it stands as the primary evidence that polarization has *not* occurred (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope, 2010). Still others have taken a more nuanced view that sorting represents a facet of mass polarization, but that sorting might occur without a concomitant increase in the extremity of mass attitudes (Baldassarri and Gelman, 2008; Garner and Palmer, 2011).

1.2.1   Defining sorting

In order to qualify these claims, let us begin with a fresh depiction of sorting. Conceptually, sorting reflects the systematized arrangement of things by some predetermined criterion. Partisans might sort by geographical location (Bishop, 2008; Mummolo and Nall, 2016), for example, or within their social relationships (Huber and Malhotra, 2017). Here, however, I am primarily concerned with sorting as a behavioral phenomenon in which attitudes, values, beliefs, and identities can be categorized according to the criterion of the ubiquitous left-right ideo-political framework. Within the two-party political landscape of American politics, this organizational scheme of "left" and "right" conveniently demarcates liberals from conservatives and Democrats from Republicans, respectively, such that sorting occurs when one's liberal-conservative preferences converge with partisanship (Levendusky, 2009).

Although I will discuss the elements that comprise this sorting in greater detail in Chapters 1 and 2, it is appropriate for now to quickly establish working definitions of these terms for clarity's sake. Beginning first with partisanship, it is well-established that partisan identification encompasses an individual's political self-concept (Green and Schickler, 1993; Green 1999; Huddy, Mason, and Aaroe, 2015). Drawing on decades of social-psychological research dating back to the early Michigan studies (Campbell et al., 1960), this perspective conveys that a partisan identity not only reflects profound psychological attachments to a particular party, but "helps the citizen locate him/herself and others on the political landscape" (Campbell et al., 1986, pg. 100). In other words, partisanship provides the formal organizational moorings that spatially orient individuals within the political landscape.

Attempting to define the corresponding, though more nebulous concept of "ideological preferences," however, is more complicated. There is nothing particularly immutable about ideology; rather, it is the product of social forces, elite strategy, and

colloquial use by elites (Ellis and Stimson, 2012). Leaving aside for a moment the older literature's treatment of "ideology" as a systematized belief system (i.e. Converse, 1964), I am interested in both ideological identity—psychological attachment to ideological groups—and the particular attitudes and beliefs that otherwise comprise this system—what are commonly referred to as policy preferences. While the former explicitly adopt the labels liberal and conservative, the latter are "ideological" in the sense that they can be characterized according to a liberal-conservative scheme that characterizes their realistic use by political commentators, elites, and even citizens themselves.[11]

For our purposes, individuals are sorted when their policy preferences fall to the "right" ("left") of moderate *and* they profess to be a Republican (Democrat).[12] Conversely, if an individual's partisanship is incongruent to these attitudes, say, a Democrat who is pro-life or prefers limiting government spending, then this person is "unsorted" on these particular partisanship-policy pairings. By aggregating together the many possible partisanship-policy dyads that an individual might possess, we can envision a continuum that ranges from completely unsorted on one end, where partisanship bears an inverse relationship to the ideological character of an individual's preferences, to fully-sorted on the other end, where there is full congruence between partisanship and these sentiments.[13]

But how does this sorting differ from polarization? To better illustrate the potential differences between these concepts, Figure 1.1 provides a series of helpful diagrams. Panel A portrays a hypothetical, heterogeneous distribution of an electorate, wherein individuals are split into different partisan groups (vertical bars) across ideological categories (arrayed along the x-axis).

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[11] Put another way, these "ideologies are the shared framework of mental models that groups of individuals possess that provide both an interpretation of the environment and a prescription as to how that environment should be structured" (Parsons, 1951, pg. 24).

[12] Presumably, it is also possible for Independents / moderates to be "sorted," insofar as these neutral categories match, although this is a much less consequential form of matching.

[13] But what about persons who identify as "Independent" and "moderate" in their partisan and ideological affiliation? By the definitional criteria employed here, such individuals would be as "sorted" as partisans with matching and strong ideological preferences (perfect overlap). By ignoring gradations in the strength of these constructs, past research effectively treat respondents with weak (if not "neutral") orientations the same as those with "strong ones." This problematic aspect is a further justification for moving beyond this simple "matching" criterion.

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A: Hypothetical population;
neither sorted nor polarized

B: Sorted, but not polarized
population

C: Polarized, but not sorted
population

D: Polarized & sorted
population
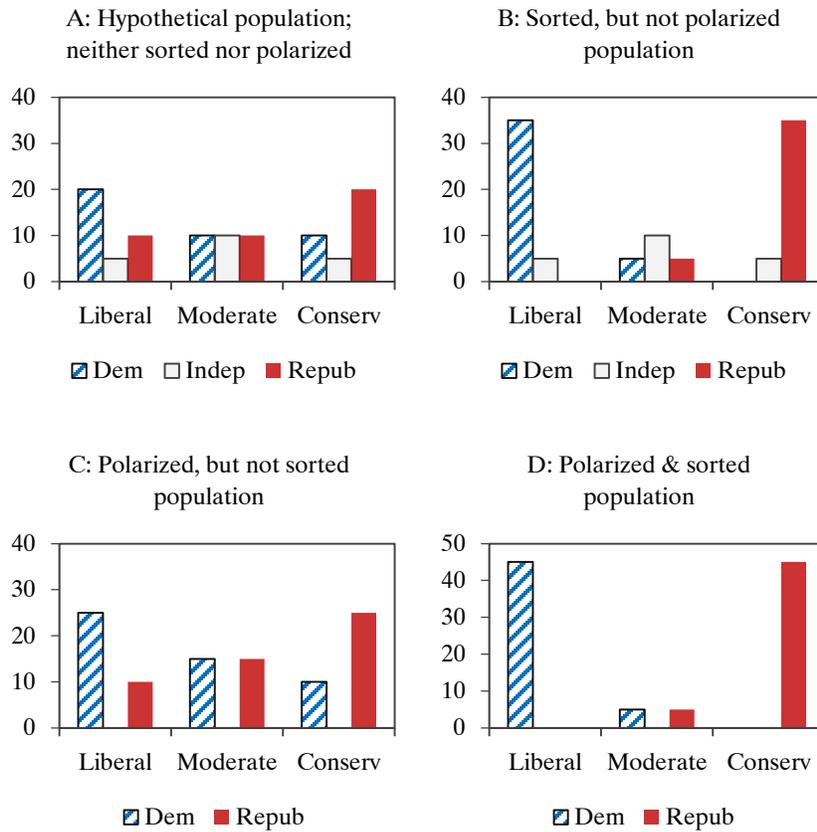
Notes: Each panel represents hypothetical electorate, where the sum of all respective bars in a panel total 100 percent of persons in population.

Figure 1.1. Hypothetical Distribution of Ideology by Partisanship

This population is neither particularly sorted nor polarized; individuals are more or less evenly split among the three categories of political affiliation and are evenly distributed across the various ideological categories. Panel B illustrates how this population changes if it becomes sorted, but not polarized. Here, the distinguishing feature of a sorted but not polarized population is that the population of independents remains, even as the categorization of partisans into the correct ideological groups increases markedly. In other words, the overall population of partisans does not change; instead the *distribution* of partisans in the "correct" ideological category changes. Whereas polarization implies that individuals have become more extreme in the distribution of their political or ideological

preferences, sorting merely implies that the composition of individuals' preferences is, in the parlance of an older literature, "constrained" (Converse, 1964). However, while sorting can occur without individuals becoming tangibly more extreme in their partisan orientations, what happens if the proportion of party identifiers remains constant, yet the *strength* of those attachments increase? This question highlights the difficulty and, indeed, the confusion generated by artificially prying such matching (sorting) apart from the distribution (extremity, polarization) of the survey response.

Unlike Panel B, Panel C portrays an electorate that is starkly polarized but not well-sorted. This is polarization without any attendant matching between partisanship and ideology. Here, the lack of Independent identifiers conveys that individuals have fled the neutral core of political affiliation such that the population has polarized into two distinct and separate groups, yet these partisan groups are not marked by matching ideological preferences. In other words, there is little sorting. This type of scenario is probably unlikely for obvious reasons: what generates deeply-divided partisans if not ideology? Thus, Panel D illustrates both a sorted *and* polarized population, wherein the population of individuals are completely split between the Democratic and Republican parties who are, consequently, correctly divvied up between the correct, corresponding ideological groups. This is the scenario in which the starkest political divisions are observed, where individuals not only flock toward the parties but become "correctly" ideological in the process.

Which of these portrayals faithfully depicts the shape of mass public opinion in America? In a vacuum, such as this, it is perhaps easier to differentiate between contrived examples of sorting and polarization than in practice. It is clear that, on some level, these two phenomena are inherently, if not intimately, related—it would be a very odd population indeed that was polarized but not sorted. This is perhaps why Fiorina (2012, 2) notes that "Of all the misconceptions associated with discussions of political polarization, none is more common than the confusion between party sorting and polarization." In part, this confusion is the probably the result of a lack of terminological precision—Levendusky (2009) notes that "party polarization" is sometimes used interchangeably with "sorting," even though "polarization" implies a change in the extremity of an individual's views while sorting does not. To recover some sensibility in this debate, and to decipher the shape of Americans' preferences, let us turn to outlining a definition of sorting that speaks to these concerns.

1.2.2   What is the *extent* and *nature* of sorting?

While Fiorina (2012) notes that the two processes of sorting and polarization are not mutually-exclusive, the existing literature struggles to fully explicate the relationship between these concepts. Hazarding the risk of pedantry, a major problem with a firm distinction between sorting and polarization rests on the fact that the extant literature essentially dichotomizes individuals' partisan and ideological preferences to identify whether an individual is sorted. As Levendusky (2009, pg. 44-45) writes, a citizen is sorted "when his position is on the same side of moderate as that of his national party elites—a sorted Democrat takes a liberal position; a sorted Republican takes a conservative one." Yet this seems to be a gross simplification regarding the true nature of one's preferences. In fact, individuals identify as "strong" or "weak" ideologues and hold opinions that similarly range in strength—in other words, they vary in *the degree* to which they identify as a liberal or a conservative and *the degree* to which they support, for example, expanding government spending or supporting access to abortion.

    This is not a purely semantic distinction. We could sort attitudes like laundry, differentiating between liberal and conservative responses as if we were parceling lights from darks, but this inevitably loses a great deal of interesting variation within these responses. For instance, this scheme cannot differentiate between the matching of "weak" and "strong" ideological preferences to an individual's partisanship. Instead a Republican who possesses weak conservative preferences across, say, the extent of government spending and the provision of public healthcare, is considered as "sorted" as a Republican who espouses extremely conservative opinions across those items, respectively. Yet if variation within these preferences exists, then an appropriate conceptualization of sorting should not only capture simple categorization but also the strength of those attendant relationships, more faithfully capturing the extent to which a person is sorted.

    Ironically, when scholars have traditionally spoken of political sorting as a phenomenon in which partisanship and ideological preferences converge, they are speaking about the *extent* to which these concepts are correlated—implying as much a difference of degree as kind—even though the prevailing specification of sorting does not account for such variation.[14] Indeed, as Levendusky (2009, pg. 4-5) writes, "sorting is a

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[14] Although research examining partisan-ideological sorting *does* account for the strength of these identities (e.g. Mason, 2015; Davis and Mason, 2015), it doesn't theorize why

changing correlation between partisanship and ideology, so that in a sorted electorate party and ideology are more closely related (more correlated) than in an unsorted electorate." Yet this is a fundamentally different type of sorting than the definition of sorting found in *The Partisan Sort*, which treats sorting as simply correctly-matched political preferences without a compensatory notion of *how well-matched those concepts actually are*.

A second example illustrates this shortcoming, and, in the process, reveals another. Recalling from Figure 1.1 that a sorted population needn't be a "polarized" one, we would expect a well-sorted population of partisans to resemble a horseshoe in the distribution of their attitudes. Figure 1.2 introduces two items from the American National Election Studies 2012 Time-Series survey, defense spending preferences and ideological self-identification, to help illustrate how very different conclusions can be drawn about the extent of sorting based on this measurement distinction. As Panels A and B indicate, there is a noticeable "V" shape to the distribution of these responses. Republicans generally favor increasing defense spending (conservative response), while Democrats prefer decreasing such spending (liberal response); similarly, Republicans overwhelmingly identify as conservatives and Democrats as liberals. In other words, it appears that citizens are reasonably, if not similarly, sorted on these items.

Yet the discretization of responses to these "ideology" items hemorrhages substantive information about their true relationship to partisanship. As Panel C illustrates, the modal category of partisans' defense spending preferences is actually the neutral, midpoint response "keep spending the same." Further, the vast majority of correctly-sorted preferences cluster around this midpoint of the scale—partisans may manage to espouse the correct response, but this relationship is weak (fewer than 10 percent of Republicans and Democrats comprise the strongest category of "correct" preferences).

Panel D, like Panel C, illustrates that the simple expression of sorting-as-matching obscures meaningful variation in how partisans are distributed across liberal-conservative identity. However, a different portrait of sorting emerges here in that the distribution of partisans across liberal-conservative identification is essentially bimodal, where responses are skewed more toward the extremes than middle. Further, relative defense spending attitudes, higher rates of sorting on ideological identity exist. Although there is not a perfect

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these distinctions are important or consider how they shape sorting across policy preferences.

"V" shape to the distribution of responses—the existence of which would be indicative of sorting *and* polarization—both the fit between partisanship and ideological identity is stronger than defense spending preferences.
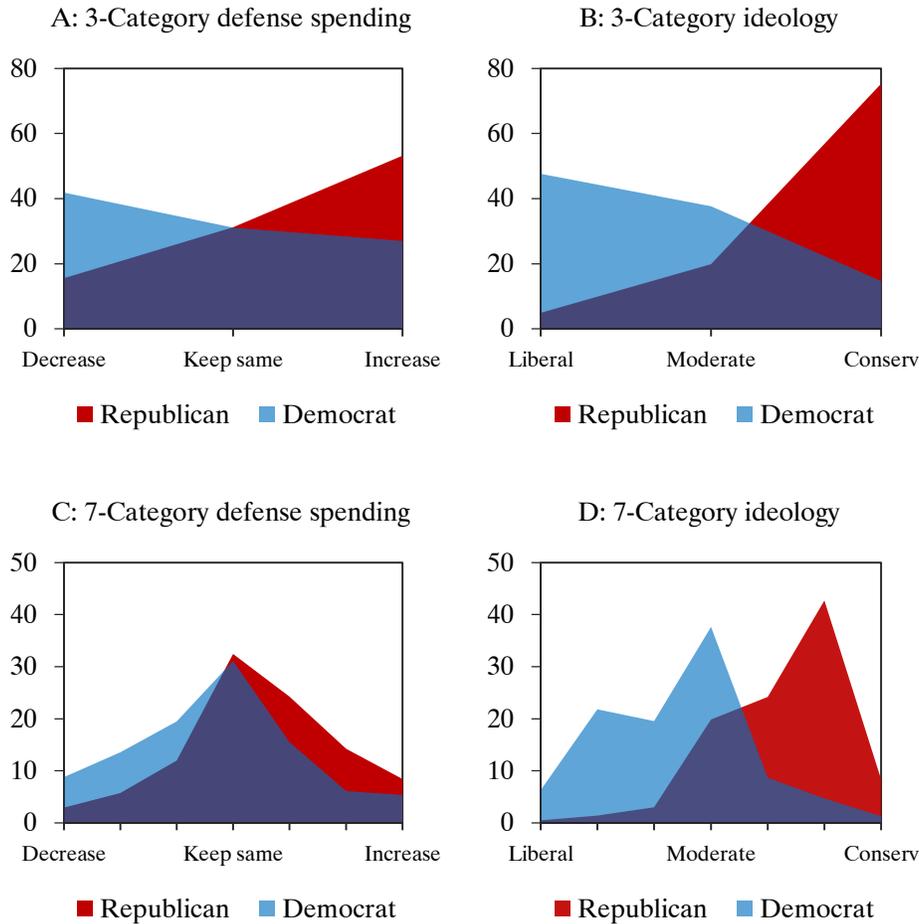
Source: 2012 ANES Time-Series survey
Notes: Partisan groups aggregate "strong," "weak," and "leaner" categories of identification.

Figure 1.2. "Ideology" by Partisanship, 2012 ANES Time-Series

The benefit of conceptualizing sorting in the terms of Panels C and D is twofold. First, these illustrations convey that Americans are not particularly "polarized" in their responses to survey items tend to only modestly skew toward the distributional extremes. Second, by extension, they indicate that individuals are not uniformly sorted on different types of ideological preferences. If Fiorina (2012, pg. 3) is correct in asserting that "sorting is more often a compositional phenomenon—rather than change their views, the categories

to which people belong change," then the relationship between liberal-conservative and partisan identification may be qualitatively different than the connection between policy attitudes and partisanship.

Why is it problematic that the prevailing theoretical and empirical operationalization of sorting has traditionally weighted ideological self-identification equivalent to attitudinal ideological preferences? Because it conflates, in the parlance of Ellis and Stimson (2012), a symbolic, or identity-based, form of ideology with an operational, or attitudinal-based, one. This is a vital distinction. They write that

> symbolic ideology is a representation of how citizens think about themselves: whether they consider their views to be liberal, conservative, moderate, or something else. Operational ideology is grounded more explicitly in concrete decisions, what citizens think the government should or should not be doing with respect to important matters of public policy (2012, pg. 11).

Although these concepts are closely intertwined at the elite level—conservative elites support conservative policies, and liberal elites, liberal ones (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, 2006; Lupton, Myers, and Thornton, 2015)—at the individual level, "it is another matter entirely" (Ellis and Stimson, 2012, pg. 11; see also: Kinder and Kalmoe, 2017; Hill and Tausanovitch, 2015). If individuals' attitudes do not conform to a unidimensional framework (e.g. Feldman and Johnston, 2014), then this absence of systematic ordering has implications for the relationship between ideology and partisan identity. *In particular, sorting on ideological attitudes (i.e. policy preferences) ought to be distinct from sorting on ideological identity (i.e. the categories to which people belong).*

1.3   Outline of the dissertation

This dissertation proceeds in two parts. In Part 1, I build on the foregoing discussion of problems with the prevailing understanding of partisan sorting. In doing so, I show that identity- and issue-sorting constitute two unique facets of the socio-political features that divide Americans. Chapter 1 reviews the extant scholarly literature regarding partisanship and ideology, or the raw materials of sorting. Drawing on this research, I operationalize two types of sorting in Chapter 2 and compare how different measurement protocols affect the characterization of public opinion. I find that the extent to which individuals are sorted

is much more modest than the proportion of individuals who merely match ideology to partisanship. Although the popular description of sorting is that "Americans are increasingly sorted into think-alike communities that reflect not only their politics but their demographics" (Pew, 2016), this sorting is—in many ways—more superficial than many realize. Finally, Chapter 3 provides a series of empirical tests that justify partitioning sorting into identity- and policy-based constructs.

The second part of this dissertation is devoted to the study of identity-based sorting, with a particular focus on the antecedents and consequences of this phenomenon. Given that political identities are the fundamental constructs from which Americans reason and navigate the political environment, understanding the nature of sorted identities is a pressing concern for both theoretical and practical reasons. Chapter 4 takes up the question of *why* individuals' identities converge. Prior research posits that elite cues generate greater matching between partisan and ideological preferences—that is, elite polarization causes mass sorting. However, while the underlying spatial model of politics employed in this logic is intuitive, two problems plague this account. First, different cues shape different forms of sorting. Second, group memberships bias individuals' understanding of where parties and their policy approaches fit within ideological space. These biases figure prominently into the calculus of sorting: I find that sorting is related to asymmetric perceptions of out-group dissimilarity rather than relative perceptions of between-group differences.

Chapter 5 explores how this sorting affects compromise. While amicable intergroup communication is vital to both civil political discourse and to political compromise, identity sorting creates demands on the extent to which individuals are willingness to compromise. These findings, however, come with a caveat: well-sorted Republicans are much less likely than well-sorted Democrats to believe that compromise is an important and desire quality in principle. Fascinatingly, however, when compromise is operationalized as the extent to which individuals are willing to concede concessions to the "other side," these differences between citizens with left- and right-leaning identities disappear. Further, and perhaps alarmingly, I discover that, even in the absence of consistent policy preferences, identity-sorting is sufficient to decrease an individual's propensity to belly-up to the bargaining table. These findings help explain both the

consequences of tribal political identities and why sorting poses a particularly acute problem for democratic exchange.

Finally, Chapter 6 examines how identity sorting alters the decisional criteria that voters utilize to select political candidates. Presenting survey-takers with different depictions of candidates in policy space, I show that sorted individuals eschew proximately "optimal" candidates in favor of more extreme ones. In effect, while persons who exhibit high levels of sorting perceive that they are choosing ideologically-proximate candidates, there is a significant disconnect between perceived and objective ideological congruence. Sorting, then, is a sufficient condition for pushing citizens toward more extreme candidates—even when individuals' issue preferences suggest that their "best" candidate is considerably more moderate. These findings help explain how sorting, in turn, exacerbates elite polarization. The well-sorted citizen behaves in ways that generate representational extremity, even as he or she possesses a mixed of inconsistent preferences.

Taken as a whole, this dissertation both refines the extant logic of sorting and pushes this research into new territory. In demonstrating that identity-based sorting constitutes a unique and particularly powerful political phenomenon, I reveal why concern over the systematic coherency of mass opinion is, perhaps, misplaced. Politics largely trades on the power of symbolic information (Achen and Bartels, 2016), which often obscures the type of nuance needed to fully comprehend and solve complex socio-political problems. If symbolic cues generate identity sorting, and identity sorting, in turns, endangers commitment to deliberative democratic exchange and increases the attractiveness of extremist representation, then scholars might consider shifting a focus on the (lack of) systematic constraint that constitutes the average citizen's belief system and instead scrutinize the tribal, group-based divisions that reduce compromise and amplify rigid political behavior. It is this sorting that contributes to intemperate and polarized politics.

Chapter 2: The Raw Materials of Sorting

"Politics doesn't seem to "work" without some structure that allows broad sets of policies to somehow go together."
     - Feldman (2003, pg. 478)

2.1   Introduction

The study of sorting has been described as "an investigation of how voters align their party identification and ideological beliefs over time" (Levendusky, 2009, pg. 7). This is unquestionably true. However, the study of sorting *also* involves the study of both partisanship and ideology—separately and jointly. In other words, to understand the contours of the mass public's sorting, it is necessary to understand the complexity of these constructs.

In fact, while the scholarly interpretation of partisanship as a durable set of emotional attachments has withstood almost sixty years of inquiry, the study of ideology has puzzled and frustrated scholars. In particular, the exact relationship between individuals' various policy attitudes and identification as a liberal or conservative is murky. Attitudes and identities are interlinked, yet they reflect different aspects of the cognitive and psychological processes that underscore an individual's political preferences.

Problematically, the prevailing sorting literature has ignored warnings that these forms of ideology are not interchangeable (e.g. Conover and Feldman, 1981; Malka and Llekes, 2010; Devine, 2015). Levendusky's (2009, pg. 4) work represents the single comprehensive text on partisan sorting in American politics, and his treatment of ideology is emblematic of this point. He writes that

> I focus here on indicators of ideology—respondents'
> liberal-conservative self-identification and their issue
> positions on a variety of different policies. While there is
> some controversy about the self-identification measure in
> the literature (Conover and Feldman, 1981), I use it here
> as a summary indicator of the respondent's outlook on
> politics (for similar uses, see Zaller, 1992; Hetherington,
> 2001; Sniderman and Carmines, 1997). Using both

measures together will allow me to demonstrate that sorting is not simply an artifact of a particular measure.

Yet, the conceptual, much less empirical, expression of sorting is very much the product of these underlying indicators. While there is some overlap between ideological self-identification and issue-based ideology, a growing body of work conveys that these are distinct facets of ideology (Malka and Llekes, 2010; Devine, 2015)—that these facets of ideology are not so similar that they can be exchanged as substitutes or even treated as direct analogs. This disconnect is consequential for understanding the shape and scope of sorting in that the relationship of partisanship to these various "ideological" elements may not be uniform. Taking these differences seriously, this chapter provides the theoretical framework that justifies splitting sorting into identity- and issue-based constructs.

2.2 What is partisanship?

The canonical view of partisanship as a social-psychological construct is rooted in the early work of Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes' (1960, pg. 143) work in *The American Voter*, which conceptualized partisan identification as "an affective attachment to an important group object in the environment." This emotional affinity for a party was described as both durable and encompassing, and, to the extent that these preferences were socialized in the home, partisan identification was presumably stable over the course of an individual's lifetime.[15] Only a serious event of extraordinary intensity might shake the fixity of this support.

This interpretation, which stylizes partisan affiliation as exogenous to policy preferences, has occasionally been challenged on the grounds that partisanship ought to be construed as a summary set of (cognitive) evaluations of the parties (Fiorina, 1981). In this case, citizens function as good Bayesians who update their partisanship according to experiential evidence (Achen, 1989; Gerber and Green, 1998). Thus, partisanship is not so

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[15] Lost in the ensuing years, however, Campbell and colleagues (1960) did warn against caricaturizing partisanship as exclusively emotional ties. They noted that while partisanship appeared to influence attitudes more than attitudes influenced partisanship, this finding was conceivably restricted to the time-period of inquiry and not necessarily generalizable beyond that narrow window (1960, pgs. 133-135).

much an "unmoved mover" or "perceptual screen" that filters information, but a running tally of judgments without independent causal significance.[16]

Be that as it may, the generally accepted, if not hegemonic, interpretation of partisan identification is deferential to the Michigan school's original formulation of this concept as a vested, emotional attachment (Lewis-Beck et al., 2008; Bartels, 2002; Huddy, Mason, and Aaroe, 2015). In particular, recent scholarly work has returned to the *group-based* qualities of partisanship, arguing that these psychological affinities for parties can be interpreted through the lens of social identity theory (Greene, 1999; Huddy, Mason, and Aaroe, 2015).[17] Social identities involve the incorporation of a particular group membership into an individual's self-concept, what Tajfel (1981, pg. 255) describes as the combination of group membership "together with the value and emotional significance attached to membership." The foundations of social identities are prominently driven by a need for positive distinctiveness where one's own group is favorably prioritized relative an out-group in such a way that members are motivated to protect or advance their own party's status.[18] Unlike belonging to a club to which an individual might pay yearly membership dues and little else, this membership includes "an awareness of similarity, in-group identity, and shared fate with others who belong to the same category," which has "pervasive effects on what people think and do" (Klandermans, 2014, pg. 5). In other words, a social identity is a highly valued group membership that structures how people think about and behave within their immediate environment (Huddy, 2013).

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[16] Yet even this approach has received its share of criticism for expecting too much out of a single, uni-dimensional measure. "45 years ago a single indicator called party identification was commissioned to perform too many tasks," writes Johnston (2006, pgs. 339-340), and "…it does seem clear that real heterogeneity—beyond that of direction and intensity—is being shoehorned into a single procrustean indicator." Weisberg's (1981) work was an attempt to reconcile some of these issues, but has mostly lost in the scrum over whether issues or group attachments underscore partisanship.

[17] In fact, Campbell and colleagues understood partisanship as a form of group attachment not unlike various racial or religious groups, a depiction that Greene (1999) notes was years ahead of its time.

[18] These motivations may have some evolutionary basis. Evolutionary psychologists stress the necessity of group coordination for basic activities like child-rearing, group defense, and even the production of basic goods (Sidanius and Kurzban, 2013). Within this perspective, the internalized attachment to a particular group evolved as a functional necessity for survival. In a post-material context, where safety and the availability of goods are no longer concerns, however, the psychological benefits of belonging to a group are perhaps sufficient conditions for the continued relevance of such memberships.

For many citizens, partisanship fits this description. Not only do partisans intensely favor group members over non-group members (Iyengar, Sood, and Llekes, 2012; Mason, 2015), but partisan identification strongly biases how individuals interpret information (e.g. Bartels, 2002; Leeper, 2014; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus, 2013; Iyengar and Westwood, 2014). Further, because elections are competitions that produce significant material and psychological benefits to participants, individuals engage in behaviors consistent with and on behalf of their group—behavior consistent with the expectations of social identity theory. Huddy, Mason, and Aaroe (2015), for example, provide experimental evidence that this sociological interpretation of partisanship explains such behaviors better than a purely psychological model. Much like the passionate fan who cheers their favorite team in the heat of a competition, partisans' internalized sense of partisan identity is intimately related to their group's victories and defeats; it is personal, rooted deeply within an individual's subconscious (Theodoridis, 2013).

This understanding of partisanship as a social identity complements the conceptualization of parties as groups whose central or primary motivation is the accumulation of power. Schumpeter (1942) argues that the classic (Burkean) stylization of parties as groups of individuals bound together by common principles is naïve. Acknowledging that parties will, of course, espouse certain principles that will be vital to their success in much the same way a department store's success is related to certain brands, he argues that the department store can no more be defined in terms of its individual brands than a party might be defined in light of its particular principles. Instead, a "party is a group whose members who propose to act in concert in the competitive struggle for political power" (1942, pg. 238). This dissertation proceeds on the assumption that this competitive struggle for power feeds into the group-based nature of partisanship; that what it means to be a Republican and Democrat is not so much contingent upon *what* the parties stand for, but that these orientations ultimately comprise more primal attachments.[19] Thus, partisanship reflects how individuals think of themselves as a "Democrat," "Republican,' or "Independent" (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler, 2002, pg. 137).[20]

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[19] Still, this is not to say that partisanship contains no basis in issue preferences. Rather, this interpretation merely suggests that the average citizen conceptualizes partisanship in terms of *group* affiliation rather than *issue*-based preferences.

[20] There is some question of whether or not unaffiliated partisans—"independents" and, to a lesser extent, independents who "lean" toward one of the parties—might conceptualize

Still, if this form of group identity provides locational information that helps citizens place themselves and other actors within the political landscape (Campbell et al., 1986, pg. 100), then the positions that distinguish parties from each other should not be entirely irrelevant to understanding why individuals choose to affiliate with a given party. Thus, while "it would be naïve to suggest that either at the time of its inception or at the time of election, the members of a party are bound together solely by the force and rationality of an ideological stance," it is also the case that "political parties tend to rationalize the existing interests of groups or classes supporting them and articulate issues in ideological terms…they play the game of power in the name of an ideology" (Ashraf and Sharma, 1983, pg. 89). Understanding how individuals think about and conceive of these stances and, ultimately, connect them back to their partisan identity, lies at the heart of understanding sorting and is the task to which we now turn.

2.3   What is ideology?

Classic democratic theory is demanding of citizens. It requires them to pay close attention to current events, to engage in political discussion and debate with their peers, and, ultimately, to participate in electoral processes (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, 1954). These requirements impose a substantial informational burden on the average person. Rationally choosing a candidate or party to support not only demands that citizens possess some basic knowledge about political processes, figures, and policy of the day (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996), but that individuals possess sincere or orderable preferences (Downs, 1957). Accompanying the latter requirement is the implication that the relation of an individual's preferences to each other is bound or organized by some unifying principle or paradigmatic criterion (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, 1954; Converse, 1964).[21] Ideology is the embodiment of those preferences.

Yet this idealized notion that individuals' preferences are meaningfully structured has been the subject of serious debate. Sociological approaches to the study of ideology

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their independence from the Republican and Democratic Parties as its own from of identity. But without clearly delineated group boundaries, much less group goals, it is difficult to see how relevant independent identity might be for politics.

[21] These demands are perhaps too great for the average citizen, however, whose return on this investment is low. Schattschneider (1960) argues that this "problem" lies more with the unrealistic expectations of classic democratic theory than with an apathetic public.

allege, for example, that there is little organizational structure among specific beliefs (e.g. Converse, 1964, 2000), while psychological perspectives tend to stress that the origins of these preferences are often self-generated and only tenuously related to abstract political ideas (e.g. Lane, 1973; Jackson and Marcus, 1975). Yet despite their differences, "these two perspectives share a common concern with the question of whether people think ideologically" (Conover and Feldman, 1984, pg. 95).

Ideology has been, and probably remains, one of the most ubiquitous—though elusive—concepts in modern political discourse. Sartori (1969, pg. 398) describes the frustrating opaqueness of ideology, writing that "the growing popularity of the term has been matched, if anything, by its growing obscurity," eventually concluding that "the word ideology points to a black box." Elsewhere, Mullins (1972) reflects on the ambiguous usage of ideology and a seeming lack of an agreed-upon definition of its basic properties by theorists and scientists alike. Converse's lament that "a term like 'ideology' has been thoroughly muddled by diverse uses" (1964, pg. 3) was perhaps more prescient than he realized.[22]

Nevertheless, these definitional difficulties have not prevented the concept of ideology from becoming a central component in the study of public opinion and political behavior (Lee, 2009). How, then, should we understand this concept? Let us begin with a simple definition of ideology as a benign organizing device that reflects the systematic composition of interconnected values and beliefs (Knight, 2006; Gerring, 1997). Traditionally, the various components that give this framework its structure are stylized according to a hierarchical system of ordering, "bearing some loose resemblance to the vertical line that might be pursued downward through an organization or political movement from the narrow cone of top leadership, through increasing numbers of subordinate officials" (Converse, 1964, pg. 2). This is not to say, however, that ideology is rooted in strict syllogistic reasoning, where attitudes are deterministically linked to other attitudes across value domains. Instead, the logic of ideology is sufficiently broad account

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[22] In part, this confusion is the result of the divide between critical and value-neutral approaches to the study of ideology, or the difference between a embracing a "critical, even judgmental tone in describing and analyzing ideologies" and adopting a more value-neutral position that can be indiscriminately used to describe any particular belief system of attitudes and ideas (Jost, Federico, and Napier, 2009, pg. 309).

for some countervailing preferences, although "ideologies must not repeatedly violate their canons of sensibility" (Mullins, 1972, pg. 510).

Obviously, these frameworks are not value-neural. Parsons (1951, pg. 24, italics mine) describes ideologies as "the shared framework of mental models that groups of individuals possess that provide both an interpretation of the environment *and a prescription as to how that environment should be structured.*" More recently, Krochick and Jost (2010, pg. 146) write that ideology is a "socially shared belief system about how society should conduct itself (and how it conducts itself at present)." In this way, ideology reflects the underlying structure of beliefs inasmuch as it communicates the particular character that they take, which reflects Freeden's (1998) description of ideology as a configuration of political concepts that decontests the indeterminate meanings that inherently characterize such terms, enabling the construction of meaningful political worlds.

Taken together, then, it is possible to conceptualize ideology as both the structural framework of an individual's worldview and as a normative blueprint relating to 1) the appropriate allocation of power, and 2) the ends such power might be utilized to achieve preferred goals. Put another way, ideology has been used to describe both the *shape* or *structure* and, simultaneously, the *character* of one's beliefs. This is a subtle, but perhaps overlooked distinction that may be responsible for some amount of the confusion related to this concept. As ideology relates to this project, however, I am less interested in the interrelationship of attitudes inasmuch as I am concerned with how an individual's liberal-conservative preferences fit within left-right political space relative partisanship. Thus, in this application, ideology is treated as a blanket term that embodies an individual's beliefs, attitudes, and sense of group identity within the liberal-conservative framework.[23]

2.3.1 The liberal-conservative conflict

In its contemporary American use, ideology reflects conflict among two countervailing political perspectives embodied in the concepts "liberal "and "conservative," which

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[23] It should be noted, of course, that other ideologies exist—many even within the more general liberal-conservative framework. For now, however, simplicity is our guide and this distinction is the quantity of interest. When speaking about liberal-conservative identity or attitudes, I qualify "ideology" with the associated term.

juxtaposes philosophical differences in approaches to social change and the distribution of economic goods within a single "left-right" dimension (Jost et al., 2009).[24] Historically, this conflict dates back at least as far as the French Revolution, where liberalism conveyed support for freedom from state intervention in social and economic domains and opposition to the influence of the monarchy, Church, and aristocracy, conservatism reflected, if not outright support, then cautious skepticism over dismantling those monarchical, religious, and aristocratic institutions (Davies, 1996). In modern American political discourse, however, these relationships are essentially inverted: the promotion of free markets and minimal government is now associated with conservative approaches to governance and the protection of governing institutions with liberalism.

At present, the terms "progressive," "system change," and "equality" are often associated with the "left," while terms like "system maintenance," "order," and "individualism" are connected to the "right." In American political discourse, the liberal-conservative distinction is often used interchangeably with this left-right understanding of political concepts. While a full accounting of the historical development of ideology in America is beyond the scope of the present project (for a historical overview, I point interested readers to Noel's (2013) excellent book, *Political Ideologies and Political Parties in America*), the purpose of the following section is to present the culturally-standard summaries of these concepts in order to contextualize how ideology matches with to partisanship in the modern American political context.

American liberalism

In the aftermath of the Great Depression, it was proposed that institutions could redress collective action problems associated with complicated social and economic dilemmas. Government, according to then-President Franklin Roosevelt, was the principal agent responsible for redressing these problems. Thus, he framed his New Deal programs in the verbiage of "liberal" priorities, so chosen for the word's positive connotations—free from

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[24] More specifically, whereas liberalism conveyed support for freedom from state intervention in social and economic domains and opposition to the influence of the monarchy, Church, and aristocracy, conservatism reflected, if not outright support, then cautious skepticism over dismantling those monarchical, religious, and aristocratic institutions (Davies, 1996).

any link to concepts like fascism, socialism, and communism that were both threatening and unpopular in the mind of the public (Rotunda, 1986). According to Roosevelt (1941)

> as new conditions and problems arise beyond the power of men and women to meet as individuals, it becomes the duty of Government itself to find new remedies with which to meet them. The liberal party insists that the Government has the definite duty to use all its power and resources to meet new social problems with new social controls.

These sentiments enjoyed great initial success in their implementation, forming the backbone of the New Deal and Great Society programs, but, over time, the general popularity of this assemblage of philosophical ideals waned. In fact, Stears (2007, pg. 87) writes that "following decades of racial tension, student unrest, rising crime, and profound difficulties in international affairs, explicitly liberal political ideals found few adherents." Nevertheless, these liberal ideals have played important long-term roles in shaping matters of public policy: a plurality of Americans have long-preferred various government interventions in the economy (Ellis and Stimson, 2012).[25]

At its core, modern American liberalism proposes that the assistance of the state is central to shaping and promoting the welfare of a citizenry, drawing much of its intellectual material from egalitarian principles. In terms of social policy, liberals have prioritized freedom from coercion or intrusion on private decision-making. Often, this has centered on maintaining a healthy separation of church and state insofar as liberals have resisted the pressures that organized religion exert on matters of social policy. In particular, liberals have advocated for fewer restrictions on matters of women's health, including access to birth control and abortion. Further, their sensitivity to the rights of disadvantaged groups often leads them to advocate for special legal protections of African American's, women's, and LGBTQ rights.

Economically, this egalitarianism conveys that success should not be governed by the circumstances of birth, but by the application of one's talents and abilities. Although American social life is perhaps not as deeply stratified by class as other countries, liberals

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[25] There is obvious bleed-over between American liberalism and the more general conception of, say, Lockean liberalism, which underscores modern democratic governance itself.

generally hold the position that an individual's accomplishments in life are nevertheless governed by the lottery of birth. Government, then, is viewed as a tool to utilize in evening this unequal playing field (rather than the private sector). Specifically, government ought to act in the economy in a variety of ways, to permit collective bargaining, to ensure a minimum wage, and to guarantee that benefits such as old age pensions and health care insurance are available to all. Moreover, because these programs are expensive, liberals endure greater taxation to secure these services. Finally, while liberals support the premise of the free market, governmental regulation is viewed as the appropriate brake on private economic power that might, if left unchecked, be used to secure unfair benefits by corporations and the rich. Thus, the government's role is "to regulate the economic environment to prevent such abuses" (Ellis and Stimson, 2012, pg. 4).

<u>American conservatism</u>

The concept of conservatism was somewhat slower to develop than its liberal counterpart in American political discourse, even as Roosevelt and his supporters employed the term as a mild rebuke throughout the 1930s (Rotunda, 1986). This negative usage didn't stick, however, and literary critic Lionel Trilling (1950, pg. ix) would later surmise that "it is the plain fact that nowadays there are no conservative or reactionary ideas in general circulation." In fact, it wasn't until the late 1950s that conservatism developed any real bite as an intellectual alternative to the prevailing hegemony of public liberalism; in turn, it took Goldwater's presidential candidacy in 1964 to bring conservatism into the mainstream and Reagan's campaigning and presidency in the 1980s to crystalize what is now recognizable as modern American conservatism.[26]

Three prominent strains of preferences can be traced throughout much of the history of the conservative movement (Gross, Medvetz, and Russell, 2011). In his book, *The New American Right*, Daniel Bell (1955, pg. 47-48) laid the foundation for a form of *social* conservatism that "sought to impose older conformities on the American body politic."[27] On a tangible level, this social conservatism emphasized that private citizens,

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[26] It is worth noting, however, that this modern conservatism is perhaps dimensional, as well, including derivatives like paleo- and neo-conservatism.

[27] Perhaps less charitably, his approach ostensibly boiled down to an attempt to "stuff a rapidly changing American society back into the box of a white, theologically

families, and even communities were better judges of appropriate social norms than the federal government, although the irony of this preference for traditional social life is that it still required a strong federal government to enforce this version of social order.[28]

A second strand of influence within conservatism deals with the particular influence of the Christian right, which imbued public conservatism with a moral quality that is separate from a simple opposition to progressive social trends. Thorne (1990, pg. 8) writes that "all contemporary American conservative thinkers hold two fundamental ideas: a certain view of human nature and a certain conception of…moral order." Although this comity between religion and conservatism was a later development than the more general suspicion of social progressivism outlined above, by the late 1980s, evangelicals had imbued conservatism with a particular vision of moral and, therefore, social, order (McGirr, 2001). Their influence ranged from attempting to ban the teaching of evolution and sex education in schools to opposition movements over same-sex marriage, abortion, and gambling to their support for the death penalty (see Blee and Creasap, 2010 for an excellent review).

Finally, conservatism is associated with limited governmental interference in the marketplace. While conservatives take seriously the notion of equal opportunity, they generally argue that reducing inequality is best achieved with an open market rather than a regulatory government (Friedman and Friedman, 1990). Ellis and Stimson's (2012, pg. 6) describes these economic preferences thusly: "free markets, whatever excesses they might have, are seen as the single greatest pathway to long-run economic growth and prosperity, and government intervention in them stifles both innovation and the ability of a citizenry to allocate resources in a way that it sees fit." Thus the policies preferred by conservatives are generally designed to minimize the footprint of government on the activities of the marketplace, informing a preference for private insurance, low government spending (with the exception of defense spending), and lower taxes.

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conservative, small-town vision of the good" (Gross, Medvetz, and Russell, 20xx, pg. 328).

[28] This resistance to change also carried certain racial connotations, although the extent to which this informs modern conservatism is heavily debated (Ansell, 2001). In particular, it is difficult to separate how ostensibly nonracial values—like the appropriate role of government—might be tinged with antiracial affect (Hutchings and Valentino, 2004).

2.3.2   The dimensionality of ideology

Given these brief sketches of the stereotypic qualities of liberal and conservative ideology outlined above, it seems theoretically parsimonious to juxtapose the labels liberal and conservative as conceptual foils that could be arrayed as opposite intellectual approaches within a single ideological continuum. Certainly this approach has historical roots. In a 1938 "fireside chat," FDR intoned

> Be it clearly understood, however, that when I use the word "liberal," I mean the believer I progressive principles of democratic, representative government... the opposing or conservative school of thought, as a general proposition, does not recognize the need for Government itself to step in and take action to meet these new problems.

In fact, President Barack Obama's more recent claim that "There's not a liberal America and a conservative America—there's the United States of America" notwithstanding, differences between liberals and conservatives can be observed across a variety of policy domains (Jost et al., 2009).[29] Yet there is, perhaps, a problem with this portrayal of liberalism and conservatism as conceptual opposites in that this approach implicitly assumes that liberals and conservatives share the same perceptual frameworks, where the single difference separating these ideological approaches is that "their view is from opposite sides of the field" (Conover and Feldman, 1981, pg. 619). Is this a reasonable assumption? Does a single dimension adequately describe, much less guide, the mass public's preferences where liberals and conservatives are simple proscriptive opposites?

The answer to these questions is complicated and depends upon one's level of inquiry. A uni-dimensional, liberal-conservative framework does guide *elite* preferences. Since the late 1960s, the voting behavior of Congressional legislators has exhibited limited dimensionality, effectively reducing conflict to a single "liberal-conservative" dimension (Poole and Rosenthal, 1997; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, 2006). More recently, Lupton, Myers, and Thornton (2015) find evidence that this single dimension adequately structures highly sophisticated Congressional delegates' political preferences.

There is limited evidence, however, that the mass public thinks in these distinctions. Converse (1964), for example, concluded that liberal-conservative-thinking

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[29] http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A19751-2004Jul27.html

was perilously low throughout the mass public. Elsewhere, Weisberg and Rusk (1970) find that "social" issues like marijuana use, abortion, and the Equal Rights Amendment, which crept into the political agenda during the 1970s, did not, at least initially, fit into the liberal-conservative spectrum. Moreover, a growing body of work in both political science and psychology conveys that this one-dimensional framework insufficiently captures the significant heterogeneity within the mass public's ideological beliefs (Feldman and Johnston, 2014). Consider, for instance, the finding that individuals' ideological self-descriptions can be functionally independent of their actual policy preferences. It is odd that individuals who self-identify as conservatives would prefer, on balance, liberal policy preferences, yet this discordance is precisely what Ellis and Stimson (2012) observe. This dovetails with research that indicates that citizens impose varying substantive interpretations the liberal-conservative spectrum (Zumbrunnen and Gangl, 2008), that economic and social preferences are often independent or distinct (Layman and Carsey, 2002; Rokeach, 1973; Feldman and Johnston, 2014; Duckitt, 2001), and that mass attitudes are, more generally, characterized by a general lack of constraint among issue positions (Myers, Lupton, and Thornton, 2015).[30]

This is *not* to say, however, that individuals' attitudes are uninterpretable or do not conform to any particular pattern. In fact, while Feldman and Johnston (2014) present considerable evidence that there is enormous heterogeneity among citizens' ideological preferences, they find that a multidimensional solution to the structure of ideology partitions individuals into coherent groups. Like Conover and Feldman (1984) and, more recently, Moskowitz and Jenkins (2004), they argue that the reductionist tendency to squeeze policy preferences into a simple linear continuum runs the risk of misrepresenting how individuals actually think in practice. Instead, it appears that individuals' attitudes are at least minimally governed by a two-dimensional approach that only modestly relates to the condensed, bipolar liberal-conservative continuum.[31] In other words, the terms liberal

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[30] Zaller (1992) and Zaller and Feldman 19xx) offer that individuals may not hold fixed attitudes at all; rather, survey responses are a mix of ambivalence and, occasionally, opposing attitudes whereby individuals sample whatever information is most easily accessible (i.e. top-of-the-head considerations).

[31] Still, this not to say that the liberal-conservative framework is an anachronism. A robust body of findings has demonstrated the usefulness and remarkable reliability of the liberal-conservative ideological framework over time (Alford, Funk, and Hibbing, 2005; Bobbio, 1996; Jost et al., 2008; Baldassarri and Gelman, 2008).

and conservative may be parsimonious theoretical foils, but, empirically, the mass public's attitudes may only weakly fit within this one-dimensional framework.

2.4 Disentangling ideology for the study of sorting

After more than fifty years of research on ideology, scholars remain frustrated at the lack of resolution in the debate over 1) whether mass preferences conform to a general, idealized spectrum, and 2) whether these preferences are related to each other in any systematic way. This has not been for lack of trying (see Jost et al., 2009 for a review). There have been a variety solutions targeted at resolving these issues, ranging from Achen's (1975) sophisticated work on instability in individuals' survey responses vis-à-vis the reliability of the survey instruments themselves to more recent work using latent empirical approaches to identify dimensionality in ideology (Moskowtiz and Jenkins, 2004; Ellis and Stimson, 2012; Feldman and Johnston, 2014; Claussen et al., 2015). Still, the lack of clear consensus on the character of ideology has recently provoked the conclusion that "there is little to be gained by rehashing a debate that has still not been resolved after more than 50 years of political science research" (Carmines and D'Amico, 2015, pg. 210).

Although this frustration is understandable, I disagree with its conclusions. The implications of the extant body of work on ideology present some difficulty for the study of sorting for an obvious reason: the criterion on which sorting is based—the left-right ideo-political framework—is inherently one-dimensional, yet the components that comprise sorting may not share this limited dimensionality. If these issues cannot be resolved, then sorting, which literally relies on a one-dimensional, left-right classificatory scheme, is a poor, if not irredeemable, approximation of the extent to which ideological preferences do, *much less ought to*, map onto partisanship.

Thankfully, however, we need not throw the baby out with the bathwater, as a number of solutions to address the complexity of ideology within the context of sorting are available. Recent research that questions the suitability of the liberal-conservative ideological framework notwithstanding, the left-right model of ideological structure has "parsimony on its side and has fared surprisingly well in terms of theoretical utility and

empirical utility" (Jost et al., 2009, pg. 310).[32] Yet there is a key distinction between facets of ideology that has serious implications for the study of sorting: ideological identity is more strongly related to partisanship than is issue-based ideology—perhaps because while liberal-conservative identity is effectively one-dimensional, liberal-conservative attitudes are not.

In fact, ideological self-descriptions and the attitudes that populate belief systems are not interchangeable concepts.[33] While most contemporary samples of American survey respondents convey that ideological self-identification within the liberal-conservative space is reliably correlated with a varied range of policy preferences—including preferences for decreased (increased) social welfare spending, progressive (traditional) cultural-moral stances on issues like same-sex marriage and abortion, and decreasing (increasing) the size and strength of the military (Malka and Llekes, 2010)—this does not mean that liberal-conservative *identity* is a mirror-image concept of liberal-conservative *ideology*. Specifically, even though the traditional understanding of the liberal-conservative labels assumes that ideological self-identification is the product of issue orientations or preferences, much of the mass public may not associate these terms with issue-based meanings (Klingemann, 1979; Levitin and Miller, 1979; Conover and Feldman, 1981).[34] The classic example of this disconnect can be observed in the "symbolic-

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[32] An immense literature demonstrates that the validity of ideological labels is high, reliably predicting partisanship (citation), electoral choice (citation), news consumption preferences (citation), and even elective affinities (citation).

[33] The meaning of ideological self-identification has puzzled scholars. As Conover and Feldman (1981 , pg. 621) ponder, if this concept is not issue oriented, that is, if issues are only weakly related to why individuals choose to associate themselves with these groups, then "what is the meaning associated with ideological labels?" On the one hand, ideological identity shares some relationship to partisanship. Levitin and Miller (1979) note that ideological self-identification seems to be some comment on the parties and their positions, yet, on the other hand, ideology exerts independent force on behavioral outcomes relative to partisan identification. Whatever commonality these items share, the question of their shared nature remains.

[34] Abramowitz and Saunders' (2006) work is emblematic of the approach that holds that issue attitudes are intimately related to ideological self-identification. Analyzing Cronbach's Alpha coefficients that account for coherence among policy issue attitudes common to NES surveys and liberal-conservative self-placements, they find that these items have become more internally consistent over time. But this work remains agnostic on the point of whether issue attitudes or ideological self-identification are derivative from the other.

operational paradox," which implies that Americans' overwhelming favor the conservative ideological label in spite of holding policy preferences that are, on balance, liberal (Ellis and Stimson, 2012; Free and Cantril, 1967). Although *symbolic ideology*, the particular ideological group with which individuals may align, is clearly related to their constellation of particular issue attitudes, what has been termed *operational ideology*, a growing body of research argues that these concepts should be analyzed separately on their own merits (Conover and Feldman, 1981; Levitin and Miller, 1979; Popp and Rudolph, 2011; Devine, 2015; Mason, 2016).

One explanation for the meaning of ideological identification is to conceptualize this response as a symbolic group attachment. Put another way, ideological identification as a liberal or conservative is a powerful symbolic attachment to a particular group that orients group members to their surroundings. Drawing again on social identity literature, which notes that in-group identification, intergroup differentiation, and in-group bias result from defining oneself as a group member, liberal-conservative identity should motivate individuals to generate strong positive and negative feelings toward those individuals who do not belong to their chosen ideological family. Roccas and Brewer (2002, pg. 50) describe this process as one in which individuals "come to perceive themselves more as the interchangeable exemplars of a social category than as unique personalities." Ideological self-identification, then, can be defined in light of these social or expressive functions rather than particularistic attitudes. In other words, self-categorization as a "liberal" should constitute a social identity where an individual's self-perception as a liberal draws from the shared experiential similarity with in-group members and as a point of collective difference with those persons who identify with other ideological groups (e.g. conservatives; e.g. Devine, 2015).

Separate this symbolic form of ideology, issue-based ideology reflects the beliefs and dispositions that generate concrete choices regarding the appropriate role of government (Ellis and Stimson, 2012). This is ideology as conventionally construed when individuals talk about ideological position-taking and is emblematic of the many considerations that individuals hold when they think about politics. They are what Erikson and Tedin (2003, pg. 64) describe as a "set of beliefs about the proper order of society and

how it can be achieved."[35] This is an elegant description in theory, but, in practice, the operationalization of issue-based ideology is a great deal more complex in that does not conform to uniform standard of a one-dimensional scale like that of elites. Instead, issue-based ideology appears to be something of a potpourri of countervailing or cross-pressured preferences that only weakly convey a semblance of organization according to the traditional understanding of the left-right continuum (Treier and Hillygus, 2009).

In light of these distinctions, theorizing about, much less measuring, sorting requires greater attention to the underlying complexity of ideology. I propose that a better way of considering the extent to which Americans' ideological preferences match to partisanship requires separating the relationship of between these two facets of ideology and partisanship. In the next chapter, I begin to build the empirical case that shoehorning both forms of "ideological" preferences into the calculus of sorting is a misguided approach to measuring sorting. Drawing on the distinctions laid out in this chapter, I will argue that, at least minimally, sorting should be broken into two separate components: an issue-based form of sorting, which reflects the degree to which particular policy preferences overlap with the partisan orientation, and a symbolic form of sorting, that accounts for the convergence between ideological and partisan identity.

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[35] Any discussion of issue-based ideology must ultimately account for the quality of attitudes found in opinion surveys. The idealized conception of public opinion communicates that individuals hold well-founded, carefully constructed opinions about a variety of socio-political phenomena. This description, however, is tenuous given longstanding realities about low levels of political knowledge (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996), sophistication (citation), and psychological tendencies that allow citizens to simultaneously hold both negative and positive dispositions toward attitude objects (Lavine, Johnston, and Steenbergen, 2012; Zaller and Feldman, 1992). Approaching issue-based ideology from a dispositional perspective, that is, examining whether latent domains structure opinions, releases researchers from holding a priori expectations about the quality, character, and relationship among survey-based attitudes.

Chapter 3: Defining Identity- and Issue-based Sorting

Sorting is a changing correlation between partisanship and ideology, so that, in a sorted electorate, party and ideology are more closely related (more correlated) than in an unsorted electorate.
~Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*[36]

3.1   Introduction

The raw materials of sorting are a mix of evaluations, attitudes, and symbolic identities, and, as the previous two chapters indicate, quantifying the extent to which partisanship has converged with ideology requires taking these complexities seriously. Compositionally, extant research relies on a simple expression of sorting: "conservative" responses to policy questions and ideological identification are matched to identification with the Republican Party, while "liberal" responses to these items are matched to Democratic Party affiliation. The more items that fit into the appropriate partisan "bin," the greater the sorting that must exist. This approach is certainly an important part of the sorting calculus; correct classification of terms is vital to the composition of sorting. Yet, focusing solely on matching without also accounting for the distribution of opinion hemorrhages valuable information about the *extent to which* individuals' underlying attitudes and identities are "extreme," thereby blunting the insights that sorting can offer about the character of public opinion—a key feature that lies at the heart of the larger debate regarding mass polarization.

In this chapter, I argue that prior work on sorting suffers two serious shortcomings—one theoretical, the other, empirical—and outline an approach to measuring sorting that addresses these issues. Our first task is to recover the meaningful variation that is lost when we treat the concept of sorting as a relationship between discrete quantities. In effect, past work on partisan sorting treats the independent, leaning-partisan who possesses extreme and consistent ideological preferences as empirically identical to the strong partisan who possesses weak, though consistent, ones (c.f. Levendusky, 2009).

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[36] Levendusky (2009, pg. 4-5).

The problem with collapsing this variation should be obvious in that it confounds values that are theoretically distinct yet treated as empirical analogs.[37]

Concurrent to addressing these measurement issues, our second task in this chapter is to disaggregate partisan sorting into identity- and policy-based constructs.[38] As I have alluded, the pivotal criteria for making this distinction hinges on the multifaceted nature of ideology. Departing from *The Partisan Sort*'s approach, I argue that it is possible to construct a measure of policy-based sorting to complement the identity-based one utilized elsewhere (e.g. Mason, 2015; Davis and Dunaway, 2016).[39] These concepts, while related, are not mere analogs. In the next chapter, I empirically defend this line of reasoning, but, for now, my goal is simply to outline the composition of these forms of sorting.

Finally, I conclude with a brief discussion about how the approach to quantifying sorting outlined in this chapter offers insights into the disconnect between warring interpretations of mass polarization. On the face of it, the narrative that the American mass public is and has become more sorted over time is accurate. However, accounting for the underlying extremity of both partisan and ideological preferences paints a less dramatic, if not conclusive, portrait of mass opinion. While Americans are more likely to match their partisanship to their ideological preferences, the *extent to which* the mass public has sorted is modest. Thus, the common ground that sorting represents in the fight over whether attitudes have become more or less extreme is not quite the panacea that scholars sometimes suggest. If anything, convergence among the mass public's preferences in the aggregate remains, on balance, quite superficial.

3.2   Identity-based sorting

At its core, identity-based sorting reflects the integration between two forms of political identities, the partisan and ideological self-concepts. As individuals become "better"

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[37] Further, extending the data utilized by Levendusky (2009) by two additional election cycles, I show that the predicted growth in sorting across a variety of issues has not happened for half of the issues analyzed.

[38] I use the terms "issue sorting" and "policy sorting" interchangeably.

[39] While some research has examined identity sorting on its own merits (e.g. Mason, 2015; Davis and Dunaway, 2016), issue-sorting has received virtually no attention outside of Levendusky's (2009) original work. Further, no research explicitly juxtaposes these two concepts to examine their relationship to each other.

sorted, their political identities move into alignment within left-right space, where Democrats identify as liberals and Republicans, conservatives. In this section, I first discuss the prevailing operationalization of partisan and ideological identities before specifying the mathematical expression that captures how these identities combine.

3.2.1   Liberal-conservative ideological identity

Symbolic ideology, or liberal-conservative identification, is a "representation of how citizens think about themselves: whether they consider their views to be liberal, conservative, moderate, or something else" (Ellis and Stimson, 2012, pg. 11).[40] While there are a number of approaches to understanding the nature of this self-description, recent research argues that ideological identity reflects a form of social identity (Devine, 2015).[41] Within social psychology, an identity comprises conceptualizing the self as a member of a particular category, a process termed "self-categorization" (Terry, Hogg, and White, 2000; Turner, 1991). A given identity exists at a certain place and time and is, at least partially, a function of the cultural and discursive contexts that are unique to that time and place (Huddy, 2001). For example, "categorizing oneself as a "'conservative' will…constitute a social identity when one's self-perception as conservative is experienced as a point of similarity with other ingroup members and as a point of collective difference with outgroup members" (Malka and Llekes, 2010, pg. 160). In this telling, the particular meaning of the ideological self-concept conveys an emotive, symbolic attachment to a particular ideological group.

When pollsters ask individuals to report on the nature of their ideological self-concept, however, the survey item often used to capture their responses does not explicitly frame ideological affiliation in terms of these group-based attachments. Instead, individuals are simply asked to place their views within a spectrum or scale ranging from "liberal" to "moderate" to "conservative" (one could be forgiven, then, for treating

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[40] This self-reflection might be objectively "accurate" in the sense that the many things an individual believes actually comport with this label, but, as I have previously noted, it is possible for this self-concept to be functionally independent of issues.
[41] Although this is not to say that this label is wholly devoid of policy-based meaning. These labels are not merely rhetorical devices, but do probably reflect some sort of "summary" of one's underlying policy preferences. That said, for the average politically unknowledgeable and disinterested citizen, the quality of the issue content of these labels is debatable (Malka and Llekes, 2010).

responses to this question as a "summary evaluations" rather than an indication of a unique form of social identity). Be that as it may, I will later demonstrate that these responses exhibit properties associated with social identities, even though the instrument is somewhat vague. Within this response set, left-leaning orientations comport to lower values and higher values conservative ones, ranging from "extremely liberal," coded 1, to "extremely conservative," coded 7.[42]
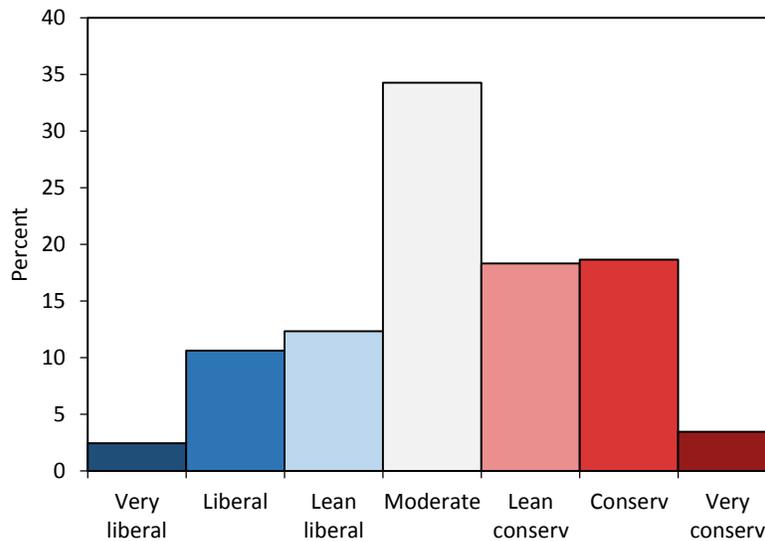
Source: ANES 1984-2012 Time-series surveys
Notes: Weighted sample frequencies

Figure 3.1. The Traditional Measurement of Ideological Identification

Figure 3.1 depicts the distribution of responses to the traditional liberal-conservative self-placements within the 1984-2012 ANES Time-Series surveys. Strikingly, the modal response category for this survey question is "moderate," although pooling all "liberal" and "conservative" responses together indicates that a plurality of the mass public

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[42] While this response set is more or less continuous, Treier and Hillygus (2009) go so far as to argue that ideological self-identification should be operationalized as a nominal rather than an ordinal variable. In their estimation, moderates are not wholly moderate, which gives a false impression about the directionality or mixture of their preferences. Be that as it may, this ordinal response format is almost universally utilized.

identifies with one of the two major ideological groups.[43] However, it is worth noting that there are few individuals who readily identify with the ideological extremes compared to the more modest categories—an observation that immediately casts some suspicion on claims that the mass public is ideologically "extreme."

3.2.2   Partisan identification

As the prior chapter suggests, partisan identification has been simultaneously conceptualized as both an evaluative orientation in that it compromises a generalized and enduring response to an object (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981) and as a form of group attachments (Campbell et al., 1960). These are not necessarily mutually-exclusive interpretations (Greene, 2002), but the measurement of partisanship does introduce some amount of ambiguity as to the nature of what, precisely, scholars' measurement tools are picking up when they attempt to quantify an individual's partisan attachments. Nevertheless, it appears to be the case that the traditional approach to measuring partisanship "is better suited to measuring partisanship as group belonging than as an attitude" (Greene, 2002, pg. 174), if for no other reason that it explicitly asks individuals to first categorize themselves as a group member. This step is a critical component of the general social identity approach to measuring group identities in that such self-categorization is vital to uncovering group membership (Tajfel, 1978).

The traditional measurement of partisanship utilizes a branching set of survey items that first ask respondents whether they consider themselves to be a "Democrat," Republican," or an "Independent." If individuals select one of the two party offerings, they are then asked to identify how strongly they feel about those group ties (this is where the "Michigan" measurement strategy muddies the water between group identity and evaluative attitude). For those individuals who first selected Independent identification, a

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[43] Perhaps not unsurprisingly, the actual framing of these questions is important to the responses given. Robinson and Fleishman (1988) find widespread evidence of "house effects" in the measurement of the liberal-conservative self-concept, noting that, while varying the number of response categories does not necessarily alter the observed ratio of liberals to conservatives, the middle response category does see systematic movement depending on how polling firms describe the midpoint of this scale and whether they give respondents the option of selecting "haven't thought much about this," or "don't know" responses.

follow-up question asks whether these respondents "lean" toward one of the parties.[44] These persons are classified as "partisan leaners," while those who do not deviate from Independent identification are treated as "pure" Independents.

Values on this seven-category partisanship item range from 1, "strong Democrat," to 7 "strong Republican." Figure 3.2 portrays the distribution of these responses within the 1984-2012 ANES Time-Series. Democrats comprise the plural group with which individuals associate. Unlike the more normal distribution of ideologues presented in Figure 3.1, the proportion of partisans in the varying categories of partisan strength tends to increase as we transition from weaker identities to stronger ones. Finally, note that relatively few individuals identify as pure Independents.
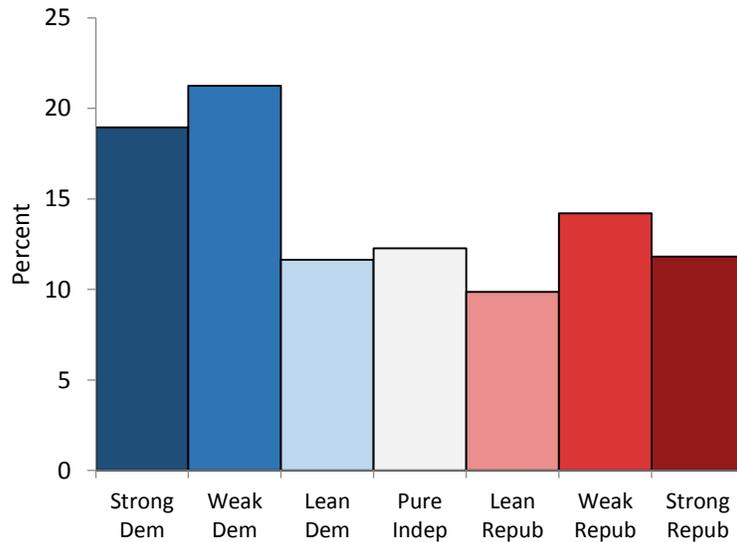
Source: ANES 1972-2012 Time-series surveys
Notes: Weighted sample frequencies

Figure 3.2. The Traditional Measure of Partisanship

3.2.3   Constructing a measure of identity-based sorting

To construct a measure of identity sorting, I first construct a measure of overlap between partisan and ideological identification. I then take the product of the resulting overlap term

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[44] From a practical standpoint, these leaners are not that dissimilar to regular—and even strong—partisans (Keith et al, 1986).

and the "strength" of the two identity items used to generate that value (c.f. Mason, 2015). To generate the overlap between identities, we simply subtract a respondent's score on ideology from their score on partisanship and take the absolute value of the resulting number to account for the degree to which a person's preferences are matched.

$$overlap = abs(PID - IDEO) \qquad (1)$$

Empirically, if partisanship and ideology are scored on seven-point scales, ranging from low values (left-leaning: Democrat, liberal) to high ones (right-leaning: Republican, conservative), then complete overlap or perfect "sorted-ness" computes to zero—for example, scoring a seven on ideology (i.e. extremely conservative) minus a score of seven on partisanship (i.e. "strong Republican) yields a score of zero. Conversely, a person who exhibits extraordinarily low overlap would yield a high value according to this equation: subtracting the value 1 on partisanship (i.e. "strong Democrat") from the value 7 on ideology (i.e. "extremely conservative") produces a score of 6 . To reclaim a more sensible ordering of these values, we simply reverse-order them and then add "1" to these scores so that perfect overlap takes the highest value (7) and the least overlap the smallest value (1).[45]

Having accounted for the extent of overlap between identities, we should now account for the extremity of them. To do this, we will multiply the overlap score by the "strength" of these attachments, which requires folding the identity varaibles at their midpoint. Here, the moderate / Independent categories take the value of 1, weak identification the value 2, moderate identification, 3, and, finally, strong group attachments a value of 4. After multiplying the overlap score by these strength values, I then rescale the measure of sorting to range from 0 to 1. Thus, this final score represents the degree of the overlap between an individual's identities multiplied by the strength or extremity of both of those items.

$$identity\ sorting = overlap\ \times PID\ strength\ \times IDEO\ strength \qquad (2)$$

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[45] I add "1" to these scores because multiplying the value "0" by the forthcoming strength measures will naturally constrain all scores to a value of 0. If an individual scores a 0 as a function of strong, countervailing preferences, we are unable to recover the effects of the strength of those constituent preferences because multiplying a value of 0 by any integer will remain 0.

Figure 3.3 displays the distribution of sorting scores, overlaid with three examples of different configurations of partisan and ideological identities. The scale is anchored by those persons who classify themselves as "pure" Independents *and* "pure" ideological moderates (0). As values increase, a number of things occur: 1) identities transition from neutral to one-sided, be that Republican (Democrat) or conservative (liberal), and 2) the correspondence or overlap between identities increases. Middling values, then, are indicative of moderately strong and cross-cutting identities (e.g. conservative Democrat), while higher values convey very strong and matching identities (e.g. conservative Republican). Unlike the discrete measure popularized by Levendusky (2009) in the *Partisan Sort*, which scores matching identities as "1" and all other combinations "0," this coding scheme is theoretically sensible across empirical values and produces a metric of sorting that fully expresses the different combinations that these identities may take.
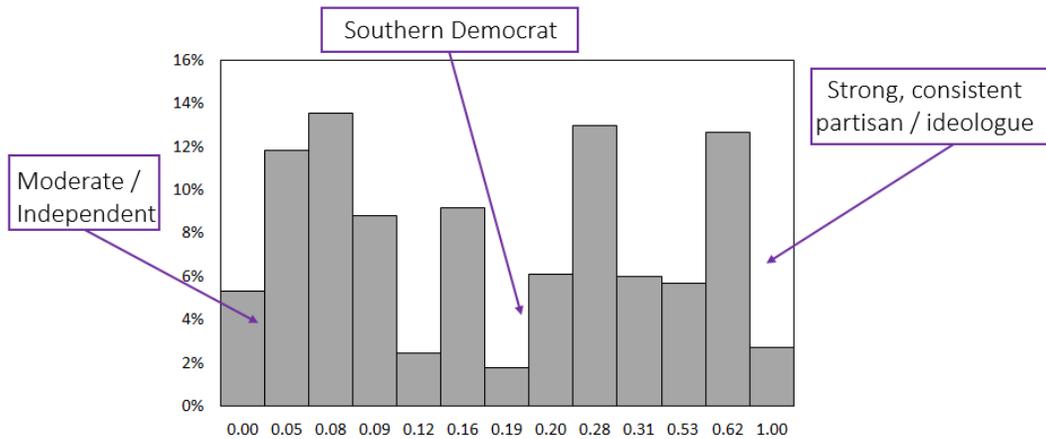
Source: ANES Time-Series, 1984-2012
Notes: Variables have been rescaled to range from 0 (unsorted) to 1 (perfectly sorted).

Figure 3.3. Distribution of Identity-based Sorting Scores

With these distinctions in mind, Figure 3.4 illustrates a comparison between the proportion of respondents whose ideological identity matches their partisan one, *matching-only,* and the *identity sorting* variable described above. On the face of it, individuals have become much more likely to appropriately match their ideological and partisan identities

over time. From 1984 to 2012, the matching of liberal-conservative identity to partisanship within the mass public grew more than 20 percent. This is an impressive increase, but, when contextualized against the fuller identity sorting measure, it should be clear that this sorting is more modest when we account for the underlying distribution of the constituent items. From 1984 to 2000, sorting on ideology waffles back and forth around the value 0.25 and peaks in 2008. By 2012, identity sorting has increased by about 10 percent relative the starting value in 1984, which is less than half the change observed across matching-only item. The cautious conclusion that we might draw, then, is that while identity-based sorting *has* increased over time, a matching-only approach to sorting overstates the strength of the relationship between partisan and liberal-conservative identities.
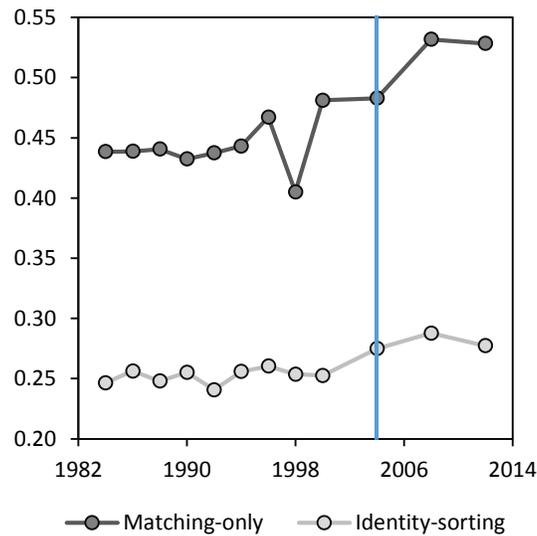
Figure 3.4. Identity-based Sorting over Time

3.3   Issue-based sorting

Peeling away liberal-conservative identity away from the omnibus sorting index found in extant research, we are now left with a series of issues that include respondents' attitudes toward the government provision of healthcare, the scope of government and defense spending, the role of government in providing jobs and aid to minorities, rates of legal immigration, and the propriety (legality) of abortion and same-sex marriage. Taken together, these items contribute to a form of ideology that is "grounded more explicitly in concrete decisions, what citizens think the government should or should not be doing with respect to important matters of public policy" (Ellis and Stimson, 2012, pg. 11). In other words, these are the particular beliefs, attitudes and opinions that populate the network of an individual's belief system. In this section, I turn to considering how we might apply the logic of sorting outlined above to create a complimentary (and novel) type of sorting rooted in the extent to which individuals' policy opinions are matched to their partisanship.

Although I have made the case that partisanship can be conceptualized as an identity-based construct, and, therefore, that it should enjoy a special or unique relationship to ideological identity, there is a sizeable literature that argues that party affiliation is more appropriately construed as a summary evaluation of one's political preferences—or that, at minimum, the cognitive content shared between partisanship and ideology is similar (Sharp and Lodge, 1985). In this telling, partisanship functions as a running tally of how the parties perform, an instrumental attachment of sorts rooted in the ideological proximity of an individual to their ideal party. As Fiorina writes (1981, pg. 84), partisanship can be described as a "running tally of retrospective evaluations of party promises and performance." This account places particular importance on the connection between partisanship and issues, bolstered by recent work that finds that partisanship now contains a stronger issue-based foundation than previous years (Bafumi and Shapiro, 2009; Abramowtiz, 2010). Thus, we might still observe robust sorting on issues even after purging ideological identity from such a metric.

Operationalizing a policy-based approach to sorting is relatively straightforward using the ANES Time-Series issue placements because the response sets for those items resemble the same seven-category ones that comprise both ideological identity and partisanship. In this case, we wish to first account for the overlap between an individual's partisan affiliation and their issue preference on a given policy issue. Because both

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partisanship and the individual issues are measured using seven-category, ordinal scales, the values of which can be roughly interpreted as ranging from liberal to conservative responses, generating a measure of overlap requires simply adhering to the coding scheme outlined in the previous section. We then simply multiply this overlap value (eq. 3) by the strength of the issue attitude and partisanship (eq. 4).[46] In each respective section, I juxtapose the resulting *issue sorting* score with a *matching only* one that merely reflects whether the policy preference is correctly-matched to the respondent's partisanship, coded 1, or not, coded 0.

$$overlap_{\,n\,policy} = abs(issue\ placement - PID\ placement) \qquad (3)$$

$$issue\ sorting_{n\,policy} = overlap \times PID\ strength \times policy\ strength \qquad (4)$$

3.3.1   Sorting on individual issues

There are a number of policy issues that we might examine in the pursuit of constructing an issue-based form of sorting, limited only by the content included in survey questionnaires. Customarily, however, the ANES Time-Series surveys have routinely featured only a limited number of policy issues over a sufficiently long duration of time. Six policy items, however, have been regularly included on these surveys dating back to 1984. They include perspectives on aid to minorities, the provision of government healthcare, whether the government should guarantee citizens jobs, abortion, and defense and social welfare spending.

<u>Aid to blacks / minorities</u>

I begin with the question of whether government ought to offer targeted aid to African Americans. This question was intended to capture whether or not individuals believe that government assistance is needed to counterbalance prevailing inequalities that exist among certain minority racial groups. Rooted in the legacy of Civil Rights era policy changes, the

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[46] An alternative approach to operationalizing "issue sorting" includes building an Item Response model that computes a latent, policy-based form of ideology. This is more or less the approach Ellis and Stimson (2012) take in constructing their "operational" ideology term. For the sake of parity and parsimony, I simply use the measurement scheme outlined above.

policy debate over the question of affirmative action within the mass public has remained divisive, even though elected officials periodically claim that the mass public is staunchly opposed to race-conscious government programs (Steeh and Krysan, 1996).[47]
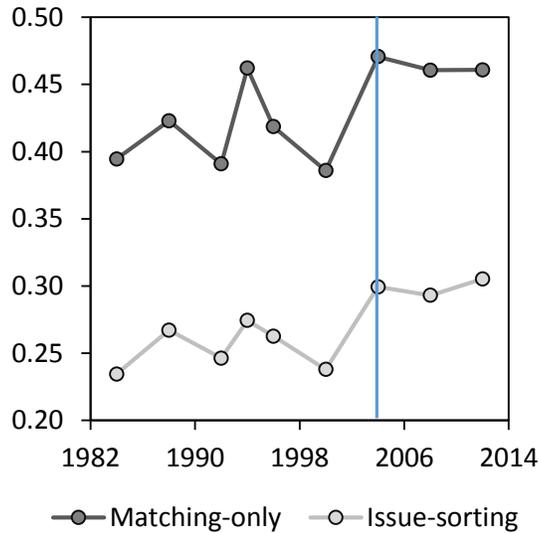
Figure 3.5. Issue sorting on "Aid to blacks and minorities"

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[47] Like any question that taps into a sensitive matrix of economic, social, and even religious material, the phrasing of language used to capture preferences related to affirmative action matters a great deal. Steeh and Krysan (1996) assemble a great range of data from varying polling firms that indicate that couching this question in terms of quotas in both employment and admissions settings produces variation in positive responses to the question of affirmative action compared to more generalized phrasing regarding "aid" to blacks and minorities. However, because the overarching support for these policies is low, any movement at all within this narrow band is nontrivial.

In the mid-1980s, the ANES began fielding a version of an affirmative action item that asked individuals to place themselves along a seven-category scale that ranges in the degree to which individuals think that government should intervene to redress these inequalities. Specifically, the question put to respondents is worded as follows: "Some people feel that the government in Washington should make every 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. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about it?"[48]

The solid dark line in Figure 3.5 depicts how responses to this policy question match to partisanship. This illustration reveals that matching on this item has increased modestly over time. In the early 1980s, roughly 40% of individuals conveyed responses to this question that were matched correctly to partisanship. Although sorting on such aid varies considerably, 2004 represents the high watermark for matching on these responses. Turning to the measure of issue sorting, a similar upward trend manifests, although the actual amount of sorting on this issue is markedly superficial. A more direct comparison between the change in sorting over time communicates that the issue-based measure of sorting increases roughly 7 percent compared to about six-and-a-half percent for the discrete term. Interestingly, this is the only issue on which the change in issue sorting surpasses the change matching, a finding that is perhaps related to the racialization of this policy by the Obama presidency (e.g. Tesler, 2012).

Government healthcare

Public debate on the issue of whether government should provide healthcare dates as far back as the mid-1800s.[49] Support for the issue moved to the center of the modern policy

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[48] The exact wording of this variable (VCF0830) can be found in the CANES codebook (see:
http://www.electionstudies.org/studypages/anes_timeseries_cdf/anes_timeseries_cdf_codebook_var.pdf).

[49] As a component of the broader progressive movement, reformers pushed to improve social conditions of the working class through the provision of social insurance, but, without a strong working class consciousness, support for these measures was relatively low. Combined with stiff opposition to nationalized insurance programs from doctors, interest groups (specifically, the American Medical Association [AMA]), labor groups, insurance companies and the wider business community, the efforts of progressives up

agenda, however, in the aftermath of FDR's death and Truman's subsequent elevation to the Presidency. Although Truman supported shifting state-administered systems of health care toward a national one, a brief Democratic majority in Congress wasn't enough to push legislation through the House of Representatives, stymied, in part, by the American Medical Association and Republicans' characterization of a national health system as "socialist." With the growth in Cold War tensions over socialism, the mere whisper that a broad, government-funded health insurance program might reflect socialist programming was enough to doom the passage of any such proposal. These fault lines remained largely intact over the next fifty years, preventing any meaningful movement toward a nationalized system of health insurance through at least a half-dozen presidencies. Eventually, Bill Clinton's Administration would come close to seeing universal coverage extended to Americans, but it was not until 2010 that President Barack Obama and Congressional Democrats passed the Affordable Care Act through a use of procedural rules to extend medical and insurance benefits to millions of previously-uncovered Americans.

Unsurprisingly, public attention to the issue of whether government or the private sector should provide health insurance has waxed and waned considerably over time, even as little actual legislative progress occurred. The ANES has surveyed respondents on this issue as far back as the early 1970s, but, here, we pick up the issue in 1984. The verbiage of this survey item has evolved subtlety over time, but is generally specified as follows: "There is much concern about the rapid rise in medical and hospital costs. Some people feel there should be a government insurance plan which would cover all medical and hospital expenses for everyone…Others feel that medical expenses should be paid by individuals through private insurance plans. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?"[50] Possible responses to this item are anchored by two opposing perspectives: at the left-leaning or liberal end, a preference for government health insurance; on the right-leaning or conservative end, a preference for a completely privatized system of insurance.

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through the early 1940s largely failed to move the needle on support for government intervention in the provision of health insurance.

[50] The exact wording of this variable (VCF0806) can be found in the CANES codebook (see:
http://www.electionstudies.org/studypages/anes_timeseries_cdf/anes_timeseries_cdf_codebook_var.pdf).

Figure 3.6 illustrates that the matching of respondents' attitudes to partisanship has steadily risen from 1984 to 2012, although when we account for overlap *and* strength, this change looks less impressive. While the raw overlap between partisanship and insurance attitudes has increased almost 14 percentage points over time, the change in issue sorting is roughly 50% less than that estimate. In other words, while respondents are more likely to give an ideologically-correct answer to this survey item, the strength of sorting on this item is modest.
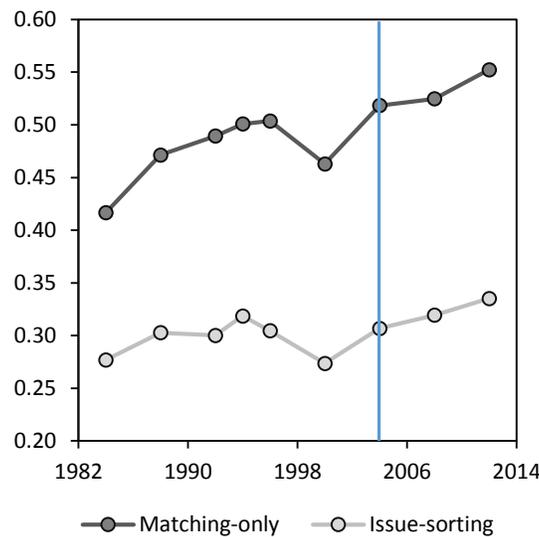
Source: 1984-2012 ANES Time-Series
Notes: Estimates weighted by population weights. Y-axis is interpreted differently for the different variables. For "matching-only" estimates, y-axis conveys percentage of people correctly matching policy to PID. For "issue-sorting," estimate conveys mean value (on scale ranging from 0 to 1). Solid vertical line indicates where data in Levendusky (2009) ends.

Figure 3.6. Issue sorting on "Provision of health insurance"

Government provision of jobs

The question of whether the government should offer jobs to its citizens juxtaposes whether individuals prefer a more expansive federal government, where government provides work to jobless citizens and maintains basic standards of living, or whether individuals believe that prosperity and employment are best left to an unencumbered private sector. Proponents of government intervention generally believe that government, broadly construed, can play

a fundamental role in shaping social and economic inequalities by providing marketplace assistance in the form of vocational training, public service employment, institutional training, or even job creation and placement programs. Over time, a number of programs that encompass the practical manifestation of this approach have been legislated through Congress, including the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration, and, more recently, the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act program. Conversely, detractors of these policies and programs argue that they are a violation of certain principles that guarantee an open and free marketplace and freedom from the type of coercive governmental regulation that ostensibly accompanies the former approach. Instead of providing net increases in job creation and employment, this perspective conveys that "new governmental jobs will instead attract individuals who are already employed in the public economy, but at lower rates of pay than the new positions being devised by government" (Wanniski, 1978, pg. 84).

Support for either of these perspectives is measured through a survey item that juxtaposes governmental intervention relative personal responsibility as these concepts relate to the provision of jobs. In the ANES, this question is usually operationalized as: "Some people feel that the government in Washington should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living. Others think the government should just let each person get ahead on his/her own…Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?"[51]

On balance, Figure 3.7 reveals that matching on this item has remained largely static over time, decreasing during certain presidential cycles (2000) and increasing during others (2004). The full measure of issue sorting reveals a similar pattern insofar sorting on this item has either remained constant (2008) or actually fallen slightly (2012) in recent years. Given the unstable nature of the economic environment throughout these years, which covered the worst major economic recession since the Great Depression, sorting on this item probably fell as those individuals feeling the impact of job loss and employment— who were otherwise Republicans—selected slightly more liberal preferences on this item.

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[51] The exact wording of this variable (VCF0809) can be found in the CANES codebook (see: http://www.electionstudies.org/studypages/anes_timeseries_cdf/anes_timeseries_cdf_cod ebook_var.pdf).

Turning to the issue sorting measure, which accounts for the strength of these attitudes, we see a somewhat similar pattern. Be that as it may, the extent to which individuals are sorted on the provision of jobs only increased by about two percent from 1984 to 2012, about 50 percent less than the change in discrete sorting over the same period.
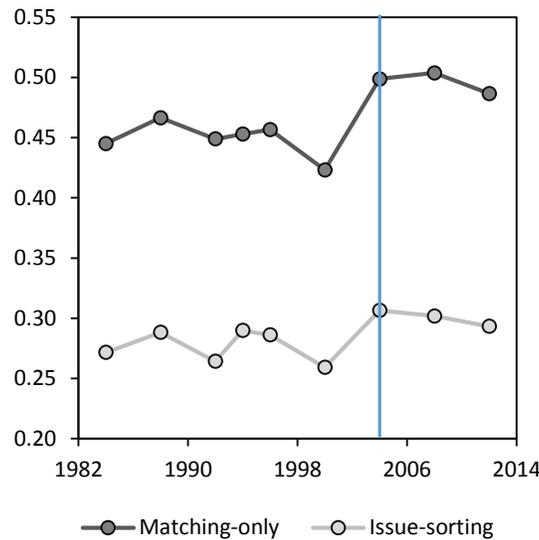
Source: 1984-2012 ANES Time-Series
Notes: Estimates weighted by population weights. Y-axis is interpreted differently for the different variables. For "matching-only" estimates, y-axis conveys percentage of people correctly matching policy to PID. For "issue-sorting," estimate conveys mean value (on scale ranging from 0 to 1). Solid vertical line indicates where data in Levendusky (2009) ends.

Figure 3.7. Issue sorting on "Government provision of jobs"

Federal spending

The size and scope of federal spending is one of the bread and butter issues of American public policy, and has generated a sizable academic literature (e.g. Cook and Barrett 1992; Gillens, 1999; Jacoby, 1994, 2000; Soroka and Wlezien, 2010). Although the scope of federal spending is ultimately tied to budgetary appropriations, it is rarely connected back to the question of the taxes necessary to provide for programmatic spending. In fact, as is often the case when the question is placed before respondents, the item effectively asks individuals about their preferences for spending divorced from the realities of how that

spending will be paid for. This is, of course, the ironic twist to attitudes toward spending, which Citrin (1979) famously describes as "wanting something for nothing."

In general, the American citizenry reliably supports the federal government providing social goods and services. As Faricy and Ellis (2014, pg. 56-57) write, "[t]the idea the government should play a role in providing housing for the poor, pensions for the elderly, education for all children, and a variety of other social benefits is popular with the public, even among Republicans and Conservatives." Yet while the public tends to support, on balance, a government that pursues some modest amount of "redistribution" (e.g. Page and Jacobs, 2009), individuals still tend to hold rather negative opinions of the government. In fact, while there is a commitment to social spending for the aforementioned groups, the public holds intuitively countervailing preferences for a leaner and small government (Ellis and Stimson, 2012).

The ANES Time-Series surveys approach the question of government spending by juxtaposing two perspectives. One end of a seven-category response set is anchored with "Some people think government should provide fewer services, even in areas such as health and education, in order to reduce spending." On the other end of the spectrum is the statement "Other people feel that it is important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending."[52] Respondents are then asked to pick a value between those two points that best represents their feelings toward the provision of government services and spending.

Figure 3.8 illustrates that matching between policy attitudes and partisanship has gradually increased over time, while the change in issue sorting is effectively flat. Further, the estimates actually seem to diverge after 2004—although the raw overlap between partisanship and issue positions increases, once we account for the underlying extremity of these components, we observe issue sorting actually decreases. Table 1 buoys this visual presentation by presenting the percentage change in these concepts over time. Here, we observe that matching increases roughly nine percent from 1984 to 2012, while issue sorting only increased by about three percent.

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[52] The exact wording of this variable (VCF0839) can be found in the CANES codebook (see:
http://www.electionstudies.org/studypages/anes_timeseries_cdf/anes_timeseries_cdf_cod ebook_var.pdf).

Figure 3.8. Issue sorting on "Government spending"

Defense spending

The United States' armed forces are unparalleled, but a mighty military does not come cheap. In fact, the United States spends more money on its military than the next fifteen countries…combined. And even though the United States' population is only roughly five percent of the global population, it produces almost 50 percent of the world's total military expenditures (Thompson, 2010).[53] Over the previous decade, defense spending has increased more than 100 percent, a higher rate of transfer than even the monies allotted to the military complex during the height of Reagan's presidency during the Cold War. In other words, defense spending is higher today than at any other time since the Second

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[53] Whence does this money come? Military spending is a component of the discretionary budget, or the money that Presidential Administrations and Congress have direct oversight over and must act to spend each year (as opposed to mandatory spending, or monies that are spent to remain in compliance with laws already on the books, e.g. social security, Medicare, debt payments, etc.).

World War—even as the overall economy contracted. To put this output into perspective, the Pentagon spends more money on warmaking activities than all 50 states together spend on health, education, and welfare.

While federal spending is easy to classify within the liberal-conservative framework, public attitudes toward defense spending somewhat resist this left-right classification. While it is true that opinions toward defense spending *should be* related toward perspectives on government spending, public attitudes toward defense expenditures bedevil such simple comparisons. Instead, the mass public generally appears to support defense spending on balance, although there is no real broad consensus among ordinary Americans regarding whether the federal government spends too little, too much, or just about the right amount on military spending. Baretls (1994, pg. 497) provides some evidence that even in light of major geopolitical upheaval in the aftermath of the Cold War, "both the level and the structure of defense spending preferences among the least informed 60 percent of the public have changed only marginally."[54] The ANES Time-Series surveys measure attitudes toward defense spending by asking respondents to place themselves along a seven-category continuum ranging from "Some people believe that we should spend much less money for defense" to "Others feel that defense spending should be greatly increased."[55]

Figure 3.9 shows variation in sorting on this item over time. There is a general downward trajectory for both matching and issue sorting until 2004, at which point the proportion of individuals correctly matching policy to partisanship increases. Ostensibly, this change was the result of Republicans becoming better sorted as the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars reached a crescendo. However, in the intervening years since 2004, we

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[54] However his postulation that the downward inertia of a willingness to spend more money on defense among the informed might reduce the scope of such spending has not borne out—military spending has proven remarkably resilient even in the face of a modest aggregate preference to reduce it, perhaps because of its connection to the military-industrial business complex or the subsequent explosion of defense spending in the wake of 9/11.

[55] The exact wording of this variable (VCF0843) can be found in the CANES codebook (see: http://www.electionstudies.org/studypages/anes_timeseries_cdf/anes_timeseries_cdf_codebook_var.pdf).

observe a decrease in matching and issue sorting. In the aggregate, changes in sorting are effectively nonexistent.
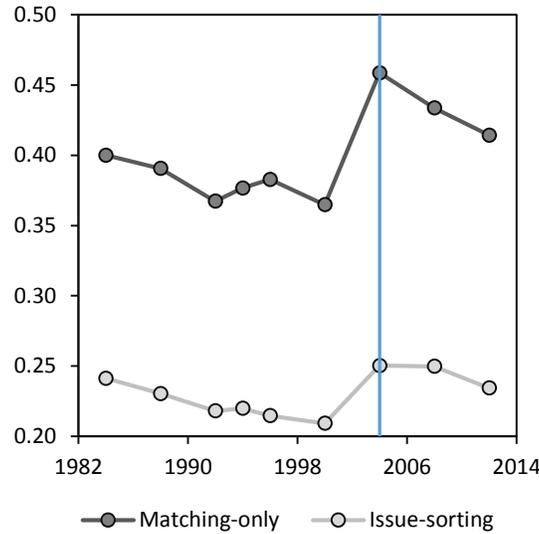
Source: 1984-2012 ANES Time-Series
Notes: Estimates weighted by population weights. For "matching-only" estimates, y-axis conveys percentage of people correctly matching policy to PID. For "issue-sorting," estimate conveys mean value (on scale ranging from 0 to 1). Solid vertical line indicates where data in Levendusky (2009) ends.

Figure 3.9. Issue sorting on "Defense spending"

Abortion

The issue of abortion is one of the most singularly divisive issues of social policy in modern political discourse, which asks "What role should the federal government play in determining whether, if not when, a woman is allowed to willingly terminate a pregnancy?" The question over the legality of abortion is inextricably linked to *Roe v. Wade*, in which the Supreme Court ruled that the right to privacy provided by the 14th Amendment's due process clause extended to a woman's reproductive choices, with one important caveat— the state has a legitimate interest in balancing both the health of a woman against protecting the potentiality of life. This logic was further refined in *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey*, where the Court attempted to explicitly demarcate the conditions under which the state had a compelling reason to disallow terminating a

pregnancy. Eschewing the trimester template originally established by *Roe v. Wade*, which stipulated the state could regulate abortion in the third trimester of pregnancy, *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* determined that viability could occur as early as 24 weeks, and, thus that the government (state) has a compelling reason to reject allowing the termination of a pregnancy beyond that point.

In light of these developments, surveys generally measure public opinion on abortion by juxtaposing the perspective that abortion should never be allowed with a series of responses that vary the permissibility of abortion under certain circumstances and culminating with a response that communicates that abortion access should be effectively unrestricted. The ANES Time-Series' method for capturing individuals' attitudes toward the issue of abortion fits this approach and provides four categories that respondents may select: 1) By law, abortion should never be permitted, 2) The law should permit abortion only in case of rape, incest, or when a woman's life is in danger, 3) The law should permit abortion for reasons other than rape, incest, or danger to the woman's life, but only after the need for abortion has been clearly established, and 4) By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice.[56]

Given that abortion is coded using this four-category scheme, operationalizing both a discrete and continuous measure of sorting on this issue demands a bit of creativity in arraying these values so that they fit the seven-category scheme of partisanship. Here, I array the two more permissive response categories of abortion attitudes at values 1 and 3, respectively, the most restrictive category of abortion at 5, and the response that abortion should never be legal at 7. For the purposes of creating a "matching" item, Democrats match to values 1 and 3 and Republicans 5 and 7.[57] Measuring issue sorting follows the basic template provided in the previous section: I calculate an overlap score between

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[56] One drawback to this approach is that it does not ask respondents about viability related to the duration of the pregnancy; still, this template provides substantially more information than simply asking respondents whether they identify as "pro-choice" or "pro-life." The exact wording of this variable (VCF0837 & VCF0838) can be found in the CANES codebook (see: http://www.electionstudies.org/studypages/anes_timeseries_cdf/anes_timeseries_cdf_codebook_var.pdf).

[57] Readers may balk at matching extremely limited abortion provisions to Republican identification, but a nontrivial proportion of Republicans would allow for the termination of a pregnancy in extreme circumstances, such as when a mother's life is in real danger.

abortion attitudes and partisanship. Folding the abortion responses in half provides two categories of "strength" which are then multiplied by this overlap term and partisan strength
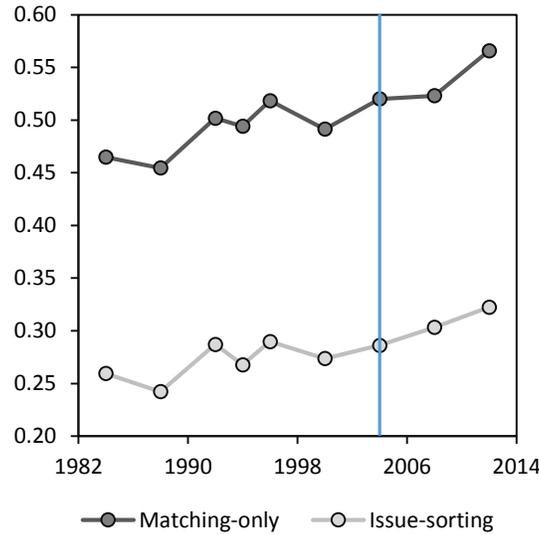
Figure 3.10. Issue sorting on "Abortion"

Figure 3.10 presents the average amount of matching and issue sorting on abortion over time. There is a clear increase in the amount of sorting across both measures, although the increase in the extent to which individuals are sorted on abortion is less extreme than we might expect. From 1984 to 2012, issue sorting has increased by about six points. This is about 40 percent less than the change in the simple overlap between abortion issue preferences and partisanship.

3.3.2   Constructing a measure of issue-based sorting

Having developed and reviewed separate measures of matching-only and issue sorting across a variety of individual policy questions, I now turn to creating an index of issue-

based sorting that reflects the total sorting across these various policy items. In theory, this composite variable should reflect a type of cohesiveness within an individual's ideological worldview in that this item encompasses the extent to which an individual is able to make connections or abstractions between their partisanship and many policy preferences. The aggregate measure of issue sorting presented in Figure 3.11 accounts for both the overlap between partisanship and ideological preferences and the extremity (or strength) of these items. Combining the separate policy sorting items together results in an index that ranges that also ranges from 0 to 1 (see eq. 5).

$$\sum_{n_{policy}}^{\infty} f(issue\ sorting\ score\ ) \tag{5}$$

As scores transition from minimum (0) to maximum values (1), not only does overlap or "sorting" increase, but so, too, does the extremity of these underlying considerations. In other words, this variable more appropriately accounts for Independents with moderate views, "confused" partisans whose attitudes appear to be the function of simple random selection, cross-pressured partisans with a variety of strong views, and sophisticated, strong partisans with highly-consistent opinions.

Figure 3.11 contextualizes how issue sorting within the mass public has changed over time relative a matching-only approach. According to a minimalist specification of sorting in which attitudes and partisanship need only match, there does appear to be robust issue sorting within the mass public—even beyond the levels observed by Levendusky (2009). For all the debate over the distribution of mass opinion over time, sorting on a series of multifaceted policy issues seems to have occurred. If the relationship between partisanship and ideological preferences conveys the quality of public opinion, then this finding suggests that moderate coherence within mass opinion exists.

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partisanship and ideological preferences conveys the quality of public opinion, then this finding suggests that moderate coherence within mass opinion exists.

Figure 3.11. Issue sorting over time

However, as we turn our attention to the measure of issue sorting, this conclusion is somewhat tempered. Notice that the predicted values for this variable stay relatively flat, occasionally increasing in some years (e.g. 1994, 2004) only to significantly decrease in others (e.g. 2000, 2012). In fact, from 2004 to 2012, sorting has not appreciably changed, *even as congressional legislators have become increasingly polarized.* This is not at all what we would have expected according to the traditional account of sorting, and it draws into relief the notion that public opinion is characterized by both heterogeneity and (relative) moderation. Indeed, Table 3.1 presents a summary of these very changes.

Table 3.1. Changes in various measures of sorting over time, 1984-2012

		Discrete sorting	Issue sorting
Percent Δ from 1984 to 2012	Government spending	+8.9	+3.1
	Defense spending	+1.4	-0.7
	Aid to blacks	+6.6	+7.0
	Abortion	+10.1	+6.3
	Government healthcare	+13.5	+5.8
	Government jobs	+4.2	+2.1
	Avg. percent Δ in sorting	+7.45	+3.93

Source: 1984-2012 ANES Time-Series
Notes: Percent change is value of sorting metric in 2012 less value in 1984.

3.4   Conclusion

The extent to which individuals have become more sorted over time pales compared to changes in discrete sorting. Individuals may be more skilled at matching partisanship and ideology in 2012 than they were some 30 years previous, but this connection is appreciably weak. Further, the *rate of change* in sorting across identity and issue sorting over time is muted relative changes in the simple matching of ideology to partisanship. This finding is consistent with a robust literature that persuasively argues that ideological constraint does not describe the cognitive capabilities of the mass public (e.g. Converse, 1964; Zaller, 1992; Lupton, Myers, and Thorton, 2015).

This evidence offers some caution for scholarly (Levendusky, 2009) and popular depictions of sorting (Pew, 2014), which allege that this phenomenon is a prominent feature of public opinion—"what has happened in the United States," argues Morris Fiorina, "is not polarization, but sorting."[58] This is true. The American public has become better sorted over time.

Yet, the data presented here show very little evidence of extremity in the extent to which individuals are sorted. In other words, there is little evidence for what is traditionally understood as mass polarization. Thus, when we correct the discrete measure of sorting to more appropriately account for Independent persons and the underlying strength of mass

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[58]https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/06/23/americans-have-not-become-more-politically-polarized/

preferences, even the degree to which the mass public appears "sorted" is lower than expected. If anything, convergence among the mass public's preferences in the aggregate has been and continues to be quite modest. Further, the alleged benefits of elite polarization—more citizens who align their preferences to match those of their party's (Levendusky, 2010)—have not necessarily borne the expected proverbial fruit. Polarization within Congress has reached all-time highs (voteview.com), yet, according to a matching-only approach to sorting, the mass public is not appreciably better at matching ideology to partisanship in 2012 relative 2004. It seems that there is a limit to the upper threshold of how individuals connect their ideology to their partisanship. Whatever expected "benefits" of such elite polarization exist, they have somewhat run their course.

Still, there are a number of questions that remain after the presentation of this descriptive data. The careful reader may wonder whether these constructs are statistically independent, mere clones, or, perhaps, instead, two sides of a common coin. In the next chapter, I present a series of analyses that demonstrate why and how these forms of sorting are related, though distinct facets of partisan sorting.

Chapter 4: Partisan Sorting: Are Identity- and Issue Sorting Two Sides of the Same Coin?

> *...all measurement is theory testing. Therefore, measurement always constitutes a tentative statement about the nature of reality.*
> ~Jacoby (1999, pg. 271)

4.1 Introduction

As the prior chapter outlines, the justification for disaggregating partisan sorting into identity- and issue-based constructs is grounded in conceptual differences between liberal-conservative identity and liberal-conservative policy preferences. This chapter, in turn, presents an empirical case for this distinction and proceeds in three parts. First, I explore the relationship between identity and policy sorting. I find that, while the correlation between these forms of sorting has increased in the aggregate, there is little systemic evidence at the individual level to suggest that individuals' policy attitudes become more or less well-matched to partisanship over time. In contrast, however, I show that citizens' liberal-conservative and partisan identities exhibit signs of convergence as time passes.

Second, I investigate how political acumen or knowledge is related to sorting. Because sorting utilizes "left-right" space as its organizing criterion, successfully navigating this ideological dimension should, at minimum, shape how individuals think about their preferences in relation to their partisan affiliation. In particular, I explore the connection between what individuals know about this space—where the parties and their policies "fit" in the left-right dimension—and sorting. Predictably, a grasp of such information exerts differentiated effects on identity and policy sorting.

Finally, in order to emphasize differences between identity and policy sorting, I explore how these two forms of sorting differ in their capacity to shape group-based affinities. A core finding in social psychology conveys that group attachments are tied to the extent to which an individual's in-group is narrow or restrictive. When an individual's preferences are cross-cutting, or do not overlap, tolerance toward members of other groups is generally higher than when an individual does not belong to a diverse set of groups (Roccas and Brewer, 2002; Brewer, 1999)—i.e. when an individual is *unsorted*. I find, however, that the prevailing operationalization of partisan sorting mispredicts such tolerance. Even in the absence of a series of highly-consistent policy preferences, moderate

levels of identity-based sorting are a sufficient condition for observing severe levels of ideological biases.

Taken together, this evidence draws the arguments of the prior chapters into sharp relief. While identity and policy sorting are not orthogonal, they nevertheless represent separate facets of partisan sorting. As a result, any account of the ongoing sorting of the American mass public, to say little of predictive analyses that examine the effects of such sorting on various political phenomena, must take these differences seriously.

4.2 Is all sorting, sorting?

To distinguish identity- from issue-based sorting, I begin by analyzing four simple, bivariate relationships: 1) the correlation between liberal-conservative identity and policy consistency, 2) the correlation between liberal-conservative and partisan identity, 3) the correlation between policy consistency and partisanship, and, 4) the correlation between identity and policy sorting. Beginning with Panel A in Figure 4.1, I present a jittered scatterplot in which responses to ideological self-identification, arrayed on the x-axis, are juxtaposed by "issue ideology" scores, arrayed on the y-axis.[59] This latter variable is an additive index of the policy items outlined in the previous chapter, which includes abortion, social and defense spending, aid to minorities, healthcare, and employment preferences. Remaining agnostic about the underlying dimensionality of these data, this measure of "issue ideology" merely accounts for the consistency of opinions across these policy areas, where liberal opinions take low and conservative opinions take high values. Thus, individuals who espouse multiple very conservative or very liberal policy preferences would be located at the respective liberal or conservative poles on the x-axis; individuals who possess a heterogeneous configuration of policy preferences will be drawn toward the center of this axis.

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[59] "Jittering" is merely a change to the proportion or "weight" of each observation within the scatterplot so as to allow for maximum visual clarity. Without jittering, these panels would likely appear as solid blocks of color.

A. Identity- & Issue-ideology   B. PID & Issue ideology

C. PID & Ideological identity   D. Issue- & Identity-based sorting
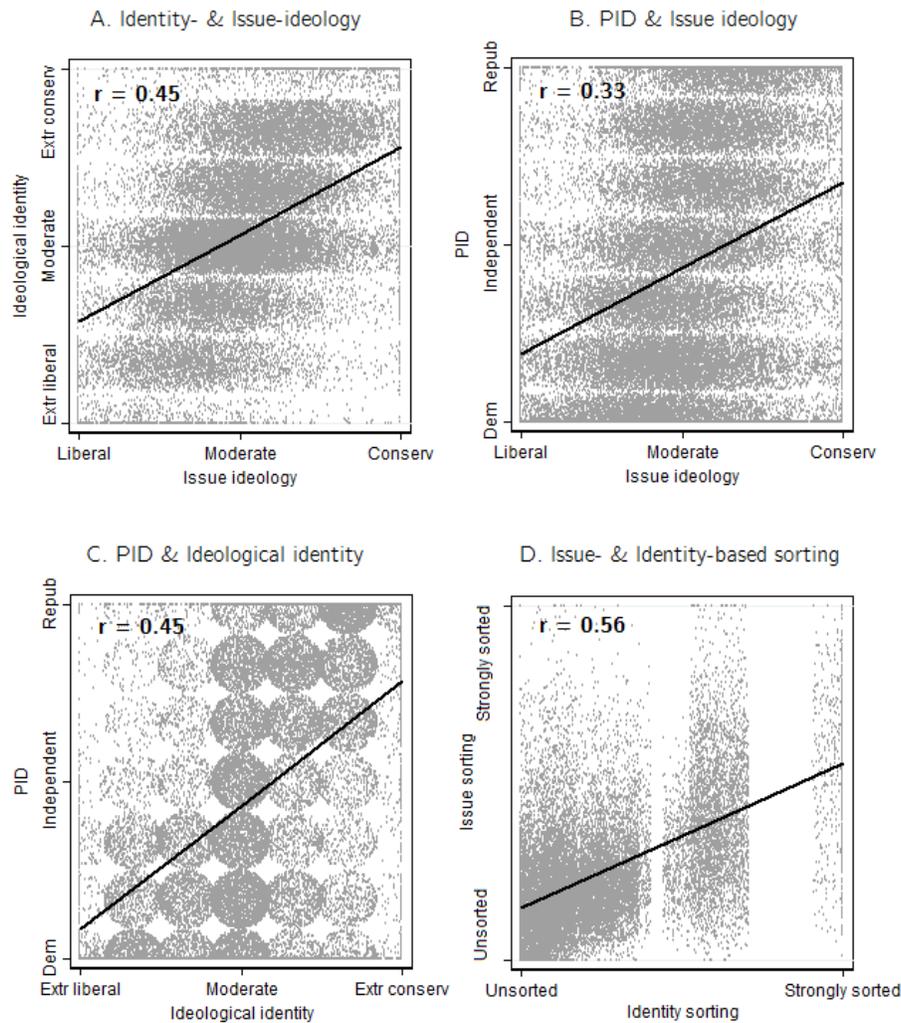
Source: 1984-2012 ANES Time-Series
Notes: Scatterplot estimates have been jittered to account for the sheer volume of responses.

Figure 4.1. Scatterplots of the relationship between ideology and partisanship

To the reader familiar with the ongoing measurement debate surrounding such forms of "ideology," there is some research that argues that individuals with strong countervailing views are not "moderate" in the sense that their apparent moderation is simply a feature of mathematical computation (Broockman, 2016; Ahler and Broockman, n.d.). This seems logically correct insofar as moderation, according to a strict definition, implies neutrality. However, in this application, I am not wholly concerned about whether these persons are "true" moderates insofar as moderation represents neutrality or

indifferent preferences. Instead, I'm only interested in testing whether this form of attitudinal consistency is matched to ideological self-identification. As Panel A illustrates, the relationship between these two concepts is modest (r = 0.45). The central category of "moderate" self-identification on the y-axis indicates that there is significant heterogeneity among the policy preferences of individuals who consider themselves to be ideologically unaffiliated. In fact, these individuals are highly emblematic of the problem with treating issue- and identity-based conceptions of ideology as analogues: a great many symbolic ideologues, those persons who claim to be "liberal' or "conservative," possess sharply countervailing views.[60]

Given this variation, it is likely that the relationship between partisanship and these two forms of ideology should also vary. Moving to Panels B and C, I present two scatterplots that depict the correlation between partisanship and issue ideology and partisanship and liberal-conservative identity, respectively. Beginning with Panel B, it is clear that issue consistency, again arrayed on the x-axis, fits rather poorly with partisanship, arrayed on the y-axis. The correlation between the two variables is modest (r = 0.33), conveying that the items share only about 11 percent of their variance. To illustrate the heterogeneity among the policy preferences of partisans, let us consider those individuals who classify themselves within the second strongest category of Democratic identification, the second row of jittered estimates from the bottom. While these partisans tend to hold somewhat liberal policy preferences, a modest proportion of individuals in this category hold views that are, on balance, conservative-leaning. This variation should not necessarily come as a surprise, however, given what we know about the tenuous coupling of self-professed ideological labels and particularistic beliefs (Converse, 1964; Sides, 2012; Ellis and Stimson, 2012). Partisanship may partially embody a summary representation of policy preferences, but it is rather weakly related to consistency within the organizational structure of an individual's policy attitudes. Simply, we observe less sorting among policy preferences than we might otherwise assume.

Turning to Panel C, the relationship between ideological and partisan identification is comparatively stronger (r = 0.47). Given that both ideological and partisan self-

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[60] At any rate, we could just as easily rename this axis' midpoint "mixed" preferences as opposed to "moderate." And, indeed, a great deal of individuals who identify as extreme liberals or conservatives appear to possess mixed policy views.

identification are seven-category items, the graphic presents 49 separate spheres—one for each categorical match between the various categories of partisan and ideological identification. Light grey spheres contain fewer dots and represent categorical matches that have low frequency; where fit between categories is high, the sphere is darker and appears almost opaque. As Panel C illustrates, we observe that the correlation between these items is positive. The upper-right and lower-left quadrants, which reflect correct and strong matching between ideological and partisan identification, contain a significant proportion of respondents.

If the extent to which partisanship and ideology are related to each other varies by the *type* of ideology, then what is the relationship between these the two forms of sorting as specified in the prior chapter? Panel D in Figure 4.1 plots the relationship between identity and policy sorting. Here, we observe that a substantial proportion of estimates are located in the bottom-left quadrant of this graphic, which conveys that a modest plurality of individuals are unsorted across both their policy preferences and their chosen political identities. Further, while the relationship between identity and policy sorting is positive and moderately strong, it is not clear that simply being sorted across one's political identities is sufficient (or even necessary) for concomitant sorting across issue preferences.

Because Figure 4.1 encapsulates responses to all Time-Series surveys dating back to 1984, it may be the case that the relationship between these forms of sorting is obscured by pooling this data together. To this end, Figure 4.2 portrays the relationship between issue and identity sorting over time by depicting the correlation coefficient for these items at four-year intervals. The strength of their relationship decreases slightly after 1984, rises in 1996, and then plummets in 2000. It rises sharply in 2004 only to dip precipitously again in 2008. Finally, in 2012, the relationship between issue and identity sorting reaches its peak within the 1984 to 2012 timeframe ($r = 0.65$). As the dotted fit line indicates, there is a slight upward trend over time in the extent to which these concepts are related, yet these estimates show some instability from one election to the next.
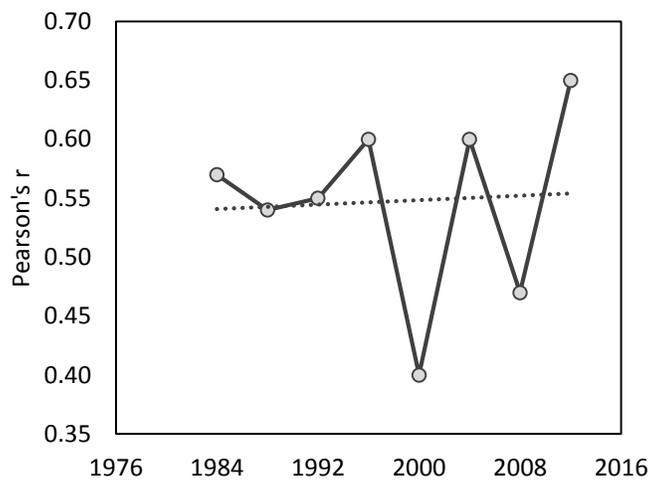
Figure 4.2. Correlation between identity- and issue-based sorting over time

However, because the above data are cross-sectional, it is difficult to interpret precisely how individual-level sorting changes from one point in time to another, much less whether the correlation between these forms of sorting changes for individuals between time periods. Ideally, we could look at how individuals' political identities and attitudes covary over a long duration of time to determine whether or not there is convergence among them. Unfortunately, however, the panel data needed to test this relationship is relatively limited. Still, two datasets can be utilized in creative ways to explore these relationships.

The Youth-Parent Socialization Panel Study was a ground-breaking, decades-long exploration of how individuals' social and political preferences and behaviors varied over time. Spanning the better part of 40 years, the study included four separate waves that sampled, without replacement, the same group of American citizens from 1965 to 1997. Fortuitously, the 1973, 1982, and 1997 waves included both the seven-category liberal-conservative and partisan self-placement instruments necessary to observe how the correlation between political identities developed over time. Table 4.1 reveals that the

strength of the relationship between partisanship and liberal-conservative identity grows over the course of the study. By 1997, the final wave of the study, the shared correspondence between partisanship and ideology—a rough reflection of "sorting"—almost doubles from the first wave in which these questions were first asked.

Table 4.1. Correlation between liberal-conservative and partisan self-placement over 2nd-4th waves

Pearson's r…		
	Party ID	Year
Liberal-conservative identity	0.35	1973 (2nd wave)
	0.51	1982 (3rd wave)
	0.61	1997 (4th wave)

Source: 1965-1997 Youth-Parent Socialization Panel Study
Notes: Entries constitute Pearson's r correlation coefficient. Liberal-conservative self-placement was not surveyed in the 1965 wave.

The rub with this data, however, is that the surveys did not include the needed policy items to explore issue sorting. Thus, I turn to the 1992-1996 ANES Panel Study provides the opportunity to observe changes in sorting among the same cohort of individuals over a period of four years and, importantly, compare how issue and identity sorting vary over time. To this end, Figure 4.3 presents a set of point estimates that illustrate changes in identity and issue sorting from 1992 to 1996. I find that the average change in issue sorting is a little less than one point, although the difference is not significant by virtue of the confidence interval's lower bound crossing the 0.00 threshold. However, the change in identity-based sorting from 1992 to 1996 is statistically significant, representing roughly an eight percent increase in sorting. Further adding an interesting wrinkle to the claim that these forms of sorting are appreciably different, the Pearson's correlation coefficient between identity and issue sorting in 1996 is actually weaker (r = 0.21) than in 1992 (r = 0.33). Thus, while the correlation between identity- and issue-based sorting has increased in the aggregate, the individual-level estimates imply that the passage of time does not inevitably beget concomitant changes in the relationship between ideological attitudes and identities and partisanship.
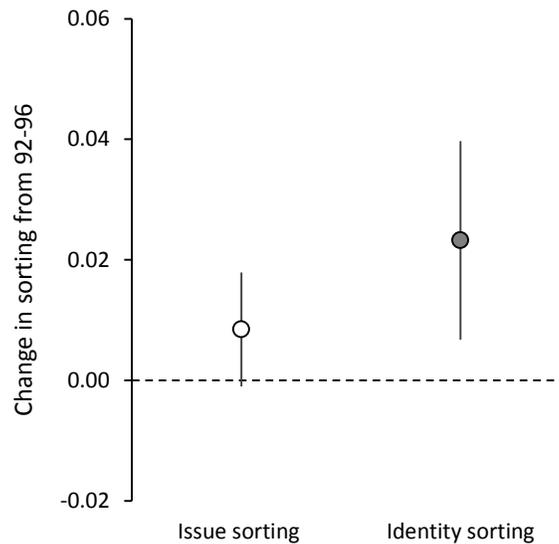
Figure 4.3. Changes in respondent issue and identity sorting over time

4.3   The informational correlates of sorting

Having explored the compositional relationship between identity and policy sorting, the data indicate that, while these items are clearly related, they constitute different facets of the relationship between ideology and partisanship. One way of further teasing apart these differences is to consider how the correlates of these forms of sorting differ. In particular, if identity and policy sorting are only modestly related, then the information that structures how individuals connect ideological and partisan preferences may differ, as well. In this section, I consider how an individual's ability to navigate and knowledge of the left-right political space shapes the extent to which they are sorted.

4.3.1   Sorting and left-right space

An impressive body of literature demonstrates that at least one major ideological dimension reliably structures political discourse across a variety of mature democratic contexts: the generalized "left-right" continuum (e.g. Gross and Sigelman, 1984; Kroh, 2007). This axis bifurcates political conflict into countervailing "left" and "right" spaces, which take their

meaning from a variety of socio-cultural and economic forces (Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976). Conceptually, it is customary to interpret the left-right distinction as one that juxtaposes equality, autonomy, and openness to change—emblematic of the "left"— with the preservation of the status quo, the exercise of control, and a general tendency to resist change—emblematic of the "right" (Piurko, Schwartz, and Davidov, 2011; Jost, Federico, and Napier, 2009). While these are broad generalizations, this left-right scheme is an elegant solution for simplifying and comparing complex, multilayered realities (Maier, 2007) and functions as an efficient mechanism through which citizens and elites communicate (Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990).[61]

Still, the degree to which this space accurately embodies political conflict and discourse varies across contexts. In fact, as Maier (2007, pg. 211-212) writes, "while European or Anglo-American voters, observers, and even political actors themselves may be happy to use the terms left and right, it is not always [clear] that they all share the same meaning of the terms." In locations where the left-right dimension is less salient, it is generally the case that some other, well-established schema orients the dominant political culture. In the United States, for example, the "liberal-conservative" dimension is the prevailing scheme that structures such conflict. However, over time, the language of the "left-right" ideological space has been increasingly overlaid onto this liberal-conservative schema (Laponce, 1981; Conover and Feldman, 1981).[62] As Jost and colleagues (2009, pg. 311) write, "it is becoming increasingly common to substitute 'liberal' and 'conservative' for 'left' and 'right,' respectively."

If the left-right ideological space serves a collective purpose, then it functions as a symbolic frame of reference that orients individuals to political groups. Given the close correspondence between the left-right and liberal-conservative spaces, successfully navigating one space ought to be related to understanding the other and, by extension, identity sorting (which is composed of such symbolic orientations). While this expectation

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[61] While it is true that elites generally employ these terms, Fuchs and Klingemann (1990) demonstrate that a not insubstantial proportion of the mass public are able to understand the meanings of "left" and "right," although this is highly contingent upon education (this matches other empirical findings that convey that politically-sophisticated individuals are usually more adept at understanding these labels, e.g. Sniderman et al. [1991]).

[62] Beginning in the early and mi-1970s, the terms "left" and "right" were increasingly used to describe the symbolic distinction between liberal and conservative political approaches, in part thanks to the Nixon and McGovern campaigns (Inglehart 1989, pg. 367).

does not preclude a relationship between left-right orientations and issue-based sorting—for example, left-right placements generally predict issue positions (Huber, 1989)—prior research finds that "symbolic factors clearly played a more important role than issue positions in determining the evaluation of ideological labels" (Conover and Feldman, 1981, pg. 634). This research has two implications for the present study. First, successfully understanding where the parties fit within this space ought to predict greater identity relative policy sorting. Second, I expect that the effect of "correctly" understanding one's self-placement within this left-right scale should beget greater identity- relative issue based sorting (in part, because this requires understanding the underlying logic of sorting in the first place).

Operationalizing left-right ideological space

Because scholars of American politics are primarily interested in the liberal-conservative ideological framework, survey instruments that capture how citizens think about the left-right dimension of politics are rare (unlike surveys in other parts of the West, where the left-right ideological framework is the prevailing dimension that structures ideological conflict). Fortuitously, however, the 2012 ANES Time-Series survey appended a series of questions that capture this information as part of a module sponsored by the Cooperative Study of Electoral Systems. Two separate questions ask individuals to place the Republican and Democratic Parties in left-right space, while a third requests individuals to select where their own political preferences fit within this continuum. Values for all three variables originally span an 11-point continuum, ranging from 0 "left" to 10 "right."

Figure 4.4 illustrates where respondents place the parties and themselves within left-right space. Predictably, a majority of individuals associate the Republican Party with the "right" label and the Democratic Party with the "left." However, while the average individual reliably understands where the parties fit within this space, there is still a modest proportion of people who either a) do not perceive that the parties are very "extreme," much less b) are able to correctly place the parties at all.[63] For purposes of analysis, I

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[63] Interestingly, the correlation between these placements and the traditional "liberal-conservative" party placements is modest at best. The weighted correlation between Democratic Party left-right and liberal-conservative placements is $r = 0.45$, while the correlation between Republican Party placements is $r = 0.38$. Moreover, even among sophisticates (respondents in the highest category of political knowledge), the correlation

reverse-code the Democratic Party placements so that "left" (correct) responses correspond to higher values; this allows them to exist in common space with Republican Party placements in that higher values convey both "correct" and "more extreme" placements. These variables are both rescaled to range from 0, "strong, incorrect placements," to 1, "correct, strong placements."

Figure 4.4. Left-right self and party placements

To construct an item that captures how successful individuals are at navigating this left-right space, I begin by taking an individual's self-placement within left-right space, ranging from 0 (left) to 10 (right), and subtract the value (5). This transforms the original values so that they range from -5 (left) to 5 (right). I then multiply a respondent's score by

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between these items is not substantially different. Presumably, these concepts are overlapping insofar as they should both reflect an individual's understanding of the connection between ideological labels and the parties, yet it is difficult to claim that the average person treats these labels as interchangeable.

a three-category partisanship item that ranges from -1, "Democratic PID," to 0 "pure Independent," to 1 "Republican PID."[64] This measurement strategy purges the left-right valence from the resulting variable and instead reflects the extent to which an individual's left-right placement is correctly-matched to their partisanship—in effect creating an alternative metric of "left-right sorting." Values on this item are then rescaled so that it ranges from -1 "extreme placement in left-right space, but incorrect match to partisanship," to 1, "extreme placement in left-right space that correctly matches to partisanship."

The third panel in Figure 4.4 displays the distribution of this variable. Values to the left of the scale's midpoint reflect those individuals who chose an ideological label that was opposite their partisanship, while values to the right of the midpoint, then, reflect those persons who chose the label that correctly corresponded to their partisanship. The bell-shaped distribution of responses indicates that individuals only modestly connect their partisanship to these left-right placements. Not only do less than half of all respondents place themselves "correctly," with the largest proportion of individuals falling into the modal, neutral mid-point, but most individuals who do place themselves correctly within this space do not convey that their left-right self-concept is particularly strong.[65] In fact, less than 10 percent of all respondents place themselves at the extreme end of the left-right spectrum *and* profess partisan attachments that match those ideological preferences.

Results

Table 4.2 presents a series of models that depict sorting as a function of left-right placements and controls. In the first set of columns, I analyze how correct placement of the parties and correct self-placement in left-right space contributes to "partisan sorting," a metric of sorting that accounts for how liberal-conservative identification *and* policy attitudes match to partisanship. This variable closely resembles Levendusky's (2009) specification of sorting. The key difference, here, however, is that the underlying components of this variable are all operationalized according to my definition of sorting that accounts for both matching and extremity. This transition away from Levendusky's

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[64] I aggregate strong, weak and leaner partisans into the respective categories and assign only "pure" Independents the value 0.

[65] This is not dissimilar from how individuals answer the more traditional liberal-conservative self-placement in that the modal category is almost always "moderate."

matching-only scheme is necessary to provide a fair test of the disaggregation of partisan sorting into identity and policy components: in keeping the underlying measurement strategy common across all items, I attempt to reduce confusion in interpreting the effects of the covariates of interest on the dependent variable. Thus, the magnitude of any given coefficient is roughly comparable across models.

In Model 1, I observe that, while correctly placing the Republican Party in left-right space is related to an increase in partisan sorting, placements of the Democratic Party exert no discernible effect on this item. Recalling that these party placements vary from 0 to 1, a person who perceives that the Republican Party is maximally located toward the "right" end of the left-right spectrum is 16 points more sorted than a person who misperceived that Republicans were very "left." Likewise, in Model 2, partisans who correctly place themselves in left-right space are substantially more sorted than those who selected the most extreme, incorrect label.

On its face, this evidence suggests that accurate placement on the political parties in left-right ideological space is strongly related to an individual's propensity to sort. However, when we disaggregate issue from partisan sorting in Models 3 and 4, the magnitude of these coefficients shifts precipitously. The effects of correct Republican Party and respondent self-placements on issue sorting are roughly 60 and 30 percent smaller. To what can we attribute these changes?

Table 4.2. The effects of left-right ideological placements on partisan, issue, and identity sorting

	Partisan sorting (issues + identity)		Issue sorting		Identity sorting	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Correctly place Democrats in left-right space	0.01	-----	0.04	-----	0.11**	-----
	(0.03)		(0.02)		(0.03)	
Correctly place Republicans in left-right space	0.16**	-----	0.05*	-----	0.10**	-----
	(0.03)		(0.02)		(0.03)	
Correctly place self in left-right space	-----	0.19**	-----	0.12**	-----	0.25**
		(0.01)		(0.01)		(0.02)
Political knowledge	0.11**	0.09**	0.06**	0.05**	0.08**	0.05**
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Interest	0.10**	0.07**	0.12**	0.10**	0.17**	0.13**
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Evangelical ID	0.01	0.00	0.05**	0.05**	0.06**	0.05**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Education	0.08	0.07	-0.01	-0.02	0.06	0.04
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)
White	0.01	-0.01	0.00	-0.01	0.04	0.02
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Black	0.06*	0.09**	0.05**	0.08**	0.03	0.07**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Income	-0.02	-0.02	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.01
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Male	-0.04**	-0.04**	-0.02**	-0.03**	-0.02*	-0.03**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age	-0.00**	-0.00**	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Constant	0.26**	0.38**	0.15**	0.22**	-0.06	0.10**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
R^2	0.06	0.11	0.08	0.13	0.13	0.25
N	4,935	4,972	4,926	4,972	4,521	4,559

Source: 2012 ANES Time-Series
Notes: *p<0.05, **p<0.01

The answer lies in the relationship between these left-right placements and identity sorting. Given the close correspondence between left-right and liberal-conservative ideology, identity sorting should be especially sensitive to how individuals navigate symbolic ideological space. Indeed, both sets of party and the individual self-placements within left-right space exert sizeable effects on the extent to which individuals' political identities converge in Models 5 and 6.[66] Not only is the size of the coefficients for the party placements in the identity sorting models larger relative to those in the analyses of policy sorting, but the effect of correctly placing oneself within left-right space on identity sorting is even greater than the magnitude of the associated effect of those placements on partisan sorting in Model 2.[67]

These differences, however, are easily obscured. In fact, partisan sorting artificially overstates the relationship among partisanship, issue preferences, and the left-right space. Whatever images Americans conjure up when they think about ideology in terms of "left" and "right", the way in which they navigate this space informs connections between ideology and partisanship in different ways. Simply, understanding the left-right ideological dimension increases identity-based sorting considerably more than it does sorting on issues.

4.3.2 Parties, issue positions, and sorting

The prior section indicates that sorting does not happen in a vacuum—some degree of familiarity with the structure that gives ideology its meaning is a minimum informational requirement for sorting to "work." By extension, if an individual neither knows nor

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[66] Of additional note is the extent to which the data explain the total variance in the dependent variable. Disaggregating partisan sorting into its constituent issue- and identity-based parts actually increases the total variance explained by the included covariates.

[67] The careful reader may ask "But is the difference in the magnitude of these coefficients across the issue and identity sorting models statistically significant?" Briefly, yes. To test the equivalence between coefficients, we may use Seemingly Unrelated Regression (SUR), which differs from other forms of simultaneous equation models in that SUR strictly models exogenous regressors (Zellner, 1963). Further, because SUR treats the error terms of each equation as if they are correlated, this modeling approach is suitable for testing differences between these coefficients across forms of sorting, given that the latter terms likely have correlated error terms. In the interests of brevity, full modeling results of these analyses are not reported here, but we are able to reject the null hypothesis that the coefficients reported in the two models are equal ($\chi^2 = 146.22$, $p = 0.000$).

understands where the parties stand on a bundle of salient public policies, then it is unlikely that that person would be able to logically connect their own preferences back to their partisan identity. Let us now turn to an exploration of the relationship between issue-party placements and sorting.

For the better part of three decades, the ANES Time-Series surveys have queried individuals about the policy approaches associated with the Republican and Democratic Parties. Much like the policy self-placements that comprise sorting (see Chapter 2), respondents are asked to place where they think the parties fall on a bivalent continuum of policy prescriptions that juxtaposes a "liberal" and "conservative" policy solution. While these responses have been used to generate subjective impressions of party extremity (e.g. Davis and Dunaway, 2016), they have also been treated as a form of objective political knowledge: the parties have a quantifiable preference to a range of issues and knowing something about these issues is indicative of a facet of political acumen or knowledge (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1993).

As a quantity of interest, political knowledge is a somewhat convoluted concept in political science (Mondak, 1999, 2001). Yet, while prior work has argued for a tight connection between party-policy knowledge and sorting (Levendusky, 2009), there is reason to think that this type of political acumen is unevenly related to identity and issue sorting. Converse's (1964) classic finding that citizens use labels and groups to orient themselves within political space, as opposed to policy information, still rings true in other applications that test how different forms of information shape public opinion (Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus, 2013; Nicholson, 2012).

Nevertheless, what individuals know—or, at least, *think* they know—about the parties is a key piece of working knowledge reflective of familiarity with the inner-workings and structure of the wider party system. Although I dig deeper into how different types of group assessments shape identity sorting in Chapter 4, for now, I focus on how party-policy knowledge affects sorting. In particular, I expect that placing Democrats to the "left" of Republicans in policy space ought to increase policy, but not identity sorting.

Operationalizing party-policy knowledge

To construct a metric of party-policy knowledge, I utilize party placement items that require individuals to ascertain where a given party sits on a response continuum that

juxtaposes two countervailing policy solutions. These items include jobs, insurance, affirmative action, defense spending, and welfare provisions policies and are coded such that liberal policy solutions take lower and conservative solutions higher values. Individuals receive a value of "1" if they place the Democratic Party to the left of the Republican Party on a given item and "0" otherwise. In addition to these five items, I also examine whether individuals correctly place Democrats to the left of Republicans on the traditional seven-category liberal-conservative scale.

A. Correctly place Ds to left of Rs
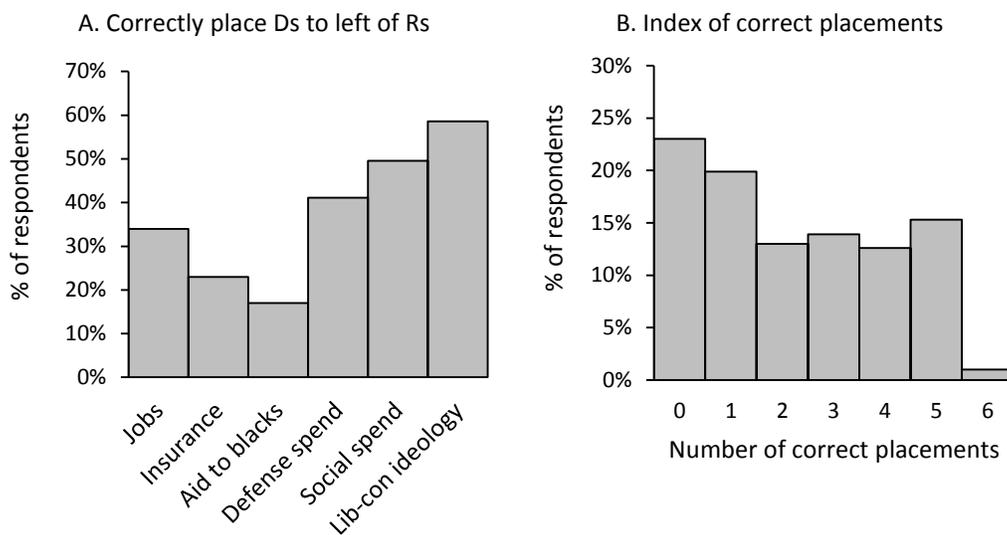
B. Index of correct placements

Notes: Estimates represent the average percentage of respondents who correctly place Democratic Party to "left" of Republican Party on five policy items and symbolic, liberal-conservative ideology.

Figure 4.5. Percentage of Respondents who correctly place Democrats to "left" of Republicans

Figure 4.5 presents both the proportion of people who correctly place the parties on the individual items (Panel A) and a summary index that aggregates the number of correct placements that individuals make (Panel B). The proportion of correct placements varies markedly across items. As Panel A indicates, individuals are far more likely to correctly place the parties within symbolic liberal-conservative space than they are, for example, able to correctly place the parties on the availability of health insurance. Taken

as a whole, Panel B indicates that individuals are quite poor at correctly recognizing differences between the parties on multiple items. An overwhelming majority of respondents are unable to place the parties on as many as two items and fewer than one percent of respondents correctly place the parties on all six party-policy dyads.

Results

Table 4.3 models sorting as a function of the aforementioned comparative placements. The first column analyzes the relationship between party-policy knowledge and partisan sorting. As expected, placing the Democratic Party to the left of the Republican Party on aid to blacks, defense spending, and social spending translates into a modest increase in sorting. However, the magnitude of these effects is dwarfed by correctly placing Democrats to the right of Republicans on the liberal-conservative ideology scale.

To ascertain whether differences in this party-policy knowledge contribute to more or less identity relative issue sorting, I turn to Models 2 and 3. In the analysis of policy sorting (Model 2), placing Democrats to the left of Republicans on the various policy dyads increases sorting by an average of two points, such that, taken together, an individual that correctly places the parties on each pairing would be about 10 points more sorted than someone who failed to correctly link the parties to these policies at all. Notably, however, while placement of the parties on liberal-conservative ideology produces a modest, positive coefficient, the magnitude of this effect pales in comparison to the associated effect observed in Model 1. This difference helps illuminate not only differences *between* forms of sorting, but informational differences *among* these placements (ignored in earlier work).

This point is drawn into sharper relief when we examine the effects of party-policy knowledge on identity sorting in the third model. While we observe that policy placements are modestly related to identity sorting, the magnitude of the correct party-liberal-conservative placement is substantial—more than three times as large as the associated effect on issue sorting. Clearly, the close relationship between these placements and the symbolic components of identity-based sorting are driving the magnitude of the effect of liberal-conservative placements on partisan sorting. This finding that comports with the one presented above in that identity sorting is more sensitive to an individual's awareness and knowledge of how "symbolic" ideological space operates.

Table 4.3. The effect of recognizing party differences on sorting (item-by-item)

Correctly place Democratic Party to the "left" of Republican Party on…	Partisan sorting (issues + identity)	Issue sorting	Identity sorting
Job creation	0.03	0.02*	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Insurance	0.03	0.02*	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Aid to blacks	0.04**	0.02**	0.02**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Defense spending	0.05*	0.02*	0.02*
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Social spending	0.06**	0.03**	0.03*
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Liberal-conservative ideology	0.14**	0.04**	0.14**
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Constant	-3.02	-1.48	-3.27
	(3.25)	(1.63)	(1.63)
R2	0.15	0.11	0.13
N	23,287	23,287	17,813

Source: 1984-2012 ANES Time-Series
Notes: Control variables excluded from analysis for brevity. Standard errors in parentheses have been clustered by year; *p<0.05, **p<0.01

4.4   Sorting and group biases

Finally, having shown that compositional differences between these forms of sorting exist, I conclude this chapter's analyses with an exploration of how identity and policy sorting contribute to different evaluative behaviors. Prior work shows that identity-based sorting produces a considerable amount of partisan bias, or favoring one party toward the detriment of the other (Mason, 2015). Yet extant work has not considered how different forms of sorting might produce differentiated levels of intergroup bias.

Because group identification is driven by an innate desire to distinguish one's in-group in a positive light, group members reliably privilege and judge as superior the members of their own group (c.f. Tajfel and Turner 1979). This pattern, however, cuts both ways: while individuals describe their in-group as favorable and desirable, they also rate

competing groups in a much more negative light (e.g. Iyengar, Llekes, and Sood, 2012). To the extent that an individual's political identities, evaluations, and emotions overlap, these biases are presumed to grow stronger as the in-group narrows and the out-group becomes larger (Brewer and Pierce, 2005; Roccas and Brewer, 2002).

These expectations draw on the theory of cross-pressures, or competing forces that pull individuals in competing directions. For example, an individual might be pro-life (right-leaning policy preference) and a member of a union (left-leaning membership)—considerations that pull an individual's political preferences in competing ideological directions. The process of becoming better sorted removes these "cross-cutting cleavages" that otherwise might mitigate social conflict (Lipset, 1960; Powell, 1976). When preferences align and these cross-pressures are removed, individuals become less tolerant, more biased, and display less magnanimity toward outgroups (Brewer, 1999; Roccas and Brewer, 2002). Hence, the finding that identity sorting increases affective bias (Mason, 2015).

While much extant research is focused on how group memberships affect *partisan* biases, our the unifying theme of this project is *ideology*. Thus, we might question whether different forms of sorting affect ideological group biases. Specifically, does sorting on identities produce greater bias than sorting on attitudes? I expect that, because the referents of these assessments are the ideological groups, themselves, sorted identities should produce significant levels of ideological bias—even in the absence of sorted attitudes.

4.4.1 Measuring ideological group affect (bias)

How individuals feel about groups reflects a dimension of the emotional attachments that accompany group memberships. While specific group appraisals are interesting on their own merits, psychologists are often interested in the *relative* nature of inter-group assessments, or the preference gap between two competing groups (for recent examples, see: Iyengar, Sood, and Llekes, 2012; Mason, 2015). Commonly termed "affective polarization," this form of social polarization reflects the extent to which an individual emotionally favors one group over another. If an individual rates one group very warmly (positively) and another group coolly (negatively), then the amount of bias is presumed to be high, as the Euclidian distance between the two assessments is significant. If, on the other hand, the individual feels equally positively, negatively, or indifferent toward two

groups, then inter-group bias is low. Thus, this measure allows researchers to purge "the tendency of citizens to pull their punches, or to give groups representing the legitimate political opposition the benefit of the doubt when making evaluations" (Knight, 1983, pg. 319).

For our purposes, ideological bias is measured by asking individuals how they feel toward the ideological groups. On a scale ranging from 0 to 100, respondents are asked to rate whether they feel warmly (100) or coolly (0) toward "conservatives" and "liberals." To construct a measure of ideological bias, I simply take the absolute value of the difference between liberal and conservative scores. I then rescale this item to range from 0, "no biases," to 1, "maximum biases."
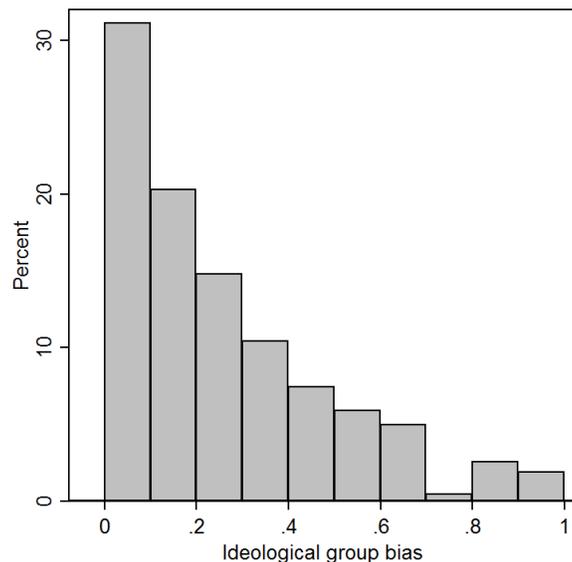
Source: 1984-2012 CANES Time-Series
Notes: Graph portrays ideological group biases broken down into deciles. Biases are the absolute difference between liberal and conservative feeling thermometers, where value 0 conveys no affective difference toward either group, and value 1 conveys complete one-sided preference for group.

Figure 4.6. Ideological bias toward liberals and conservatives

Table 4.4. OLS estimates for the effects of sorting on ideological biases

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Partisan sorting (issues + identity)	0.29**	-----	-----
	(0.05)		
Identity sorting	-----	0.48**	0.21**
		(0.02)	(0.04)
Issue sorting (deciles)	-----	0.01**	0.00**
		(0.00)	(0.00)
Identity sorting × issue sorting	-----	-----	0.04**
			(0.01)
White	0.01	0.01	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Black	-0.05**	-0.04**	-0.04**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Income	-0.00	0.01	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Male	0.01	0.02*	0.02*
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age	0.00**	0.00*	0.00*
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Old South	0.01	0.01	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Political interest	-0.02	-0.02	-0.02
	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Political knowledge	0.13**	0.10**	0.10**
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Education	0.02	0.01	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Protestant	0.02**	0.01	0.01
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Year	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Constant	-5.90*	-4.82*	-4.38*
	(2.06)	(1.69)	(1.63)
R^2	0.22	0.33	0.34
N	10,705	8,742	8,742

Source: 1984-2012 ANES Time-Series

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses have been clustered by year; $*p<0.05$, $**p<0.01$

Pooling ANES Time-Series surveys from 1984 to 2012, Figure 4.6 presents the distribution of these scores. By a substantial margin, the modal category is "0.00," which represents inter-group indifference or a lack of ideological (affective) polarization on the part of the respondent. Further, most respondents possess only modest bias between the two groups. The 75th percentile of scores translates to roughly 0.50 on this index, which conveys that only modest amounts of ideological bias are observed within the mass public.

4.4.2 Results

To provide a fuller illustration for why aggregating identity and issue-based sorting together is problematic, I explore how the predictive capacity of these items differ in the context of ideological group biases. Table 4 depicts three models of ideological bias. In Model 1, ideological bias is modelled as a function of partisan sorting. Model 2 separates the effect of sorting into the constituent issue and identity constructs, while Model 3 portrays the effect of these biases as the multiplicative function of identity and issue sorting.

The results shown in the first column are straightforward: the more items on which an individual is sorted, the more ideological bias we observe. Panel A in Figure 4.7 illustrates the contours of this effect. As individuals become more sorted, the extent to which they both intensely like one ideological group and dislike the other increases dramatically. Specifically, transitioning from being completely unsorted to fully sorted results in an increase of almost a full standard deviation in ideological bias.

However, the exact shape of the relationship between sorting and these biases is less straightforward when we disentangle sorting into identity and issue-based parts. Consider the second model, which portrays ideological bias as a function of the two separate forms of sorting. For purposes of illustration, I have recoded the issue sorting item, which is approximately continuous across hundreds of values ranging from 0 to 1, into deciles. While both entries produce positive coefficients, the magnitude of these effects varies considerably. At the highest level of policy sorting, we observe that ideological bias increases by about 10 points; conversely, at the highest level of identity sorting, where ideological and partisan identities both overlap and are strong, ideological bias increases by almost two full standard deviations—almost 50 points. Given the results of the first model, it appears that the effect of aggregating these forms of sorting together is incredibly

inefficient. Not only is the model fit in Model 2 substantially better than Model 1, but the effect of sorting on ideological biases appears to be artificially depressed when sorting is treated as an omnibus construct.

Model 3 takes the results of Model 2 and modifies the relationship between these forms of sorting and ideological biases by adding in an interaction term to capture the joint effect of issue and identity sorting on the exhibition of ideological bias. To ease in the interpretation of this effect, Panel B in Figure 4.7 visually illustrates the effects of issue sorting on ideological biases when identity sorting is held at minimum and maximum values. Predictably, the relationship is a great deal more complex than the simple "additive" approach to sorting utilized in Model 1.
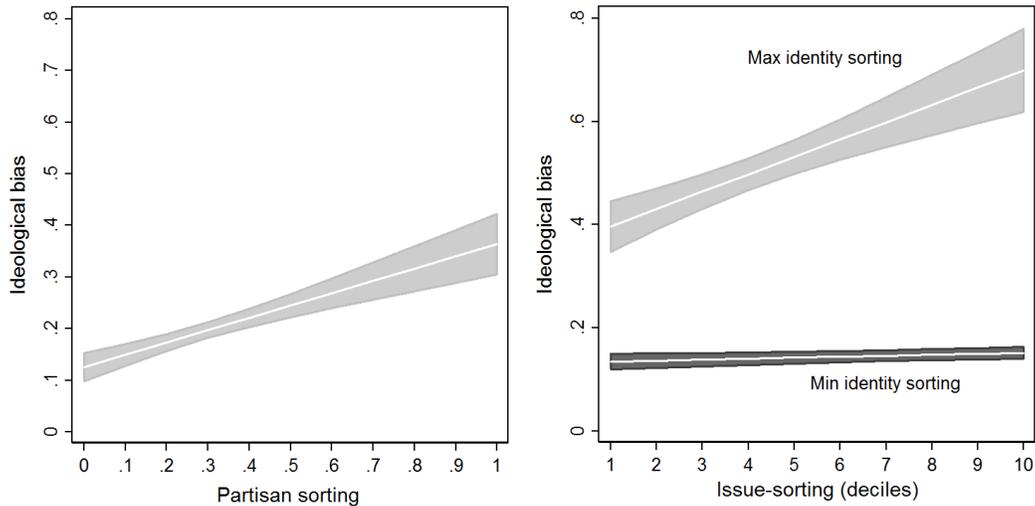
Source: 1984-2012 ANES Time-Series
Notes: Estimates bracketed by 95 percent confidence intervals. Panel A corresponds to Model 1, Table 4; Panel B corresponds to Model 3, Table 4.

Figure 4.7. The effect of sorting on ideological biases

Consider the case of a hypothetical person whose ideological identity is "slightly" conservative, whose identifies as a "leaning" Democrat, but who possess a consistent set of strong policy preferences that are mostly left-leaning (e.g. historically, the consummate "Southern Democrat"). Effectively, this person scores near the minimum value on the identity sorting scale (weak identities, low overlap), yet scores near the maximum value on the policy sorting item (strong policy preferences correctly matched). According to the

partisan sorting approach, this person would have correctly matched an overwhelming majority of their political preferences to their partisanship. Looking at the x-axis in Panel A, Figure 4.7, the amount of ideological bias that we would expect this person to possess should be near the upper threshold of the estimates, around, say, 0.30.

However, according to Panel B in Figure 4.7, this is not the "correct" amount of bias that this person actually espouses. At minimal levels of identity sorting, even well-sorted policy preferences are only tenuously linked to ideological biases. This very same person with the same configuration of identities and attitudes would score, instead, 0.15 units of ideological bias—almost 50 percent less than Model 1 predicts. In other words, individuals do not exhibit the same levels of bias when their own group memberships are weak and poorly synched. While this expectation is entirely consistent with social identity theory (see Huddy, 2013 for a review), partisan sorting misrepresents the predictive capacity of these concepts. Far from interchangeable constructs, these forms of sorting produce fundamentally different levels of psychological affect, further demonstrating that identity and issue sorting reflect distinct patterns of coherence among one's political preferences.

4.5   Sorting and behavioral motivations

Aside from differences in the effect of these facets of sorting on group biases, what role do these forms of sorting play in relation to behavioral motivations? Do the effects of identity and issue sorting on political participation vary? While past research shows that sorting decreases the likelihood of casting split-tickets (Davis and Mason, 2016), it has not examined how sorting might shape the prior decision to actually cast a vote in the first place.

Scholars know a great deal about the correlates of casting a vote for a presidential candidate (see Lewis-Beck et al., 2008 for a review). In particular, past research almost uniformly observes that partisans cast votes at higher rates, participate in campaigns, and follow politics more closely than otherwise-unaffiliated persons (Converse, et al., 1960; Brady, Verba, and Schlozman, 1995; Lewis-Beck et al., 2008). Why? The expectation that sorting should increase an individual's propensity to participate draws on the expressive functions of partisanship (e.g. Green, Palmquist, and Schickler, 2002). As I outline above and in Chapters 2 and 3, this perspective involves treating political identities as forms of

symbolic social identities, wherein group members are motivated to act on behalf of their groups. Gerber, Huber, and Washington (2010), for example, use field experiments to demonstrate a strong, causal relationship between partisan identity and turnout. Elsewhere, Huddy, Mason, and Aaroe (2015) find strong support for an expressive interpretation of partisanship. They demonstrate that campaign activity is a function of partisans positively expressing their identities and a diminished role for issue stances and ideological identity.

This latter point raises an interesting question. While this research reveals the power of partisanship in contributing to political participation, what happens when these identities *converge*? Given the tension between instrumental and expressive treatments of partisanship (Archeneaux and Vander Wielen, 2013), how do different forms of sorting that account for these different approaches affect turnout? I expect that identity sorting should be associated with greater turnout beyond the effect of consistent party-issue preferences.

4.5.1   Measuring turnout

Research in the survey literature shows that more respondents say they intend to vote than actually end up casting a ballot (e.g., Bernstein et al. 2001; Silver et al. 1986). This issue is problematic insofar as individuals with stronger identities may feel additional social pressure to confirm that they participated, thereby inflating the effect that we wish to detect. Unfortunately, the CANES data do not contain validated voting records, which would help resolve tendencies to over-report. However, given the limited availability of the necessary survey instruments (i.e. the cohort of issue questions), the CANES provides the opportunity to make a strict comparison of identity and issue sorting that matches the above analyses. Here, self-reported turnout is coded 1 and otherwise 0.

Table 4.5. The effects of sorting on turnout

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Partisan sorting (issues + identity)	1.28**	-----	-----
	(0.18)		
Identity sorting	-----	1.15**	1.99**
		(0.19)	(0.36)
Issue sorting (deciles)	-----	0.10**	0.12**
		(0.02)	(0.02)
Identity sorting × issue sorting	-----	-----	-0.12**
			(0.03)
White	0.23**	0.33**	0.33**
	(0.09)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Black	0.75**	0.67**	0.66**
	(0.14)	(0.16)	(0.15)
Education	1.42**	1.44**	1.43**
	(0.11)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Income	1.17**	1.24**	1.24**
	(0.13)	(0.18)	(0.18)
Male	-0.22**	-0.27**	-0.27**
	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Age	0.03**	0.03**	0.03**
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Old South	-0.24**	-0.16*	-0.17*
	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Political interest	0.33	0.14	0.13
	(0.82)	(0.77)	(0.77)
Political knowledge	1.54**	1.33**	1.34**
	(0.22)	(0.21)	(0.21)
Protestant	0.06	0.04	0.04
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Year	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Constant	-7.56	-3.97	-5.23
	(8.94)	(13.46)	(13.18)
N	11,298	9,047	9,047

Source: 1984-2012 ANES Time-Series

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses have been clustered by year; *p<0.05, **p<0.01

4.5.2   Results

The results presented in Table 4.5 depict the effect of sorting on self-reported turnout. Model 1 is designed to test how partisan sorting, which includes both the issue and liberal-conservative elements, affects the likelihood of casting a vote. The large positive and statistically-significant coefficient indicates that sorting exerts the predicted effect on turnout. Given that log-odds ratios are not readily interpretable, the first panel in Figure 4.8 illustrates the contours of this effect. Simply, as an individual correctly connects more items to their partisanship, the likelihood of political participation increases.

However, this effect is more nuanced than we otherwise might assume. The second model in Table 5 indicates that the effect of identity and issue sorting exert independent effects on self-reported turnout, albeit the magnitude of these coefficients is similar. To assess how these facets of sorting work in conjunction, Model 3 analyzes turnout as a function of the different sorting terms, in addition to an interaction variable that captures the effect of identity sorting contingent on issue sorting.
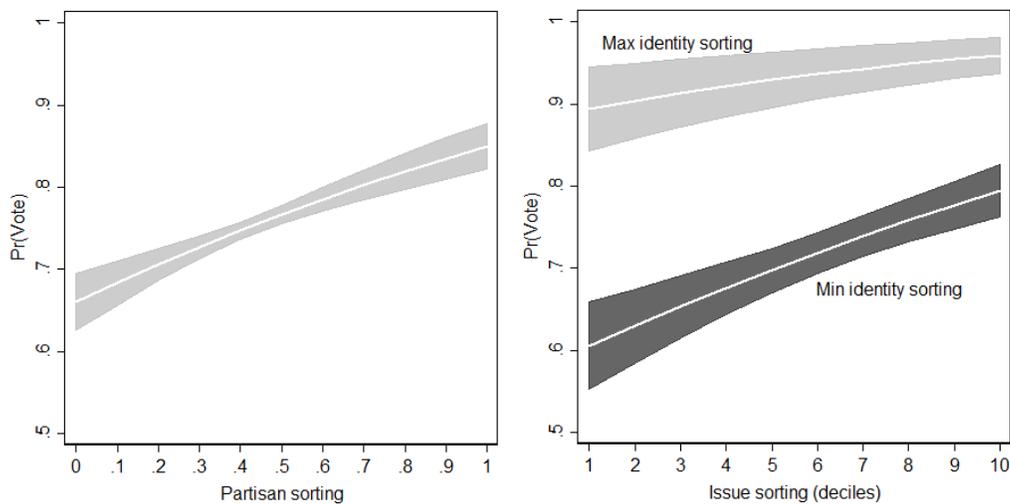
Source: 1984-2012 ANES Time-Series
Notes: Estimates bracketed by 95 percent confidence intervals. Panel A corresponds to Model 1, Table 5; Panel B corresponds to Model 3, Table 5.

Figure 4.8. The effect of sorting on turnout

The second panel in Figure 4.8 illustrates the shape of this effect. Let us consider a few practical examples of particular configurations of identities and issues in order to better understand these predicted values. The light-grey shaded area conveys the marginal effect of maximum levels of identity sorting at varying deciles of issue sorting. For the person with strong and matching political identities, having minimal levels of issue-sorting—i.e. making very few and weak matches between policy and partisanship—does not undercut the power of sorted identities. These individuals are roughly as likely to cast a vote as those persons with strong and sorted issue preferences.

Interestingly, however, the effect of sorting on issues does matter in this setting. Unlike the estimates presented in Figure 4.7, where issue-sorting had negligible impact on ideological biases, here, the presence of well-sorted issue preferences is sufficient to generate a higher likelihood of reported voting. Even when an individual's identities are unsorted, say, a leaner Democrat who identifies as a moderate, possessing a strong and consistent set of issue preferences generates a modestly strong propensity for political participation.

4.6   Discussion and conclusion

The relationship between ideology and partisanship lies at the heart of the question, "What is sorting?" As the culmination of the distinctions broached in the previous chapters, these analyses form the empirical backbone of the claim that Americans can, and often do, sort independently within two distinct domains. Further, I demonstrate that artificially constraining these political preferences into an omnibus metric—as prior research has done—not only misrepresents the knowledge-based foundations of the ongoing sorting of the American mass public, but that this approach risks fundamentally misspecifying the downstream consequences of this sorting. These findings warrant three conclusions.

First, the relationship between issue and identity sorting is both modest and positive, much like the relationship between the underlying materials that comprise these constructs. In fact, although the correlation between forms of sorting rises and falls over time, the general trend of the relationship between these items is positive in the aggregate. In general, Americans exhibit greater sorting on both identities and attitudes today relative the early 1980s. Still, given the enormous heterogeneity among the average individual's policy preferences, the evidence for within-subject changes in individual-level issue

sorting over time is meager, at best. Instead, individuals are much more likely to constrain their symbolic political identities than they are to become sophisticated, policy-matching-partisans.

What explains this disconnect? The temporal effects at play could have something to do with both micro- and macro-level processes. Given what we know about how individuals answer surveys, that attitudes appear to be the manifestation of "top-of-the-head" considerations (Zaller and Feldman, 1992), it is unlikely that, barring some sort of extreme event that placed a number of issues at the forefront of survey-takers minds, we should observe increased sorting between two time periods. However, given the highly symbolic and salient nature of political labels, it makes a great deal of sense that, as the parties became more polarized from 1992 to 1996, individuals would also become reliably better sorted. This, in turn, helps to explain the modest growth between these constructs in the aggregate: the parties, as they have polarized, have communicated where they stand on a variety of issues.

Relatedly, second, the results produced in this chapter offer some insight into the core informational requirements of sorting. Understanding where the parties fit within left-right ideological space contributes to greater identity relative policy sorting; in contrast, knowing something about the relationship between parties and their policy platforms is related to greater issue relative identity sorting. This is a significant disconnect missed by earlier work on sorting. As we turn to a fuller study of identity sorting in Part 2 of this dissertation, I revisit this finding to map the exact contours of how elite cues contribute to the convergence between Americans' political identities. Needless to say, the conventional wisdom regarding the connection between perceived polarization and sorting is also plagued by these differences in the meaning and interpretation of these forms of information.

Finally, the difference between the effects of sorting on ideological biases and turnout portrayed in the final set of analyses is noteworthy. The prevailing metric of partisan sorting woefully mispredicts both outcome variables. I find that maximal levels of identity sorting at near-minimum levels of issue sorting produce just as much bias toward ideological groups as the measure of sorting advanced by Levendusky in *The Partisan Sort*. While this empirical finding is welcome in the sense that it underscores the utility of separating issue from identity sorting, these results are normatively troubling in that the

average citizen will exhibit prominent levels of affective biases in the absence of a meaningful integration of policy preferences. Recalling that even middling levels of issue sorting will produce significant group biases provided that identity sorting is high, the emotional ties that bind individuals to their groups do, indeed, appear to be *tribal*. Although this bias increases dramatically as more policy attitudes come to match one's partisanship, this baseline level of bias is concerning in that individuals might reliably prejudice their ideological out-group without ever holding attitudes that are congruent to their in-group or counter to their out-group. Further, even in the absence of matching issue-preferences, individuals with highly-sorted identities are roughly as like to report casting a vote as those sorted persons with consistent, matching, and strong issue preferences—confirming the finding that these identities are raw and emotive, capable of spawning behavior even in light of low levels of issue-based consistency.

Having provided both a theoretical and empirical justification for splitting partisan sorting into separate issue and identity-based components, I now turn to an in-depth analysis of identity sorting, which embodies the tribal (Mason, 2015) and symbolic attachments that drive much political behavior (Achen and Bartels, 2016). In Part 2, I focus the remainder of this dissertation on digging deeper into the foundations and consequences of identity sorting. Although prior work on sorting provides some general insights that are applicable to the study of the convergence between political identities, I find that the identity sorting is not only *context* dependent, but that it is a direct response to a particular form of elite cues. In turn, this sorting has two serious, downstream consequences that have serious ramifications for American political behavior that have been insufficiently explored. Identity sorting not only decreases individuals' baseline commitments to compromise as a social good, but it fundamentally alters the particular criteria that individuals use to select elected representatives. Understanding the incivility and intractability of modern political discourse and representation, then, requires further analysis of the convergence between these partisan and ideological identities.

Elite Cues, Group Memberships, and Sorting

"A wise man gets more use from his enemies than a fool from his friends."
- Baltasar Gracián, *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*

5.1   Introduction

The prior chapters have laid a foundation for understanding the content of sorting. I now turn to exploring *why* this sorting occurs. In particular, this chapter investigates the factors that contribute to the convergence between political identities, which are the currency of modern politics. Let us begin with the acknowledgement that individuals are not born partisans or ideologues. Political preferences are, to some degree, learned.[68] In particular, the political socialization literature implies that elites play a primary role in shaping citizens' attitudes and orientations (Gilens and Murakawa, 2002). As Downs (1957) notes, the average person simply cannot be an expert in many areas of policy, so "he will seek assistance from men who are experts in those fields, have the same political goals he does, and have good judgment" (pg. 233). This cue-taking underscores the leading explanation for the growth of sorting within the American mass public: as the political parties have polarized, individuals receive clearer cues about the "correct" correspondence between their partisan and ideological preferences (Fiorina and Abrams, 2008, pg. 581; Levendusky, 2009, pg. 39).

While intuitive, this logic is flawed. First, the average citizen is neither politically sophisticated nor logically extrapolates information across many policy domains (Converse, 1964; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Kahan and Braman, 2006). As a result, individuals struggle to conform to Downs' idealized notion of cue-taking, often relying, instead, upon symbolic or group-based cues to navigate the political landscape (Bullock, 2011)—a tendency that undercuts the depiction of sorting as citizens following policy-

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[68] A Lockean epistemology notwithstanding, however, a growing body of work at the intersection of neuro- and political science also demonstrates that such orientations are, at least partially, heritable (Alford, Funk, and Hibbing, 2005; Hatemi and McDermott, 2012).

based elite cues (e.g. Levendusky, 2009). Second, citizens' spatial perceptions of elites are often biased and asymmetric. Not only does the average American tend to misperceive the extent of policy polarization (Levendusky and Malhotra, 2016), but ideological placements of in-party and out-party elites and copartisans are not uniform (Ahler, 2014). Consequently, these tendencies undermine the linkage between perceptions of party polarization and sorting (e.g. Davis and Dunaway, 2016).

In this manuscript, I demonstrate that the conventional stylization of the relationship between elite cues and sorting cannot fully account for why identity sorting occurs. I begin by showing that the convergence between Americans' political identities is tenuously related to policy polarization or how individuals understand policy space. Rather, symbolic cues within the polarized political environment are almost wholly responsible for identity-based sorting (Study 1). Linking this finding to a social identity approach to intergroup behavior, I then demonstrate that identity sorting is not driven by *comparative* group assessments, or what is commonly termed "perceived polarization," but by beliefs about out-group dissimilarity and extremity (Study 2).

These findings not only require a new framework for understanding how elite cues shape sorting, but point to a sobering conclusion. Effectively, given the social identity foundations of sorting, it may matter little whether or not elites are objectively divided or moderate across many issues and policy domains. Provided that political elites continue to wage symbolic wars of ideological tribalism, this sorting—and its attendant downstream effects like partisan bias (Mason, 2015) and electoral polarization (Davis and Mason, 2016)—show no sign of slowing.

5.2   Elite cues and sorting

The accumulated wisdom regarding the development of mass opinion points to a general "elite cue theory," which suggests that individuals derive their political opinions in light of elite discourse (e.g. Key, 1966; Nie, Verba, and Petrocik, 1979; Zaller, 1992; Berinsky, 2009; Lenz, 2012; Brader, Tucker, and Duell, 2012). In the aggregate, for example, Carmines and Stimson (1989) demonstrate that changes in party elites' behavior toward racial issues in the 1960s generated subsequent divisions within the mass public's attitudes, while the crystallization of abortion attitudes can be similarly traced to elites taking less ambiguous positions on the issue (Adams, 1997). At the individual level, elite cues serve

as information-laden signals that citizens use to infer what to believe and how to act (Lupia and McCubbins, 1998; Cohen, 2003, Study 1; see also: Lau and Redlawsk, 2001). However, while this literature seems to provide a firm foundation for the relationship between cue-taking and sorting, in the forthcoming sections, I deconstruct the conventional specification of this cue-taking mechanism and theorize a new social-identity driven framework for understanding why American's political identities have converged.

5.2.1 The conventional explanation for elite-driven sorting

With the movement of George Wallace's conservative, working class defectors to the Republican Party and John Anderson's liberal Republicans to the Democratic Party, the late 20th Century realignment of the political parties cemented into place two ideologically-coherent parties. Whereas conflict among legislators was once multidimensional, the prevailing cleavage within Congress now resembles a single dimension of conflict, where Republican legislators are uniformly conservative and Democratic legislators, liberal (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, 2006). As these liberal-conservative divisions extended across numerous issues, scholars predicted that the coherency of public opinion would respond accordingly. Layman and Carsey (2002, pg. 799) write that

> [i]f Democratic and Republican elites take positions on multiple issue dimensions that are consistently liberal and consistently conservative, respectively, then politically-aware party identifiers will receive cues that their views on different issue agendas should go together and they should move toward polarized stands on each of those dimensions.

While the extent to which these changes have polarized mass opinion is a matter of some debate, the relationship between elite polarization and sorting rests on firmer footing.[69] Indeed, this account underscores Levendusky's (2009, pg. 3) conceptualization of the mechanism that constrains whether an individual's ideological preferences are congruent with their professed partisanship. According to this logic,

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[69] Whether or not this has generated any meaningful, compensatory issue *polarization*, is another matter, although substantial evidence suggests not (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope, 2006; Fiorina and Abrams, 2010; Ansolabehere, Rodden, and Snyder, 2006). But increased sorting on issues may occur even as increased extremity may not (Mason, 2015b).

> [a]s elites pull apart to the ideological poles they clarify what it means to be a Democrat or a Republican. Ordinary voters use these clearer cues to align their own partisanship and ideology. Elite polarization, by clarifying where the parties stand on the issues of the day, causes ordinary voters to sort.

However, as it relates to the convergence between partisan and ideological identities, this narrative hinges upon a number of idealized (and problematic) expectations. First, it assumes that individuals are not only able to recognize salient policy differences between political candidates or parties, but that they should be able to extrapolate that information in meaningful ways—an assumption that rests on somewhat awkward empirical grounds given the low levels of political knowledge and sophistication that are characteristic of the mass public (e.g. Converse, 1964; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Kahan and Braman, 2006). Further, this account implies that the average citizen will objectively assess the degree to which elites are polarized—i.e. that individuals' comparative assessments of the parties are bereft of well-known biases that stem from group memberships. These are not insignificant assumptions, and they generate two questions that the prevailing sorting literature has not sufficiently addressed: 1) Are all cues uniformly related to sorting?; and, 2) If not, then do group memberships shape the informational utility of these cues?

5.2.2   Different cues, different sorting?

On a basic level, cues are simply information—yet not all information is equal. As Bullock (2011) notes, cues may be informal and symbolic, for example, "the Democratic Party is liberal," or they may be explicit and particular, say, "the Democratic Party is pro-choice." Both statements provide information about Democrats. In the first case, knowing that the Democratic Party is liberal may conjure up a variety of expectations about the (stereotypical) policy positions of that party; in the latter case, the knowledge of Democrats' position regarding reproductive choice conveys specific information about that single policy domain. The extent to which the above cues might resonate with citizens, and, importantly, the extent to which they will provide the type of information necessary to navigate the political environment, however, appears contingent upon the *type* of

message and whether this information is readily or easily interpretable by the target audience (Bullock, 2011; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus, 2013). In particular, this extant research generally distinguishes between symbolic and policy-based cues.[70]

With this in mind, let us briefly return to the Levendusky's (2009) depiction of the linkage between elite cues and mass sorting. In his analysis, cues are operationalized as an index of correctly placing Democrats to the left of Republicans on a variety of items, ranging from perspectives on government spending to the parties' liberal-conservative identities. As a result of aggregating these placements together, both policy and symbolic cues are treated as functionally-equivalent in their relationship to the convergence between partisan and ideological preferences.

On its face, this simple coding decision seems innocent enough.[71] But a great deal of evidence points to serious problems with combining these two very different types of information. Specifically, there is significant scholarly consensus that ideological labels and the particular attitudes that populate belief systems are not interchangeable concepts. In fact, while most contemporary samples of American survey respondents find that ideological self-identification within liberal-conservative space is reliably correlated with a varied range of policy preferences—including preferences for decreased (increased) social welfare spending, progressive (traditional) cultural-moral stances on issues like same-sex marriage and abortion, and decreasing (increasing) the size and strength of the military (Malka and Llekes, 2010)—extant research indicates that ideological labels and issue-based indices of ideology are not directly analogous constructs (Conover and

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[70] While this appears to be a firm distinction, it is true that some policy cues are more or less "symbolic" in the sense that they are intertwined with ideological labels. I return to this point in further detail in Study 1.

[71] A derivative concern with this strategy, however, is that perceived cues are treated as "discrete" phenomena. That is, individuals either correctly place the parties or they do not. This decision may help to reduce some of the error variance inherent in a response-limited continuum—is the difference between degrees of ideological extremity interpreted as monotonic by respondents?—but it nevertheless loses valuable information about the *extent to which* individuals perceive that the parties are polarized. Further, this strategy is not particularly objective in that a respondent might place Democrats to the left of Republicans, but still select a "conservative" response for Democrats (i.e. a response that falls to the right of the midpoint on the associated response set). This person would be awarded points for correctly placing Democrats to the left of Republicans, even as the assessment is, in a sense, "wrong."

Feldman, 1981; Levitin and Miller, 1979; Popp and Rudolph, 2011; Devine, 2015; Mason, 2015b; Broockman, 2016).[72]

Relatedly, while the conventional explanation for sorting implies that all forms of elite conflict ought to generate greater correspondence between partisan and ideological preferences, these discrepancies imply that ordinary citizens may not derive the same informational utility from symbolic and policy-based cues. Given the assessability and power of symbolic cues as heuristic devices (Valentino, Huthcings, and White, 2002; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus, 2013), I expect that exposure to symbolic cues—e.g. describing elite polarization in terms of liberal-conservative ideological divisions—ought to generate greater convergence between partisan and ideological identities than policy-based ones—e.g. describing party polarization within the context of the debt ceiling crisis.[73]

> H1: The effect of symbolic elite polarization on sorting should be stronger than the effect of policy-based polarization.

5.2.3   A social identity framework for understanding elite-driven sorting

The extant evidence for the linkage between elite cues and sorting comprises showing that individuals who perceive many differences between the elites should exhibit higher levels of sorting. The expectation outlined above, however, implies that perceptions of liberal-conservative party differences (i.e. perceived *symbolic* polarization) should beget greater sorting than perceiving that the parties are divided on a variety of issues (i.e. perceived *issue* polarization). Yet, a second problem lurks in the specification of the relationship between these "cues" and mass sorting.[74] Given that perceptions of elite polarization are

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[72] This disconnect is further revealed in both the "symbolic-operational paradox," which implies that Americans' overwhelming favor the conservative ideological label in spite of holding policy preferences that are, on balance, liberal (Ellis and Stimson, 2012), and the observation that individuals' own attitudes don't reliably cohere within a single dimension (e.g. Lupton, Myers, and Thornton, 2015).

[73] Further bolstering expectation is the finding that individuals generally ignore or discount policy information in their political evaluations when given party labels (Rahn, 1993; Cohen, 2003).

[74] Prior research treats these assessments as more or less indicative of the overall power or salience of elite cues, even as these assessments are not, strictly speaking, cues themselves (c.f. Levendusky, 2009).

operationalized as the simple distance between placements of the parties in ideological space, scholars have effectively treated these assessments of polarization as *unbiased* appraisals (e.g. Davis and Dunaway, 2016). This decision, however, is questionable given the selective, motivated, and biased nature of information processing. First, partisans do not evenly interact with informational sources (Stroud, 2010). Second, a substantial literature on motivated reasoning indicates that individuals expend a great deal of energy counter-arguing evidence that is incongruent to their political preferences (Taber and Lodge, 2006; Nyhan and Reifler, 2010), which dovetails with the observation that affective biases fundamentally shape perceptions of basic ideological proximity (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes, 2012; Iyengar and Westwood, 2015).

Recent work pays closer attention to how these psychological tendencies shape *misperceptions* of both mass and elite polarization. Ahler (2014) notes, for example, that individuals often wrongly attribute elite polarization to rank-and-file ideologues, while Levendusky and Malhotra (2016) show that individuals exaggerate the extent of mass polarization. Further, consider the curious asymmetry in perceptions of elite ideology. As Figure 5.1 illustrates, there is roughly a 10 point gap between the extremity of respondents' liberal-conservative placements of the in- and out-group party. In other words, respondents perceive the out-group party to be almost 15 percent more extreme than they perceive the in-group party. If basic ideological placements of the parties are asymmetric, then it logically follows that perceptions of elite polarization, or the Euclidean distance between ideological placements of the parties, are biased downwards in the sense that, while *both* parties have objectively polarized, individuals do not recognize these changes evenly. This finding presents an obvious challenge for the conventional sorting calculus, which treats these assessments as unbiased in their relationship to sorting.
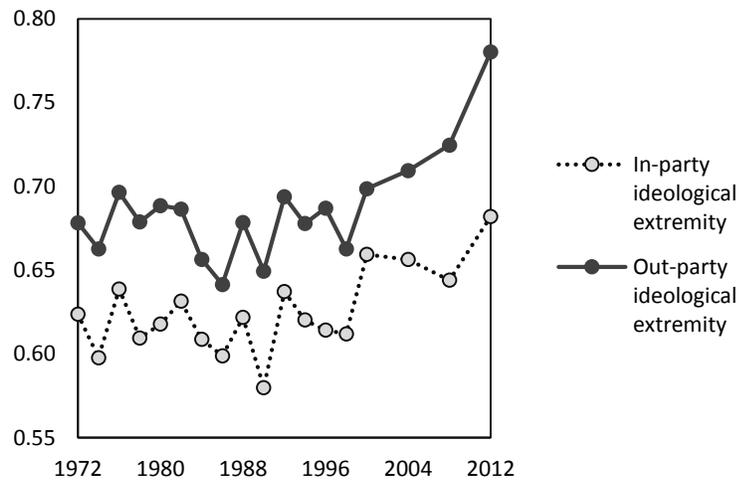
Source: 1972-2012 ANES Time-Series
Notes: Individuals are asked to describe whether the parties are liberal or conservative on seven-point scales, which are transformed to range from 0, "incorrect, extreme placement" to 1, "correct, extreme placement." Estimates are weighted means for respective year.

Figure 5.1. Perceived ideological extremity of parties by group membership

Social identity theory, however, provides an alternative approach to engage these asymmetries in relation to sorting by linking such appraisals to group memberships. If partisanship is a particular form of social identity (Huddy, 2001; Greene, 1999), then prototypic group members (e.g. political elites) provide the archetype to which group members should pattern their preferences. This expectation, however, cuts both ways. Social comparisons also produce contrast effects between groups (Campbell, 1967). Both Turner et al.'s (1987) and Brewer's (1991) work, for example, implies that the categorization processes that distinguish in- from out-group membership motivate individuals to emphasize the distinctive features of out-groups in order to establish intergroup boundaries that separate peers from opponents.

While classic versions of social identity theory emphasize that individuals desire to emulate in-group prototypes (e.g. Tajfel, 1959), thereby prioritizing the role of in-group cues, more recent applications of social identity theory in political science find that out-group cues are particularly powerful. Goren, Federico, and Kittilson (2009), for example, show that out-group cues increase the salience of individuals' in-group values, while

Nicholson (2012) demonstrates that out-group cues polarize individuals' attitudes beyond the effect of exposure to in-group cues. What explains the power of these cues? Consider, first, that social comparisons literally hinge on distinctiveness, necessitating an appreciation for the features that distinguish out-groups (Brewer, 1991). Second, Tversky's (1977) work suggests that the illusion of out-group homogeneity—the perception that an out-group is uniformly undesirable—emphasizes the objectionable features of out-group members relative the attractiveness of in-group characteristics. Finally, Atkinson's (1986, pg. 132) work posits that group *differences* play an important evaluative role; because "similarity and difference are not related by a perfect inverse function, the question arises as to which is the more basic process. Perhaps the best way to answer this question is to consider which is more likely to be noticed. The tentative answer would be difference since the judgment reflects distinctive over common features."

By extension, one productive way of thinking about how group memberships shape perceptions of elite cues is to consider this common focus on out-group distinctiveness. Given that optimizing distinctiveness is a core, if not primary, feature of intergroup relations (Brewer, 1999), combined with the more general finding that negative information is weighted more heavily than positive information (Ito et al., 1998), I expect that sorting is actually a reactionary, identity-driven process contingent on a sensitivity to *out-group differences*. When individuals perceive greater differences between themselves and their political opposition they learn precisely what they do *not* believe or wish to emulate. As Nicholson (2012, pg. 4) writes, "In an environment characterized by intergroup disagreement, the desire to seek difference with the outgrup will likely be strong." Accordingly, I expect that perceived out-group ideological dissimilarity should generate greater sorting than perceived in-group similarity or simple group differences (what is traditionally labelled "perceived polarization").

> H2: Perceived out-group dissimilarity should generate greater sorting than perceived in-group similarity.

5.3   Study 1: What "type" of cues cause sorting?

To investigate how elite cues shape sorting, I use an experimental design that juxtaposes the type of cues presented to survey subjects in order to measure how different

configurations of polarization affect sorting. The data for this experiment are drawn from Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk (mTurk) workforce during March, 2016. While mTurk utilizes an opt-in sampling frame, which results in a non-random sample, prior research finds that such online convenience samples present modest problems for experimental research (Berinksy, Huber, and Lenz, 2010).[75] The resulting sample of 1,102 American adults is young (the average age is 36 years old with a standard deviation of 12.8), educated (modal educational attainment is a college degree), and white (78 percent of the sample). Aggregating leaners into the partisan categories, 58 percent of subjects identify as Democrats, 28 percent as Republicans, and 14 percent as "pure" Independents.

5.3.1   Experimental design

Using a multi-condition between-subjects design, participants were either assigned to a "symbolic" or "policy" cue condition; subjects were then randomly presented an illustration / vignette combination that varied only in the pictorial presentation of polarization—the text vignettes accompanying the portrayals of polarization are identical across the respective policy and symbolic cue treatments. In the interest of brevity, I present contrasts between observed sorting in three conditions that utilize a common, spatial depiction of party polarization: (1) average symbolic polarization, (2) average policy polarization, and (3) a control group.[76]

Figure 5.2 illustrates two of the different substantive treatments that individuals could receive. In the *symbolic cue* treatment (N = 194), the labels "liberal" and "conservative" are used to describe divisions between the parties; meanwhile, the *policy cue* treatment uses an agree-disagree format to illustrate where the two parties are divided on the issue of the debt ceiling (N = 182). This particular policy issue was selected purposefully. The debt ceiling has become a fulcrum in Congress in recent years, resulting in multiple "crises" that brought the function of the federal government to a grinding and

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[75] In fact, in this application, the higher levels of education and political interest that are generally associated with this worker pool actually work *against* observing treatment effects insofar as sorting in the baseline control group is likely to be higher than the average levels of sorting in the mass public—thereby decreasing the likelihood of observing significant contrasts.

[76] The remaining treatments depict polarization using different pictorial representations of polarization; the contrasts presented here, however, are a fair representation of how extant literature rolls elite divisions into a single dimension.

much-publicized halt (see Jacobson [2013] for an expanded treatment regarding this issue's close relationship with polarization and gridlock). However, even if the debt ceiling is a medium salience-issue among the minds of average citizens, presenting the parties as intractably divided should still trigger sorting *if mere partisan conflict provides the needed material to cause convergence between ideological and partisan preferences.*

To further minimize presentational characteristics that might act as confounds, the "average" location of both the Democratic and Republican Parties on the linear axis that accompanies each vignette are identical across treatments (i.e. the parties are placed at the same location on the axis in both the policy and symbolic conditions). The sole differences between treatments, then, are the content of the vignette and the information displayed upon the associated axis depicting the parties as polarized. If there are observable differences in sorting that result from exposure to these treatments, then we can be confident that it is the *content* (i.e. type) of the cues and not the visual portrayal of party polarization that drives these differences.[77]

5.3.2 Measurement

Dependent variable. The outcome of interest is partisan-ideological sorting. Sorting is, ultimately, a process of categorization. In its simplest form, it merely accounts for whether an individual's political preferences are correctly matched: liberal (conservative) preferences correspond to Democratic (Republican) partisanship. In past research, these ideological preferences comprise both symbolic and policy-based preferences (e.g. Levendusky, 2009). Yet while it may be attractive to craft an omnibus measure of sorting, there are serious problems with this approach (see Appendix B for an expanded discussion of this point). Instead, it seems both theoretically and empirically preferable to parcel sorting into separate issue- and identity-based constructs. The forthcoming analyses focus on this latter construct, partisan-ideological sorting, which captures the convergence between political identities (c.f. Mason, 2015a; Davis and Dunaway, 2016).

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[77] That said, it is possible that there are variations even among policy cues as to their symbolic informational qualities. I leave this question, however, to future research.

A. Policy-based cue (polarization

Policy proposal: Congress should raise the debt ceiling.
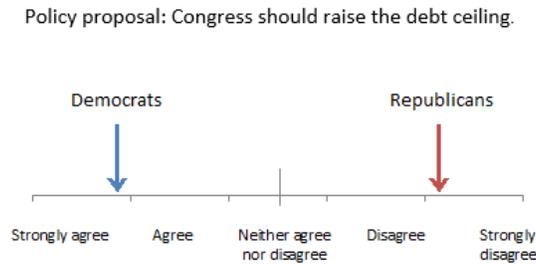
A recent study conducted by the Center for Congressional Studies sheds new light on the policy preferences of Congress.

Researchers found for example, that the parties are divided on the issue of public debt. Democrats prefer to increase the debt ceiling; Republicans, on the other hand, do not support raising the debt ceiling.

The figure above depicts the average position that Democrats and Republicans in Congress have taken on this issue. Some legislators take more moderate positions, but, Democrats and Republicans are clearly split on whether or not to increase the debt ceiling.

B. Symbolic cue (polarization
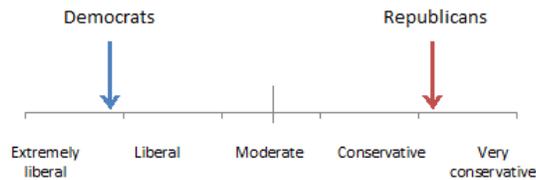
A recent study conducted by the Center for Congressional Studies sheds new light on the ideological preferences of Congress.

The figure above depicts the average ideological position of Democrats and Republicans in Congress. As you can see, the parties are divided by ideology: Democrats are liberal, and Republicans are conservative. Although some legislators are more moderate, liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans dominate their respective parties.

This means that Democrats and Republicans rarely agree on the right approach to a number of different issues. Instead, Democrats prefer more liberal solutions to problems facing our country, while Republicans prefer more conservative approaches.

Figure 5.2. Elite cues experimental treatments

Following the measurement scheme outlined in Mason (2015a), I first calculate the overlap between partisanship and ideological self-placement, which are both measured using the traditional seven-category response sets that range from Democratic / liberal identification (low values) to Republican / conservative identification (high values). The overlap between the two items is expressed by subtracting a subject's score on the ideological identification item from their score on the partisanship one. Low values on the resulting measure communicate perfect ("correct") overlap between the two items, while high values convey an extreme mismatch between partisanship and ideological identification. Next, I rescale this item so that high values will be associated with greater overlap. This score is then multiplied by the strength of both the partisan and ideological identities (measures that are derived by folding the partisanship and ideological identification items in half). The final index is rescaled to range from 0, incorrectly sorted and weak identities, to 1, perfectly sorted and strong identities.

Controls. Participants' race is broken into a series of dichotomous variables where identification as *white* or *black* is coded 1 and otherwise 0. *Age* is a continuous variable corresponding to subjects' actual age in years. *Education* is a five-category item ranging from elementary education, coded 0, to a post-graduate degree, coded 1. *Male* is coded 1 for men and 0 for women. Income is an ordinal variable ranging 1, "less than $10,000," to 12, "more than $150,000)." *Internet* is coded 1 for individuals who consume the majority of their news from online sources. *News consumption* is a seven-category item that captures how many days a week a respondent watches, listens, or reads about the news. Finally, *political knowledge*, is an index of recognition items that includes correctly identifying the Speaker of the House, who nominates Supreme Court Justices, and which party controls the House of Representatives during the time of data collection. This item is rescaled to range from 0, "no correct responses," to 1, "all correct responses."

5.3.3   Results

To investigate whether different types of cues cause greater convergence between partisan and ideological identities, I regress treatment assignment and a series of covariates on partisan-ideological sorting, thereby providing a strict comparison between the effects of policy and symbolic cues. As the coefficient entry for the policy cue treatment in Table 5.1 indicates, depicting the parties as polarized on a significant issue of public policy does little

to increase the overlap and extremity of partisan and ideological identities. Figure 5.3 illustrates that the marginal effect of exposure to the policy cue treatment is insignificant given that the estimate's confidence interval closely overlaps with zero.

However, individuals in the symbolic cue treatment were more sorted than subjects in both the control and policy cue conditions. As Figure 5.3 illustrates, presenting the parties as being polarized within liberal-conservative ideological space generates greater partisan-ideological sorting. Not only is this the marginal effect associated with assignment to that condition distinguishable from zero, but the paired contrast between policy and symbolic polarization is also significant ($b = 0.07$, $t = 1.86$). Further, the magnitude of this difference is large; the effect of exposure to symbolic polarization, for example, is equivalent to two full units of educational attainment.

Table 5.1. Elite cues and partisan-ideological sorting

	b	s.e.
Symbolic cue	0.067**	(0.039)
Policy cue	-0.004	(0.040)
White	0.096**	(0.040)
Black	0.124	(0.080)
Age	-0.002**	(0.001)
Education	0.033**	(0.019)
Male	0.110**	(0.032)
Income	-0.001	(0.005)
Internet	-0.038	(0.036)
Political knowledge	0.047	(0.058)
News consumption	0.016**	(0.008)
Constatnt	0.219**	(0.097)

Source: Amazon mTurk sample, June, 2016
Notes: *p<0.05, **p<0.01

5.3.4   Discussion

The careful reader may ask: Why do these results differ from past research? First, it is important to note that prior experimental research has largely concerned itself with how polarized elites affect attitudinal consistency and simple matching of policy attitudes vis-à-vis partisanship (e.g. Levendusky, 2009, 2010)—not the *strength* of the relationship

between partisan and ideological identification, which the metric of identity sorting used here captures. Second, consider the informational nature of policy and symbolic cues. To use the parlance of Ellis and Stimson (2012), policy cues provide information about the instrumental or "operational" nature of the parties. We know, however, that the average citizen's own symbolic liberal-conservative identity is modestly independent of their combined bundle of operational preferences (e.g. Conover and Feldman, 1981; Devine, 2015; Mason, 2016). In this case, merely presenting the parties as intractably polarized does little to grease the convergence between partisanship and ideological identification, ostensibly because 1) this policy information is more tenuously related to how individuals conceive of the relationship between partisanship and ideology, and 2) the symbolic cue condition literally preloads subjects with these connections by establishing the link between liberal-conservative ideology and partisan identity.
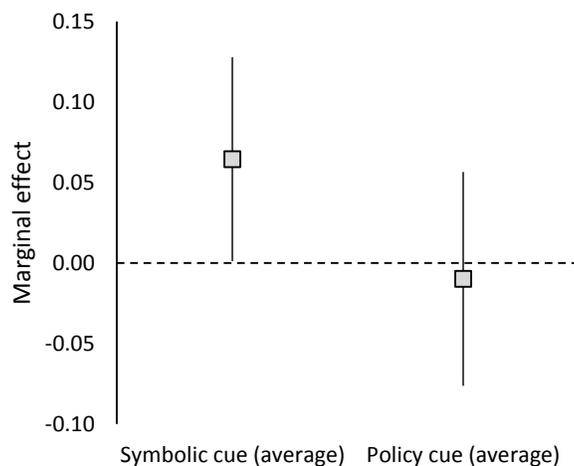
Notes: Solid lines represent 90 percent confidence intervals; contrast between conditions is significant (b = .07, t = 1.86).

Figure 5.3. The effect of elite cues on sorting

However, as I will show in the next study, the relationship between symbolic cues and sorting is still more complex than this finding. In fact, there is nothing particularly unique about polarization as an informational precursor to sorting. Instead, perceptions of symbolic out-group extremity and dissimilarity weigh heavily on the minds of individuals;

dovetailing with recent research that illustrates the pervasive nature of the in-group / out-group paradigm (e.g. Nicholson, 2012; Iyengar, Sood, and Llekes, 2012), I find that greater correspondence between partisan and ideological identities has much less to do with *comparative* party differences—i.e. elite polarization—than it does with perceptions of out-group ideological dissimilarities.

5.4 Study 2: Group memberships and sorting

In this second study, I seek to establish two novel features of the relationship between elite cues and sorting: 1) perceptions of symbolic cues should again exert greater influence on sorting than policy-based ones, and 2) these assessments should vary in their relationship to sorting according to group membership.

5.4.1 Data and Measurement

The data for Study 2 are drawn from the 1972-2012 American National Elections Studies (ANES) Time-Series surveys and 1992-1996 ANES Panel Study, respectively. The outcome of interest in these analyses, *partisan-ideological sorting*, is identical to the dependent variable utilized in Study 1. However, in these analyses, I focus not on the effects of exposure to elite cues—what might be considered the "direct effects" of partisan polarization—but rather the indirect effect of *perceptions* of these cues on sorting through the lens of group memberships.

Symbolic group cues

The ANES surveys ask individuals to rate whether and to what extent the Democratic and Republican Parties are either liberal or conservative. Responses to these items range from 1, "extremely liberal," to 7, "extremely conservative." To construct the first type of group assessment, *perceived party polarization,* I subtract a respondent's Democratic Party ideological placement from the Republican one. As used elsewhere by Davis and Dunaway (2016), this operation yields a variable that ranges from -6, which conveys that a respondent perceives that the parties are fully polarized, yet completely opposite of their "correct" ideological character (i.e. Democrats are extremely conservative / Republicans

are extremely liberal), to 6, which conveys that the individual correctly identifies the parties' ideology and views this quality as extreme (i.e. Democrats are extremely liberal / Republicans are extremely conservative). Values of or near zero, then, represent either perceiving the parties to be moderate or perceiving the parties to be effectively indistinguishable from each other. To ease the interpretation of this variable's relationship to sorting, I have rescaled it to range from 0 (perceives parties as fully polarized but wrongly assigns ideological labels) to 1 (correctly perceives parties' ideology and views the two groups as maximally polarized).[78]

Panel A in Figure 5.4 illustrates the distribution of this variable's scores. Roughly 10 percent of respondents incorrectly perceive the relative nature of party polarization (scores to the left of "no difference." The vast majority of individuals see "correct" differences between the parties, although only about 3 percent of respondents perceive that the parties are maximally polarized (i.e. Democrats extremely liberal and Republicans extremely conservative).

Next, I disaggregate this "comparative" group cue into perceptions of *in-party* and *out-party ideological extremity* according to respondent partisanship. Recalling that individuals are asked to rate the parties on seven-point scales, ranging from liberal to conservative, I reverse-code an individual's Democratic Party ideological placement in order to "match" the assessment of the Republican Party's ideological placement insofar as this recode ensures that higher scores on both party placements convey "correct" perceptions of ideological extremity (i.e. Democrats are perceived to be "extremely liberal," and Republicans "extremely" conservative). These variables are then rescaled to range from 0, (strong, incorrect assessments of a party's ideological nature) to 1 (which conveys that an individual correctly perceives that the respective party is ideologically extreme. Recall that these values were displayed in Figure 5.1.

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[78] One could take the absolute value of these assessments, but this would wrongly constrain perceptions that the parties are ideologically extreme in the incorrect direction (i.e. Dem's extremely conservative / Rep's extremely liberal) with perceptions that the parties are maximally extreme in the correct direction (i.e. Dem's extremely liberal / Rep's extremely conservative).

A. Perceived polarization

B. In-party similarity

C. Out-party dissimilarity
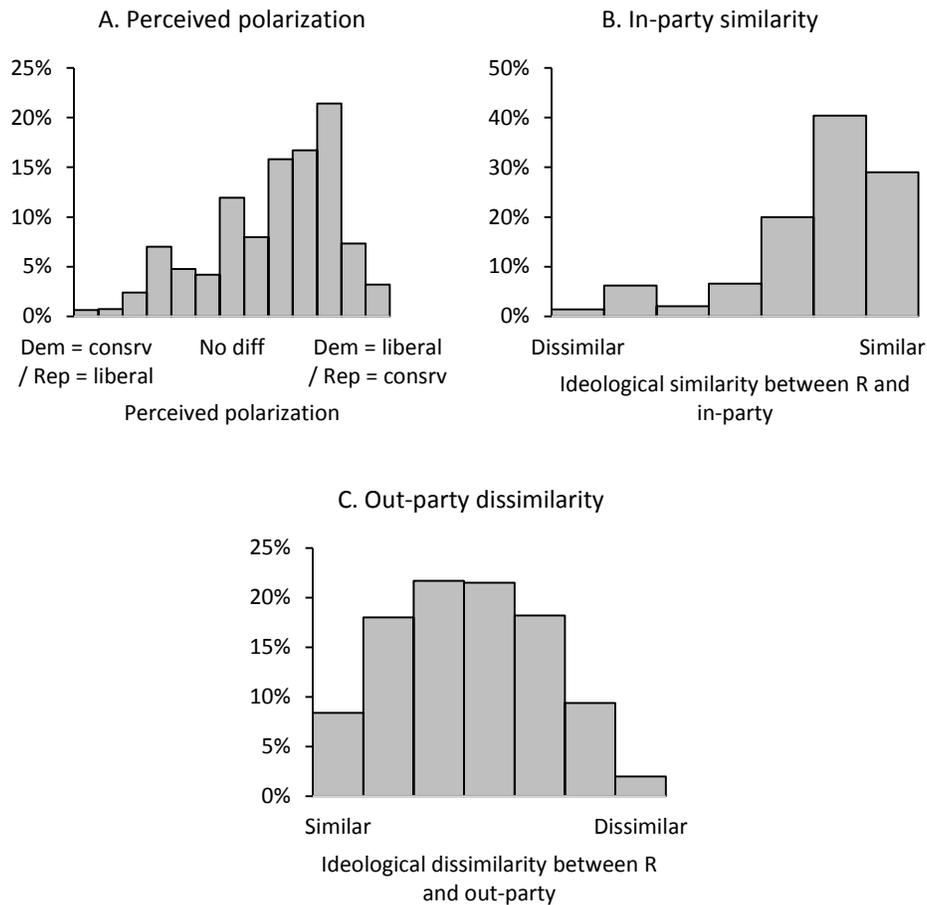
Source: 1984-2012 ANES
Notes: Estimates weighted by population weights.

Figure 5.4. Perceptions of the parties

The fourth and fifth forms of group cues reflect the perceived distance between an individual's own ideological self-placement and the corresponding placement of the in-party, the party to which the respondent belongs, and out-party, the party with which an individual does not identify. In other words, these variables not only account for the perceived ideological character and extremity of a particular party, but how these qualities relate to the respondent's own ideological identity. Perceived *in-party similarity* is created by subtracting the ideological placement of an individual's party from her own ideological self-placement and taking the absolute value of the resulting score. I then rescale this item

so that larger values will represent greater similarity. Values on this variable range from 0 (maximum ideological differences between the self and in-group) to 1 (which conveys no differences between self and group ideological placements). According to Panel B in Figure 5.4, most respondents believe that their in-party shares their own sense of ideological self-placement. Almost 70 percent of individuals fall into one of the two highest categories on this item.

Perceived *out-party dissimilarity* is constructed by subtracting the ideological placement of an individual's out-party from their own self-placement and taking the absolute value of the resulting score. This transformation is necessary to ensure that Republican and Democrat identifiers' scores exist within common space and yields a variable that, after rescaling, ranges from 0 (no differences between self and out-group ideology) to 1 (maximum differences between self and group ideology). Panel C in Figure 5.4 illustrates that the spread of values on this item is approximately normal, with fewer than five percent of all partisans perceiving maximum ideological differences between their and the out-party's liberal-conservative placement.

Policy-based cues
Beginning in the mid-1980s, the ANES began asking respondents about their perceptions of the parties' issue positions on a number of policy items. Upon being given seven-category continua that juxtapose a "liberal" and "conservative" solution to these particular policy issues, individuals are asked to place where they think the parties' approaches to these issues fit within these bivalent response sets. I first average together individuals' Democratic Party policy placements across the five items that are routinely included on Time-Series surveys (health insurance, provision of jobs, aid to minorities, spending on government services, and spending on defense). I then do the same for the Republican Party policy placements, and, finally, for each respondent. In effect, the resulting variables represent a "latent" approximation of the perceived "liberal" or "conservative" nature of the policy preferences of both the parties and the respondent, which resemble, at least in their underlying measurement structure, the symbolic assessments outlined above.[79]

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[79] Although prior research is not bullish about the limited dimensionality of individual-level preferences (Johnston and Feldman, 2014; Lupton, Meyers, and Thornton, 2015), I am not strictly interested in whether this latent score is "ideological," in the usual sense (i.e. whether a respondent's ideology is necessarily structured within a liberal-conservative

Following the approach outlined in the previous section, I then create a number of different cues based off of these indices. Because the perceived policy placements fit within the same seven-category scale as liberal-conservative ideology, the actual construction of these variables follows the exact same template detailed in the preceding section. Thus, the five items derived from the policy placements include: 1) *perceived policy polarization*, 2) *in-party policy extremity*, 3) *out-party policy extremity*, 4) *perceived in-party policy similarity*, and 5) *perceived out-party policy dissimilarity*.[80]

Controls

A number of control variables are employed. In light of the legacy of the Southern realignment, I include a dichotomous variable, *Old South,* for persons who reside in states that were originally included in the Confederacy. A respondent's *age* is measured in years, ranging from 17 to 99. *Educational attainment* conveys the highest level of schooling a respondent has undertaken and takes the form of a seven-part ordinal scale ranging from 0, "grade school," to 1, "graduate degree." The degree to which persons are *interested in politics* is coded 0 for "not much," 1 for "some," and 2 for "a lot." Because religion is deeply intertwined with political convictions (Patrikios, 2008), I provide two variables that differentiate between religious identification and religiosity: 1) *Protestant* is coded 1 for individuals who identify as members of that group and otherwise 0, and 2) frequency of *church attendance* is coded as an ordinal scale ranging from 0, "never," to 1 "attends multiple times a week."[81] Racial identification as *white* or *black* is coded 1 for identifying oneself as a member of that group and 0 for otherwise. Finally, although it is virtually impossible to find acceptable "political knowledge" items that are common across both early and recent ANES surveys, I utilize *knowledge of House majority party* as a proxy for this concept.

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dimension). Instead, I'm only interested in the relative distance between this score and the scores given to the parties, allowing me to remain agnostic about the underlying constraint observed across attitudes. If there is multidimensionality within these preferences, then we should observe great fluctuations in the relative in-group / out-group (dis)similarity scores.
[80] For brevity, the depiction of the distribution of these items is available in the Appendix (Figure B2).
[81] While it would be ideal to employ a better measure of religious conservatism, unfortunately, the data do not provide any common metric by which to measure this consideration over the time frame utilized.

5.4.2   Results

Table 5.2 reports the results of a series of analyses that model identity sorting as a function of different configurations of the group assessments specified above. Model 1 employs the standard predictor of sorting, perceived party polarization (prior works often uses the terms "differences," "polarization," and "cues" interchangeably), with one caveat—these assessments have been broken down into symbolic- and issue-based components. The difference in the magnitude of the coefficients produced by these two items is startling. Correctly perceiving that the Democrats are very liberal and Republicans are very conservative—that the parties are, in effect, maximally polarized—exerts almost triple the effect on sorting relative perceiving the parties are fully polarized across a series of policy issues. These results handsomely match the findings uncovered in Study 1; the information derived from elite cues is not uniformly related to the convergence between political identities.[82]

How do group memberships mediate the relationship between assessments (cues) and sorting? Turning to Model 2, I disaggregate perceptions of both symbolic and policy-based polarization by a respondent's group membership. Two conclusions are apparent. First, the effect of symbolic group assessments on sorting is again comparatively larger than the associated effects of policy-based assessments. Second, I uncover modest evidence that indicates that the relationship of these perceptions to sorting is differentiated by group membership. Consider a Democratic-identifier who perceives that Republicans are "extremely conservative" and Democrats are "extremely liberal," numerically the most "extreme" perceptions associated with each party. Perceiving that an out-group is maximally-extreme results in a change in sorting that is roughly 30 percent larger than concomitant assessments regarding perceived in-party extremity.

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[82] One potential criticism that readers familiar with this research may raise is that these effects are a function of a different choice of dependent variable than the one used in prior research (e.g. Levendusky, 2009). I address this concern in Appendix A5. Essentially, policy cues predict issue-based sorting, while symbolic cues predict identity-based sorting. Lumping these forms of sorting and cues together obscures these important differences.

Table 5.2. Elite cues and Partisan-Ideological Sorting

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Symbolic assessments			
Perceived polarization	0.17**	-----	-----
	(0.01)		
In-party extremity	-----	0.17**	-----
		(0.02)	
Out-party extremity	-----	0.22**	-----
		(0.04)	
In-party similarity	-----	-----	0.17**
			(0.03)
Out-party dissimilarity	-----	-----	0.65**
			(0.03)
Policy assessments			
Perceived polarization	0.06*	-----	-----
	(0.02)		
In-party extremity	-----	0.05*	-----
		(0.02)	
Out-party extremity	-----	0.07*	-----
		(0.03)	
In-party similarity	-----	-----	-0.04
			(0.02)
Out-party dissimilarity	-----	-----	0.02
			(0.02)
Controls			
Political interest	0.02	0.02	0.02
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.02)
Political knowledge	0.04**	0.03**	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)
protestant	0.02**	0.05**	0.03**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)
Constant	-2.21*	-4.11**	0.62
	(1.02)	(1.23)	(1.29)
R2	0.13	0.14	0.50
N	20,458	8,393	8,330

Source: 1972-2012 ANES Time-Series Surveys
Notes: † Additional controls include race, age, gender, household income, and year counter (full models are available in the Appendix. Analyses employ robust standard errors, clustered by year. *p<0.05, **p<0.01

However, the true power of group memberships is further revealed when we account for how these memberships mediate perceived party (dis)similarities. In Model 3, I convert the simple measures of ideological extremity into items that account for ideological group placements vis-à-vis the respondent's own ideological moorings—variables that instead reflect how ideologically (dis)similar a group is compared to the respondent. As expected, the effect of perceived out-group dissimilarity on sorting far surpasses the magnitude of perceived in-group similarity. In other words, it's not so much that individuals observe their preferred in-group archetypes and sort accordingly, but that out-group information provides a particularly stark and powerful cue. When individuals recognize that the opposing party is ideologically different from their own identity, they are much more likely exhibit robust levels of sorting than even when they perceive that their own party is a perfect ideological fit.
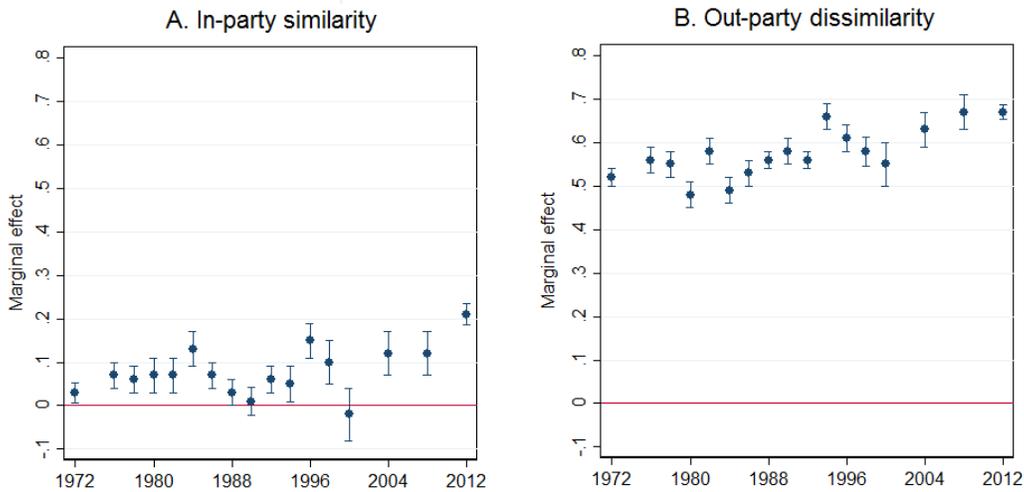
Source: 1972-2012 ANES Time-Series

Notes: Originating regressions can be obtained in Appendix, but modeling conforms to the analyses presented in Table 2. Solid vertical bands convey 95 percent confidence intervals. Point estimates for *in-group similarity* correspond to moving from minimul to maximum overlap between in-group and respondent self-placement in liberal-conservative space. Point estimates for *out-group dissimilarity* convey moving from maximum to minium overlap between out-group and respondent self-placement in liberal-conservative space.

Figure 5.5. The effect of liberal-conservative party placements on sorting, conditional on group membership

Figure 5.5 illustrates the contours of these findings by plotting the coefficient estimates associated with in-party similarity and out-party dissimilarity over time. Unlike the pooled coefficient estimates presented in Table 2, each point estimate is derived from fitting a model to the data from the respective year in which it was collected. Aside from the observation that in-group assessments are a much weaker correlate of sorting than out-group ones (in fact, the confidence intervals of the estimates associated with perceived in-group similarity are insignificant more often than not), I find that the magnitude of the effect depicted in the second panel increase significantly over time. This observation tracks the real change in Dw-Nominate estimates that indicate that the objective level of elite polarization has dramatically increased during this window of time. Thus, not only is a sensitivity to out-group cues associated with a higher propensity to exhibit sorted political identities, but the magnitude of this effect has appreciably evolved over time. As elites have become objectively divided, so too has the strength of the relationship between subjective assessments and sorting increased.

Table 5.3. The Effect of Changes in Group Perceptions on Sorting

	Change in PID-Ideological Sorting	
	(1)	(2)
Δ Party Polarization		0.025
	0.097*	
	(0.037)	(0.040)
Δ In-Party Similarity	------	0.141**
		(0.039)
Δ Out-Party Dissimilarity	------	0.181**
		(0.043)
Constant	0.039	0.063
	(0.044)	(0.042)
R2	0.03	0.19
N	319	306

Source: 1992-1996 ANES Panel Study
Notes: Coefficient estimates are changes in values on variable from 1992 to 1996, where positive values on all entries are coded to reflect an "increase" in respective item. Analyses weighted using full sample weights.
*p <0.05, **p < 0.01; Robust standard errors in parentheses.

To corroborate these findings, I investigate panel data from the 1992-1996 ANES Panel Study. Although these data were gathered over only a moderate duration of time, resampling the same respondents presents the opportunity to analyze whether explicit changes in group perceptions are related to changes in sorting. Table 3 presents a series of models that depict sorting as a function of perceived party differences (symbolic polarization) and assessments broken down by group membership. Recalling that these variables each originally range from 0 to 1, the coefficients presented in each model represent the effect of changing from a value of 0 in 1992 to a value of 1 in 1996. Thus, in Model 1, if an individual perceived no ideological differences between the parties in 1992 but perceived maximum differences in 1996, then the result would be a change in roughly 10 points of additional partisan-ideological sorting, all else equal. In Model 2, however, these assessments do not exert a significant effect on sorting. Instead, changes in perceived out-group dissimilarity are the strongest correlate of partisan-ideological sorting; the coefficient for changes in these symbolic assessments is double the coefficient of perceived party polarization in Model 1 and larger than the coefficient representing changes in perceived in-group similarity.

5.4.3 Discussion

These analyses indicate that perceptions of between-group differences, what is commonly termed "perceived polarization," reveal only a partial portrait of how "elite cues" influence the convergence between ideological and partisan identities. Although a growing body of work reveals that individuals' assessments of political groups are biased (Ahler, 2014; Levendusky and Mahlhotra, 2016) and that group memberships shape political attitudes (Nicholson, 2012), this study is the first to explore the consequences of how group memberships filter information through the ubiquitous "perceptual screen" of partisan memberships in the context of sorting. While the observation that perceived out-group ideological dissimilarities drive sorting is novel, this finding fits within the expectations of self-categorization and social comparison theories of intergroup behavior (Shaw and Costanzo, 1982; Park and Rothbart, 1982), which suggest that comparisons between the self and reference groups shape conformity among preferences whereas the recognition of between-group differences may not (e.g. Hogg, 1996; Turner et al., 1987). Individuals do not assess partisan (social) groups in a vacuum; instead, the judgments they make about

ideological extremity are a partial function of their awareness of their own ideological identity.

These results produce an important revision to extant work on sorting, and one that has far-reaching consequences for models of behavior that employ spatial analysis of ideology: perceived symbolic—*not policy*—cues facilitate the convergence between political identities. This distinction is a vital one. Prior research treats the recognition of party differences within liberal-conservative and policy space as if these domains share such commonalities that these cues can be aggregated together. Yet, descriptively, this assumption is tenuous. Recalling that dissimilarity scores range from 0 (no differences) to 1 (maximum differences), individuals perceive far greater out-group *symbolic* ideological differences (x = 0.47) than they do concomitant *policy* differences (x = 0.29). Thus, not only are party placements within ideological space biased by group membership, but individuals are either not as well-equipped to navigate policy relative symbolic ideological space or else they derive fundamentally different types of actionable information from these cues (or, perhaps both). These results imply that, even as the parties have become objectively divided across a wide variety of issues, awareness of those divisions matters comparatively little in the calculus of sorting. Provided that individuals perceive stark symbolic differences between the parties, partisan-ideological sorting may occur independent of these policy-based cues.

5.5   Conclusion

The two studies presented in this manuscript reveal that the linkage between elite cues and sorting must be reconstructed. In Study 1, I show that the prevailing linkage between elites and sorting rests critically on the type of elite cues (information) presented to subjects. Merely communicating that the parties are polarized does little to improve the extent to which political identities are sorted. Instead, symbolic polarization is a necessary and sufficient cause of partisan-ideological sorting.

Study 2 builds on this finding, showing how perceptions of these cues are then shaped by group memberships, offering a social identity-driven theory of sorting. Here, I demonstrated that perceptions of between-party differences—what scholars commonly call "perceived polarization"—exert much less impact on sorting than do perceived out-group dissimilarities. Specifically, the absolute perceived policy gap between the parties does not

drive identity-based sorting nearly as much as symbolic ideological differences between an individual and an out-group party. Why are individuals more likely to conform to the political characteristics of their in-group when they perceive that their political opponents deviate from their own group's preferences? Self-categorization theory conveys that contextual comparisons between reference groups and the individual are efficient means for processing information quickly (Atkinson, 1986). Given the desire for positive social distinction (Turner et al., 1987) and the evaluative importance of group differences (Taylor, 1981), Gracián's admonition in the epigraph to heed one's enemies proves prescient: sorting is the distilled endpoint of social pressures from out-group sources.

Normatively, these findings are not a cause for optimism. In fact, Studies 1 and 2 imply that policy moderation by party elites would do little to curb partisan-ideological sorting within the mass public. Even if cross-cutting issues perturbed the uni-dimensional policy space that currently characterizes Congressional polarization, the symbolic nature of partisan conflict has become such an ingrained feature of the political landscape that identity-based sorting may be orthogonal to most policy debate. Future work on sorting, then, would do well to consider whether certain types of issues have the power to inhibit or exacerbate the convergence of these identities.

At any rate, these findings suggest that spatial models of politics, which rely on the assumption that individuals understand policy space and connect this information to their own preferences, must wrestle with the relatively weak relationship between policy information and the convergence between political identities demonstrated here. Although political commentators lament that candidates ought to focus on the issue facing ordinary Americans, these findings indicate that some divisive issues like federal spending and affirmative action generate little identity-based sorting. This, in turn, implies that political elites should concentrate on highly stylized approaches to campaigning, which may undercut the substantive discourse that elections should encourage. However, as long as party elites have an incentive to employ symbolic rhetoric—and the public buys the demand that symbolic ideological purity is the litmus test for electoral acceptability—the ongoing convergence between partisan and ideological identities within the mass public will only accelerate.

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Chapter 6: Identity Sorting and Compromise

Politics is the art of the possible, the attainable – the art of the next best.
-Otto von Bismarck

"In Utopia, I'd like to see compromise but with the political environment that is going on now, that's impossible. It's a stand on principle and I don't give an inch.“
-Clinton voter (Wilmington, NC)[83]

6.1 Introduction

Having discussed *how* identity sorting occurs, we now turn to *why it matters*. Over the previous decade has been growing interest in the existence of "affective polarization," or the type of social polarization that is embodied in a distrust, dislike, and disenfranchisement of an opposition party (e.g. Iyengar, Llekes, and Sood, 2012; Mason, 2015). In particular, an important facet of this type of emotional distaste for one's opponents is manifested in individuals' orientations toward working closely with the other team—in other words, how individuals think about compromise. In this chapter, I explore how identity sorting affects this vital facet of democratic exchange.

Politics is often described using game metaphors. Legislators and candidates are described as players, parties as teams, and participants as fans (c.f. Green, Palmquist, and Schickler, 2002)—even the coverage of elections is presented using frames that are used to describe sporting events (Lawrence, 2000). Nevertheless, the utility of this analogy is weaker beyond the immediate electoral context. While the outcomes of sporting contests are discrete and final, outcomes in politics are less simple. Elections may determine winners and losers, but policymaking requires members from both groups to shed those labels as they work together to successfully pass legislation.

Compromise, however, is increasingly viewed as capitulation rather than an ideal feature of deliberative political exchange. Recent examples of interparty intransigence are

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[83] http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/election/article112777613.html

replete in American politics, ranging from the one-sided passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010, to the government shutdown over the federal budget in 2013, to the Senate's inability to hold hearings to fill the Supreme Court vacancy generated by Antonin Scalia's death in 2016. In fact, while Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) may have admitted in a 2015 interview that "…nobody is a dictator here. We can't do things, one party only, in a time of divided government," bipartisanship is increasingly rare (Mann and Ornstein, 2012; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, 2006).[84]

Relative the behavior of their elected officeholders, the American people fare only marginally better in their desire for and willingness to accept political compromise. In fact, while the mass public pays modest lip-service to the notion that political leaders shouldn't always get everything they want, citizens often believe that their "side" is entitled to an enormous amount of political deference (Pew, 2014). In other words, when it comes to compromising *in practice*—or, when individuals are required to belly-up to the bargaining table to make hard choices—they are much less likely to cede resources to their political opponents than they are *in principle*. Thus, citizens rarely prefer "neutral" or "moderate" policy solutions (Ahler and Broockman, 2016), much less politicians who are willing to make concessions (Harbridge, Malhotra, and Harrison, 2014; Grossman and Hopkins, 2015; Ryan, 2015).

Why do individuals resist compromise? In this manuscript, I explore how the extent to which individuals' political identities are sorted affects the value that individuals place on compromise. I show that when partisan and ideological identities overlap, citizens are less likely support legislators who compromise, with one important qualification: this effect is isolated to persons with right-, but not left-leaning identities. However, when we transition to exploring the extent to which individuals are willing to cede ground to their political opponents in order to achieve their desired ends, the textured nature of this effect disappears. Even in the absence of a consistent set of ideological values, sorted persons are less willing to broker negotiated solutions to problems (in fact, there is some evidence that those citizens with left-leaning identities are even *more* unwilling to engage in such bargaining).

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[84] December 20, 2015. *CNN's State of the Union with Jake Tapper.*
http://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2015/12/20/mcconnell-well-its-pretty-clear-from-what-hillary-clinton-said-last-night-that-she-thinks-things-with-isis-are-just-fine/

These findings highlight the curious disconnect between a commitment to abstract principles and episodic behavior demonstrated elsewhere (Sears and Citrin, 1982; Winter and Mouritzen, 2001; Ellis and Stimson, 2012; Harbridge, Malhotra, and Harrison, 2014). Simply, when push comes to shove, most people are willing to renege on their commitment to the abstract value of compromise and, instead, will directly punish the out-group party. Thus, while many Americans consent to compromise in principle, in practice, their behavior suggests a stiff resistance to bargaining with their political counterparts exists.

6.2   Compromise and its correlates

All governments must wrestle with the problem of distilling the competing preferences of its citizens into tangible policy outputs. If representatives must balance majoritarian policymaking rules with policy options that faithfully adhere to their constituency's desires, then some type of bipartisan negotiation is usually required to resolve these competing demands. Habermas (1994, pg. 5) describes the place of compromise within liberalism thusly:

> [C]ompromises make up the bulk of political processes. Under conditions of religious, or in any way cultural and societal pluralism, politically relevant goals are often selected by interests and value orientations that are by no means constitutive for the identity of the community at large.

As such, compromise embodies a practical resolution to conflict as "an agreement in which all sides sacrifice something in order to improve on the status quo from their perspective, and in which sacrifices are at least partly determined by the other side's will" (Gutmann and Thompson, 2013, pg. 10).

While some political compromises are, of course, undesirable in that they may violate a community's standards, the positive value of compromise is that it offers a meaningful political alternative to improve upon the prevailing status quo. Thus, not only does a general resistance to compromise implausibly presume that such change is uniformly undesirable,[85] but it implies that bargaining in return for concessions is

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[85] Contestation, in fact, is a vibrant component to democracy—at least as important to democratic health as "consensus" (Tilly and Tarrow, 2006; Mill, 1977).

objectionable, which ultimately privileges the status quo in a way that is incompatible with both liberal and conservative approaches to policy problems.[86] Further, resistance to compromise undermines the shared trust and respect that are needed to effectively pursue self-governance, where such respect is vital in that it 1) buoys peaceable interactions even in the face of irresolvable moral disagreement and 2) embodies the type of cooperation necessary to engage in democratic exchange (Gutmann and Thompson, 2013).[87]

If compromise is valuable for both pragmatic and ethical reasons, then why are individuals unwilling to pursue it? Consider first the relationship between values and compromise. If compromise requires citizens to default on some of their strongly-held principles to find a consensual agreement, then it makes sense that individuals would resist this type of bargaining because it ostensibly violates these core values. George H.W. Bush's aborted campaign promise to resist raising taxes in 1988, for example, was not only met by deep dismay from his supporters, but contributed to weak support during his reelection campaign. More recently, the success of the Tea Party during the 2010 midterm elections showcased how violators of party principles were dramatically punished at the polls. Simply, individuals resist reneging on their values and punish those who do.

Recent research suggests that moral values, a subset of value dispositions that are not necessarily filtered through a cost-benefit framework (Tetlock et al. 2000; Bennis, Medin, and Bartels, 2010), are particularly binding in relation to compromise. Ryan (2015) demonstrates that these attitudes fundamentally reorient how individuals approach political choices. Instead of approaching choice as utility maximizers, priming moral considerations causes individuals to instead adhere to strict rules. In turn, this reduces the likelihood that citizens prefer compromise.

A second facet of social-psychological explanations for compromise is rooted in non-cognitive aspects of information-processing. Given the ubiquity and power of

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[86] Consider a tax policy that is not ideal for large swaths of a mass public. If altering that policy benefited constituencies for both parties, yet one party refuses to compromise on even slight alterations to that policy because in so doing they either lose some measure of leverage or violate second-order intellectual preferences, both constituencies suffer as the status quo prevails.

[87] As Gutmann and Thompson (2010, footnote 25) note, framing compromise's value in terms of mutual respect helps to redress some of the criticism that a wholly "pragmatic" approach to compromise ignores the moral constraints that are imposed on the boundaries of acceptable compromise.

emotions like fear, anxiety, and hope, it is possible that these affective responses shape whether and how individuals acquiesce to mutually-beneficial (and mutually-costly) policy solutions. The relationship between fear and compromise, however, is complex. While fear related to the wellbeing of one's group may be related to a decrease in the propensity to engage in compromise (Bar-Tal, 2001), fear of personal safety is less clearly-related to the extent to which an individual will compromise (Maoz and McCauley, 2005).[88]

In contrast to these explanations, realist theories of group interactions argue that compromise is closely related to power inequalities and, by extension, threat. Drawing from research on interstate relations (Posen, 1993) and organization development (Bazerman and Neale, 1992), this approach assumes that group behavior is not so much a function of emotions, but is instead governed by the extent to which an in-group feels threatened by an out-group.[89] In this telling, negotiation breaks down when group members view mutual decision-making as a zero-sum game—or a scenario in which one side wins only when the other side loses (Thompson, 1995). Research indicates, for example, that perceptions of threat increase political intolerance towards out-groups (Marcus et al., 1995) and punitive and aggressive behaviors toward out-groups (Huddy et al., 2005), which, in turn, decreases more moderate political outcomes (Gordon and Arian, 2001).

While this framework helps explain intergroup behavior in severe ethnic conflicts, it also characterizes the nature of political exchange in American politics. Consider a recent editorial appearing in the *New York Times*, which likened Republicans' and Democrats' "zero-sum thinking" to the sectarian conflict between the two branches of Islam. "Because whether you're talking about Shiites and Sunnis—or Iranians and Saudis, Israelis and Palestinians, Turks and Kurds—a simply binary rule dominates their politics: "I am strong,

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[88] Extending the textured nature of the relationship between fear and compromise, Spanovic et al. (2010) find that the *status* of conflict moderates the effects of fear on compromise: when a conflict is ongoing, fear decreases compromise, while feelings of fearfulness during the resolution of a conflict often portend greater compromise. As Halperin, Porat, and Wohl (2013, pg. 810) write, such "collective angst has pluripotentiality—it undermines willingness to compromise in some contexts, but will facilitate it in others."

[89] The hard distinction between this approach to compromise and an emotion-based one is rooted in the longstanding differentiation between cognition and affect within social psychology. Whereas a realist perspective stylizes threat as a form of cognitive assessment, fear is instead conceptualized as a *reaction* to such perceptions of threat (Lazarus, 1991; Maoz and McCauley, 2005).

why should I compromise? I am weak, how can I compromise?...Are we all just Shiites and Sunnis now?"[90] While partisan politics in America are not wholly comparable to such sectarian conflict, recent work shows that partisan memberships are similarly binding. Citizens have difficulty in overcoming partisan biases in evaluating the desirability of public policy (Harbridge, Malhotra, and Harrison, 2014).

Taken as a whole, these are plausible explanations for why individuals might shun political compromise. However, this extant research on compromise has not yet grappled with how the ongoing sorting of the mass public has affected these orientations. Drawing explicitly on the group-based nature of party politics, I argue that as individuals' political identities align, their willingness to voice that compromise is desirable and select legislators who engage in political bargaining ought to decrease. Detailing this theoretical linkage is the task to which I now turn.

6.3   Sorting and compromise

Social identities are powerful associations that involve the incorporation of a particular group membership into an individual's self-concept. Tajfel (1981, pg. 255) describes these identities as the combination of objective group membership combined with the subjective "value and emotional significance attached to [such] membership." Driven by a need for positive distinctiveness, social identities encourage individuals to favorably prioritize in-group over out-group members in order to protect their group's status.

Political identities fit this description (Huddy, Mason, and Aaore, 2015). Not only do partisans intensely favor group members over non-group members (Mason, 2015), but partisan identification strongly biases how individuals interpret information (e.g. Bartels, 2002; Leeper, 2014; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus, 2013; Iyengar and Westwood, 2014; Davis, 2016). Much like the passionate fans who cheer their favorite team in the heat of a competition, partisans' internalized sense of partisan identity is intimately related to their group's victories and defeats; it is personal, rooted deeply within an individual's subconscious (Theodoridis, 2013).

In a similar respect, ideological or "liberal-conservative" identity also reflects these qualities. While ideology is often conceptualized in terms of individuals' policy

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[90] http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/31/opinion/win-lose-but-no-compromise.html?_r=1

preferences, a growing body of research treats liberal-conservative identification as a form of social identity (Malka and Llekes, 2010; Devine, 2015; Mason, 2016). Like partisanship, ideological identity corresponds to a group-based understanding of politics and strongly reflects affective, symbolic attachments to the liberal and conservative labels (Conover and Feldman, 1981; Zschirnt, 2011). Simply, self-identification as an ideologue constitutes a social identity insofar as an individual's self-perception as an ideologue is "experienced as a point of similarity with other in-group members and as a point of collective difference with out-group members" (Malka and Llekes, 2010, p. 160).

Given that the mere categorization of oneself as a group-member generates intergroup prejudice that reshapes economic exchange (Tajfel, 1970), political compromise, which hinges at least minimally on some degree of material, psychological, or status loss, ought to be sensitive to the strength of the underlying identities that structure intergroup relations. But while research has examined the relationship between compromise and partisanship (Harbridge, Malhotra, and Harrison, 2014), political identities (partisanship, ideological identification) do not exist independent of each other. What happens to individuals' attitudes toward compromise, then, when these identities converge? That is to say, how does *sorting* between partisanship and ideological identification affect citizens' willingness to compromise?

6.3.1 Behavioral consequences of sorting

Most individuals possess multiple group identities, which variously affect a range of assessments and behaviors (Deaux, 1996; Brewer and Pierce, 2005). For example, individuals may evaluate out-group members on the basis of one dominant membership (Macrae, Bodenhausen, and Milne, 1995), evaluate individuals as a function of some additive combination of their memberships (Brown and Turner, 1979), or even evaluate others based on a "compound category with emergent properties that are not predicted from the contributing categories separately" (Roccas and Brewer, 2002, pg. 88). Of the different permutations that an individual's identities may take when combined, this latter compound category—what Roccas and Brewer term "intersected identities"—represents an arrangement of social identities where an individual simultaneously self-categorizes with more than one social identity, yet maintains a single supraordinate sense of an in-group / out-group distinction based on the intersection of those constituent identities.

Prior work on partisan-ideological sorting, or the overlap between partisan and ideological identities, indicates that the convergence of these group memberships most clearly reflects intersected social identities in that the in-group / out-group distinctions that characterize each *individual* identity are magnified when they are *combined*. For example, Mason (2015, 2016) finds that greater overlap between political identities is responsible for increased forms of social polarization, where strongly sorted individuals are more likely to possess affective bias toward out-group members. Elsewhere, Davis and Mason (2015) show that these biases have pervasive behavioral ramifications: as individuals become more sorted over time, they are less likely to support candidates of opposing parties (i.e. split their ticket).

If a lone social identity is sufficient to accentuate out-group memberships, then the combinatory nature of identity sorting ought to enhance biases toward out-group members. In the context of bargaining, which requires a willingness to release psychological or material group resources, such sorting should effectively narrow one's in-group while simultaneously enlarging the out-group—in effect, generating behavioral rigidity and a disregard for actions that would lead to a potential loss of material or social status. Specifically, by amplifying the importance and salience of one's interlinked group memberships, such sorting ought to decrease an individual's preference for representatives that will barter with out-group members.

> H1: As the correspondence between an individual's partisan and ideological identities increases, their willingness to compromise should decrease.

6.3.2   Differential effects?

The argument offered in the previous section indicates that sorting, in general, should be sufficient to reduce individuals' propensity to compromise. Yet, based on the underlying nature of particular political attachments, it may be the case that the effects of sorting are contingent upon the groups with which individuals identify. Consider the different motivations and compositional qualities of the Republican and Democratic Parties. The Republican Party has been described as unitary and hierarchical, where purity, deference, and loyalty to the party are prioritized and members are bound together by common ideological principles. In contrast, the Democratic Party is both pluralistic and polycentric,

comprised of a coalition of constituencies with varying social, economic, and political demands (Freeman, 1986). Thus, while "Republicans face an enduring internal tension between adherence to doctrine and the inevitable concession or failures inherent in governing—a conflict that is exacerbated by the presence of an influential cadre of movement leaders devoted to publicly policing ideological orthodoxy," Democrats, alternatively, "lack a powerful internal movement designed to impose ideological discipline on elected officials, which gives Democratic officeholders more freedom to maneuver pragmatically…" (Grossman and Hopkins, 2015, pg. 120).

These characteristics are important because they have produced sharply divergent approaches to policymaking. Whereas both parties have objectively polarized (e.g. McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, 2006), which ought to generally reduce baseline rates of legislative cooperation for all elected officials, the Republican Party has especially teetered toward "near-automatic obstruction of initiatives proposed by the opposition" (Grossman and Hopkins, 2015, pg. 12). These are significant and salient cues, or informational signals that flow from elites to the public that might structure how members of these different groups approach compromise.

These institutional differences, however, do not exist in a vacuum. In fact, these divergent organizational approaches dovetail with other less political—though perhaps more fundamental—differences in how ideologues view reality. While conservatives and liberals possess distinct approaches to questions of morality (e.g. Haidt, 2009), Hibbing, Smith and Alford (2014) contend that the central organizational principle that underscores differences in everything from artistic tastes to the psychological desire for closure and from sensitivity to disgust to information-seeking behaviors is conservatives' physiological and psychological tendency toward negativity. Specifically, "compared with liberals, conservatives tend to register greater physiological responses to such stimuli and also to devote more psychological resources to them" (297). If emotional and cognitive rigidity are congenital features of conservative identification, then the combination of conservatism with Republicanism, a party affiliation marked by a recent, yet distinct resistance to political negotiation, may moderate the effect of sorting on compromise. Thus, I expect that the negative effect of sorting on compromise ought to be particularly strong for those persons with right-leaning identities.

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H2: Higher levels of sorting among those with right-leaning identities should reduce a preference for compromise more than those with left-leaning ones.

6.4 Data

To test these hypotheses, I draw on two datasets: the 2012 American National Election Studies' Evaluations of Government survey (ANES EoG) and the Pew Research Center's 2014 Political Polarization and Typology survey (Pew PPT).

6.4.1 Operationalizing compromise

There are a variety of ways one might think about individuals' preferences toward compromise. One productive way to conceptualize these orientations is to distinguish between attitudes about compromise as a "normative" or "social" good, what we might term preferences toward *compromise in principle*, and attitudes toward the distribution or allocation of resources relating to actual political bargaining, what I frame as *compromise in practice*.

I begin with the concept of compromise in principle, or the value that respondents assign to the importance of political compromise. Appearing on the ANES EoG, this question taps whether individuals are willing to consent to the idea that compromise is a valuable trait for elected officials to exhibit. Specifically, do respondents prefer a leader who sticks to their principles regardless of outcomes or someone who will compromise to change the status quo? Responses to this question are coded 0 for "wants leader who sticks to principles" and 1 for "wants leader who compromises."

In contrast to valuing compromise in principle, one practical way of thinking about compromise is to consider how much deference any one side should receive in a policy debate. Because successful policymaking often requires leveraging certain resources or favors in order to receive desirable concessions, we can assess the propensity of individuals to engage in practical instances of compromise by examining respondents' attitudes toward their willingness to cede ground to their opponents. Specifically, the Pew PPT survey asks individuals what the distribution of sacrifice should look like when political leaders engage in policymaking: "When Barack Obama and Republican leaders differ over the most important issues facing the country, where should things end up?" Responses to this item range from 0, "Barack Obama gets all demands" to 100 "Republicans get all demands."

The value 50, then, represents an equal distribution of the demands that both "sides" get during negotiations.

I create a metric that reflects orientations toward practical instances of compromise by folding responses on the above variable at the value "50"." Values on this new variable range from 0, or a preference for "pure compromise" where both sides yield equally, to 50, or a preference for uncompromising politics where one side receives all demands. As individuals transition from 0 to 50, the extent to which they believe that one side should receive total deference in the policymaking process increases. Thus, larger values can be interpreted by an aversion to an even trade or a general resistance to compromise.

6.4.2 Identity sorting

Prior research operationalizes *identity sorting* by measuring the overlap between ideological and partisan identification and then multiplying the resulting value by the strength of those identities (Mason, 2015; Davis and Dunaway, 2016). Liberal-conservative and partisan identification both range from left- (1) to right-leaning orientations (7). By subtracting and taking the absolute value of one self-placement (ideology) from the other (partisanship), we can derive a measure of overlap where lower values convey perfect overlap and high values significant discordance between identities. To make better sense of this item, the overlap between identities is then reverse-coded so that larger (smaller) values represent greater (less) overlap. To this score I add the value (1) and then multiply it by folded measures of partisan and liberal-conservative strength. The final variable is then rescaled to range from 0, "low overlap, weak (cross-cutting) identities," to 1, "perfect overlap, strong identities."

6.4.3 Control variables

There are a number of covariates that might explain individuals' orientations toward compromise for which we ought to account. One way of thinking about a resistance to compromise includes the extent to which individuals possess a coherent worldview. When it was first released to the general public, the Pew PPT survey received notable attention in the popular press for a series of graphics that showed how the mass public's values orientations had become more consistent over time. Information on ten issues were collected, including respondents opinions on government regulation, waste, how

government cares for the poor and needy, affirmative action, corporate profits, environmental policy, the size of the military, and same-sex marriage. Using these items, I construct a measure of *partisan value-consistency*, wherein individuals receive a value of 1 on a given item if their expressed opinion matches their party's and 0 otherwise.[91] These items are then averaged into an additive index whose values range from 0, or "no values that match party," to 1 "all values match party." Because values on this variable can take an extremely wide range of theoretical values, this variable is rescaled into quartiles, such that value-consistency increases with each quartile, which take the values 1-4.[92]

A number of additional characteristics may also shape compromise. First, individuals with high levels of *political knowledge* may be more likely to understand that politics often requires compromise to achieve one's ends. In the ANES EoG survey, political knowledge comprises an additive index of correctly identifying the Prime Minister of England, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the area in which the US government spends the least amount of money. In the Pew PPT survey, a political knowledge index accounts for correctly identifying which party enjoys House and Senate majorities, as well as which party prefers tax increases. The resulting indices are coded consistently such that they range from 0, "no correct answers," to 1, "correctly answers all knowledge items."

Similar to the relationship between political knowledge and compromise, we might expect *news consumption* and *political interest* to be related to compromise insofar as those persons who pay greater attention to political events may be more likely to perceive that compromise is a social good. The former item is simply the number of days that a respondent watches or reads the news, ranging from 1 to 7, while the latter variable ranges from 0, "not very interested," to 1, "very interested."

A recent study of compromise also demonstrates its close relationship with *moral values*. Ryan (2015) shows how preferences grounded in strong moral convictions are much less malleable when it comes to compromising. In the ANES EoG survey, respondents are asked to what degree their attitudes on their self-professed most important

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[91] In effect, this is more or less a stylization of sorting among values / attitudes.
[92] This is done because the variable, while more or less continuous, is not really "ordinal." However, this coding scheme is just as easily reworked into "deciles," which do not affect the results derived from the analyses below.

issue is rooted in moral values. Responses range from 1 "not at all," to 5, "a great deal." Related to these values, I also control, where possible, for individuals' religious identities. Individuals who consider themselves *Evangelicals* are coded 1 and otherwise 0. So, too, are those who identify as *religiously secular* or *religious liberal.*

Finally, I control for a number of standard demographic covariates. Respondents who identify as *white* or *black* are coded 1 and otherwise 0. *Age* ranges from a minimum value of 17 to 97 years old. *Education* is coded somewhat differently across surveys, but values on this item are always recoded to rage from 0, "lowest category of educational attainment," to 1, "highest completed degree."

6.5   Results

The models presented in Table 6.1 depict the relationship between sorting and an individual's propensity to prefer an elected official who either sticks with their principles or compromises to achieve their goals. I find that, for both referents (legislator, president), analysis of the full sample does not produce a significant coefficient estimate for identity sorting. Instead, the effect of sorting on the likelihood that an individual will value elected officials who compromise is isolated to those persons with right-leaning identities.[93] Translating the coefficient estimate for sorting from a log-odds ratio to a predicted value, the transition from minimum to maximum values of sorting results in roughly a 20 percentage point reduction in the probability that a respondent prefers compromise to sticking to one's principles. Although the average person is likely to prefer representatives who compromise rather than stick to their principles (y = 60%), greater convergence between right-leaning identities confers that, on balance, the highly sorted conservative-Republican will prefer elected representatives who do *not* compromise.

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[93] Splitting the sample into these two groups makes immediate comparisons easier. However, models that include an interaction term between group type and sorting are available in the appendix. These analyses indicate that these differences are persist at the conventional thresholds of statistical significance.

Table 6.1. The effect of sorting on preference for elected officials who compromise

	Would you prefer a ___ who sticks to his or her principles no matter what, or who compromises to get things done?			
	Representative in U.S. Congress		U.S. President	
	Left	Right	Left	Right
Sorting	0.85	-0.80*	0.22	-0.79*
	(0.55)	(0.42)	(0.48)	(0.42)
Political knowledge	1.06*	-0.01	0.73*	0.39
	(0.51)	(0.41)	(0.45)	(0.41)
News consumption	0.06	0.12**	0.02	0.10*
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Education	0.58**	0.19	0.36*	0.12
	(0.15)	(0.12)	(0.14)	(0.12)
Religious ID: Evangelical	0.93	-1.21**	0.35	-1.15**
	(0.57)	(0.30)	(0.49)	(0.29)
Religious ID: Secular	0.69	0.30	0.00	-0.99
	(1.15)	(1.64)	(0.00)	(1.52)
Religious ID: Liberal	-0.35	3.61**	-0.50	0.77
	(0.45)	(1.23)	(0.42)	(1.29)
Moral values	-0.14	-0.22**	-0.01	-0.17*
	(0.10)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.08)
Tea Party Member	0.00	-0.12	0.46	-0.42
	(0.00)	(0.37)	(1.60)	(0.37)
White	0.84*	0.36	1.06**	0.64
	(0.36)	(0.38)	(0.32)	(0.38)
Black	0.99	0.00	1.15*	0.00
	(0.51)	(0.00)	(0.46)	(0.00)
Male	0.02	-0.14	0.21	-0.09
	(0.29)	(0.23)	(0.26)	(0.23)
Constant	-1.83**	0.23	-1.45*	-0.03
	(0.62)	(0.59)	(0.56)	(0.59)
N	548	535	543	535

Source: 2012 ANES Evaluations of Government Survey
Notes: Coefficient estimates convey log-odds ratios; standard errors in parentheses. *$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$

Curiously, the split-models also indicate that the effects of certain control variables contrast across those persons with left- and right-leaning identities. Respondents who belong to left-leaning groups with higher levels of political knowledge and education are 17 and 28 percentage points more likely to value compromise, while evangelicals belonging to right-leaning groups are about 11 points more likely to prefer resolute and uncompromising elected officials. For those respondents that strongly link their moral values to issues of personal import, the likelihood of valuing an elected official who will compromise decreases modestly by about 5 percentage points.

The evidence presented in these analyses indicates that identity sorting exerts a textured effect on individuals' orientations toward compromise as a social good.[94] However, when it comes to the practical business of politics—that is, when individuals are actually required to acknowledge the extent to which they are willing to forego resources to achieve their preferred political goals—do we observe that the contours of this effect persist? In effect, no.

Turning to the analyses presented in Table 6.2, I explore a unique question within the Pew PPT survey that asks individuals just how much they think different groups should compromise when bargaining. By transforming values on this item so that low values (0) reflect that neither side should receive a disproportionate amount of demands when working toward solutions to important policy issues and high values (50) a preference for one side to receive all of their demands, we are left with a variable that conveys the amount of group-bias in policymaking preferences. Beginning first with the full sample, we see that identity sorting is positively related to group biases. As individuals' partisan and ideological identities converge, they are more likely to believe that their in-group should receive more of its demands.

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[94] In the Appendix, I provide a supplementary analysis of a sample collected from Amazon's mTurk worker pool that controls for additional covariates like out-party fear, out-party affect, need for cognition, and personality traits associated with orientations toward compromise. The results are robust: even controlling for these additional explanations, sorting exerts a strong effect on orientations toward compromise.

Table 6.2. Who gets what? Compromise in practice

	Full sample	Left	Right	Full sample
Sorting	16.84**	23.42**	9.96**	18.31**
	(2.82)	(3.72)	(3.50)	(7.02)
Values (quartiles)	0.50	0.04	0.28	0.63
	(0.57)	(0.84)	(0.86)	(0.78)
Sorting x values	-----	-----	-----	-0.53
				(2.26)
Political interest	3.24	4.98	-0.92	3.26
	(2.02)	(3.09)	(3.30)	(2.01)
Knowledge	1.86	-0.47	4.17	1.88
	(2.25)	(3.44)	(3.59)	(2.25)
Age	-1.79	3.84	-11.96*	-1.82
	(2.83)	(3.91)	(4.97)	(2.83)
Education	-1.10	-1.26	-1.18	-1.09
	(2.39)	(3.41)	(3.90)	(2.39)
Black	2.22	2.61	-9.24	2.17
	(2.49)	(2.86)	(5.35)	(2.49)
White	-2.63	-1.83	0.05	-2.64
	(1.76)	(2.32)	(2.83)	(1.76)
Income	-1.86	-0.06	-2.70	-1.89
	(2.01)	(2.82)	(3.09)	(2.01)
Male	0.58	-0.55	3.41*	0.57
	(1.07)	(1.60)	(1.48)	(1.07)
Constant	6.82**	4.82	10.75*	6.52*
	(2.49)	(3.46)	(4.23)	(2.73)
R2	0.09	0.12	0.08	0.09
N	1,167	617	447	1,167

Source: 2014 Pew Polarization survey
Notes: Robust standard errors presented in parentheses; *p<0.05, **p<0.01

When Barack Obama and Republican leaders differ over the most important issues facing the country, where should things end up?
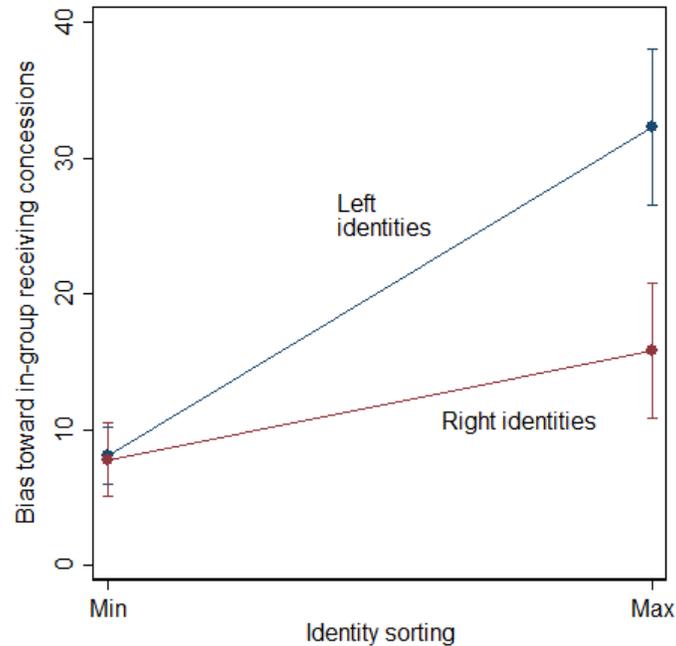
Source: 2014 Pew Polarization survey

Notes: Dependent variable ranges from 0, which conveys neutral responses or "a point of compromise," to 50, which conveys that respondent believes that their side should "get everything they want." (2) Estimates derived from interaction model available in Appendix.

Figure 6.1. The effects of sorting on compromise by type of identity

However, while we might expect those persons with right-leaning identities to possess greater in-group biases than those with left-leaning identities, the data reveal precisely the opposite pattern. As the coefficients for the split-samples indicate, persons with left-leaning identities are more likely to believe that their group should get all of its demands relative those persons with right-leaning identities. Moreover, the difference is statistically significant, as Figure 6.1 indicates. Transitioning from unsorted to sorted identities, respondents' with left-leaning identities levels of group-bias are more than 50 percent larger than those persons with right-leaning ones.[95]

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[95] Since the split-sample presentation of these coefficients does not provide for a strict empirical test of the difference between estimates, the projections illustrated in Figure 6.1

How do we square this evidence with the results that indicate that sorting among those belonging to the left has no effect on abstract commitments to compromise? In light of this evidence, does the finding presented in Figure 6.1 mean that citizens who belong to left-leaning groups are disingenuous about their "true" orientations regarding compromise? Could it be that in spite of a generalized commitment to compromise in principle these citizens are secretly harboring nefarious attitudes toward working with the other political team?

Not necessarily. It could be the case that there are social desirability or self-moderation pressures at play, where those with left-leaning identities are conforming to group-centric pressures of appearing like good, open-minded, and democratic citizens. Alternatively, perhaps people with left-leaning identities do truly value compromise in the abstract more than their peers with right-leaning identities, but, given party-based cues stemming from the refusal of Congressional Republicans to work with President Obama on various issues ranging from the federal budget to the Affordable Care Act, those among the left are simply less willing to engage in balanced policy arrangements that put them at a disadvantage (see: Grossman and Hopkins [2015] for an expanded discussion of this point).

The differential nature of this effect aside, the ubiquitous tendency to see one's group "win" helps explain the general shape of this effect. Given the pressures stemming from the perceived potential damages related to compromise—i.e. some type of loss function that operates using the logic "if you give someone an inch, then they'll take it a mile"—a reluctance to remain even mildly deferential to one's opponents is not irrational. In the end, although there is some evidence of a stronger commitment to compromise in principle by members of left-leaning groups, the convergence of political identities produces a general reluctance to act in ways that are ultimately contrary to the best material and psychological interests of one's group.

To test whether the relationship between sorting and compromise is further textured by the extent to which individuals profess coherent preferences, I interact sorting with the measure of values-consistency. This interaction effect is analyzed in the fourth column in Table 2. As the coefficient estimate for this interaction indicates, the effect of

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are drawn from an interaction term between partisan identification and sorting, available in the Appendix.

sorting does not vary across different levels of value-consistency (b = -0.53, SE = 2.26). Figure 6.2 helps ease the interpretation of this effect, portraying minimum and maximum levels of sorting across quartiles of values consistency.[96]

As the large confidence bands indicate, the point estimates overlap considerably and are indistinguishable from each other. In other words, individuals who have well-sorted identities and possess highly-consistent values orientations are no more or less likely to cede resources to their political opponents than those persons with overlapping political identities *who possess a weak grasp of how political values cohere with those identities*. Perhaps this is unremarkable given Converse's (1964) finding that individuals utilize *group cues* to navigate the political landscape, but the fact that such "baseless" sorting exerts a a similar effect on compromise relative the highly sophisticated helps explain the general erosion in political debate. Simply put, even if citizens are unable to think about politics in a sophisticated manner (i.e. most of the mass public), sorting enhances the distinctions between in- and out-groups, which, by extension, significantly reduces the likelihood of intergroup cooperation (i.e. compromise).

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[96] Supplementary analysis indicates that this transforming values consistency from the original range of values to quartiles does little to change the substantive shape of this non-significant effect. Simply put, as individuals transition from low to high values on sorting, the marginal effect of sorting on compromise does not vary as a function of value consistency.

When Barack Obama and Republican leaders differ over the most important issues facing the country, where should things end up?
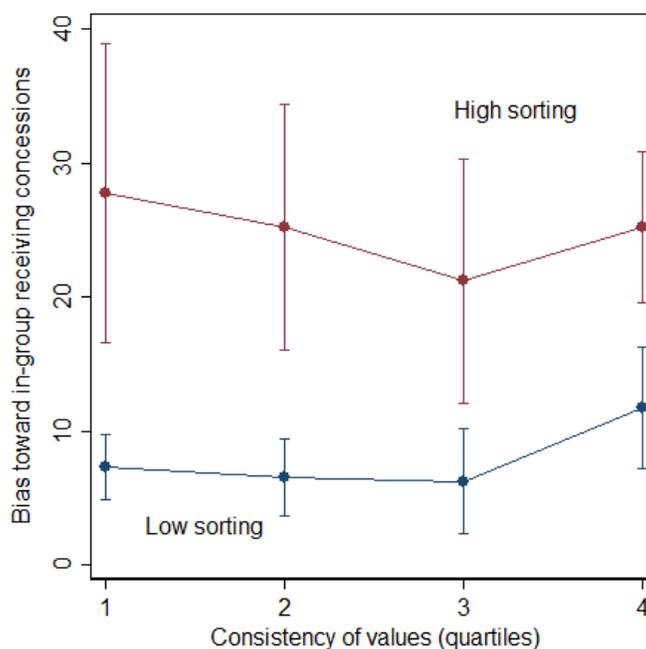
Figure 6.2. The effect of sorting on compromise, contingent on value consistency

6.6   Summary and conclusion

Referring to his Republican counterparts, Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) once argued that "…with a bully, you cannot let them slap you around. Because if they slap you around today, they slap you 5 or 6 times tomorrow." This type of attitude premises that interparty policymaking requires a type of firm irresoluteness; that, in the face of undesirable or suboptimal outcomes, one ought to fight tooth and nail to prevent the passage of undesirable policy, embodying an unwillingness to pursue what Bismarck famously termed "the next best" solution. This strategy has been the defining feature of Congress over the last decade (Binder, 2014), and, with the transition to a unified executive and legislature in

2017, the status of interparty cooperation continues to look bleak. "The pessimistic scenario," argued one panelist in a preelection forum, "is scorched earth from day one."[97]

Elites' tendencies to avoid compromise are not wholly divorced from the practical preferences of the American mass public—preferences which are exacerbated by the ongoing sorting of citizens' political identities. For those among the right, such sorting drastically reduces commitments to compromise as a normative good.[98] And, while Democrats fare slightly better in the positivity of their commitment to the ideal of compromise, in practice, the convergence between their partisan and ideological identities significantly reduces their willingness to cede resources to their political opponents. When push-comes-to-shove, group members with overlapping identities are *all* more likely to eschew even distributions of deference in the bargaining process.

This disconnect between a commitment to compromise in principle and a general resistance to compromise in practice can be explained by some of the limitations to rationality that economists and psychologists observe. Beginning with the notion that the incentive, much less capacity, to obtain information is limited, people are generally poor at deciphering the implications or calculating the consequences of their choices. Combined with the finding that individuals do not neatly rank their goals (Winter and Mouritzen, 2001) and tend toward ambivalence (e.g. Zaller, 1992), a person faced with making a generalized judgment about the value of compromise as a social good is likely to divorce the meaning of this abstract democratic value from the implications of what compromise means in practice.

Perhaps most troubling, however, is that sorting exerts this effect on compromise independent of respondent sophistication—cross-pressures, or discordant values that ought

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[97] The remarks came from a panel hosted by the Institute of International Finance in Washington, D.C. (see: www.marketwatch.com/story/scorched-earth-might-be-all-thats-left-in-washington-after-this-election-2016-10-08).

[98] In part, this finding can be explained by virtue of Republicans' highly confrontational approach to governance that maximizes political conflict between Democrats and the GOP's tendency to expunge moderates and party apostates. Yet there are also practical, philosophical reasons for why those among the "right" might be less likely to acquiesce to compromise than those on the "left." If the underlying tension between these groups is related to the role of the state, then any individual compromise means inevitably contributing to the expansion of the state. In that case, it may be highly rational for those among the right to resist such compromise if compromise inevitably leads to expansion.

to destabilize goal-directed behaviors (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, 1954), have virtually no effect on the relationship between identity convergence and orientations towar practical instances of compromise. This does not bode well for the future of inter-party exchange. Given the increase in sorting over time (Levendusky, 2009; Davis and Dunaway, 2016), it is highly unlikely that Americans will come together to broker bipartisan solutions to the major issues of the day. Future research should continue to probe the nature of these attitudes and under what conditions even the highly-sorted are willing to pursue policy that benefits, at minimum, pluralities of Americans.

The notion that elections are decided by voters carefully weighing competing candidates' stands on major issues reflects a strong faith in American political culture that citizens can control their government from the voting booth. We call it the "folk theory" of democracy…But that ideal makes sense, descriptively and normatively, only if citizens understand politics in terms of issues and ideologies and use their votes to convey clear policy signals that then determine the course of public policy.

Achen and Bartels, *The New York Times*[99]

7.1   Introduction

Traditional models of elections presume that citizens' preferences and candidates' platforms can be arrayed in common ideological space (Downs, 1957). Bafumi and Herron (2010, p. 521), write "If we conceptualize legislators as having ideal points that drive their roll call voting choices, then we should think similarly about voters…[these] ideal points can be compared in a proximate sense." As it relates to the vote choice, this logic demands that: 1) As candidates take liberal or conservative stances, voters presumably translate those messages into ideological space, which, 2) they navigate using some sort of utility maximization function whereby they select candidates according to the benefits they derive from their choice.

Yet, the manner in which prospective voters conceptualize their preferences within ideological space, much less how they understand where candidates fit within this unidimensional portrayal of politics, is a matter of some debate (e.g. Lewis and King, 1999). At their core, these questions trouble the selection rules that voters allegedly use in translating their ideological preferences into vote choice, the subject of enduring debate between scholars advocating proximity (e.g. Downs, 1957; Grofman, 2004) and directional theories of voting (e.g. Rabinowitz and Macdonald, 1989). While a growing body of research attempts to resolve these seemingly incompatible approaches to candidate selection (e.g. Tomz and Van Houweling, 2008; Claassen, 2009), these competing theories share an important theoretical and, by extension, empirical foundation in that this research uniformly relies on citizens' evaluations of both their own and candidates' *policy*

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[99] https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/23/opinion/campaign-stops/do-sanders-supporters-favor-his-policies.html

preferences—thereby effectively divorcing the role of symbolic ideology from candidate selection.[100]

In this chapter, I revisit the spatial logic of vote choice to explore 1) how identity-based sorting affects prospective voters' impression of shared ideological proximity with political candidates, and 2) how this sorting, in turn, affects individuals' electoral choices vis-à-vis issue-based proximity. I uncover little evidence that sorting biases how individuals think about candidate positioning within ideological space. However, I find that sorting exerts a curious effect on choice: while high levels of overlap between political identities increases the likelihood that individuals will choose the candidate that they perceive best resembles their ideological prototype, sorting actually *decreases* the likelihood that individuals will select the candidate whose objective ideological character is closest to their own policy preferences. In effect, then, identity sorting pushes voters to the ideological "extremes," even when the distribution of their policy preferences reveals that they are better matched to more "moderate" candidates.

Applying these insights to real instances of vote choice, I use the 2008 ANES Time-Series survey to test whether policy proximity with an in-party candidate or sorting are stronger predictors of casting an in-party vote for president. I show that, while policy proximity shapes partisan defection, even modest levels of identity-based sorting are sufficient to motivate group-conforming behavior. In other words, cross-pressures among one's political identities generate greater instability in behavior than a poorly-matched system of attitudes.

In part, these findings not only offer insight into why sorted voters are less likely to split their ballots between candidates of opposing parties (e.g. Davis and Mason, 2016), but help resolve some of the tension in the debate over whether voters utilize directional or proximity selection criteria. Simply put, identity sorting biases an individual's understanding of ideological space in such a way that a more extreme candidate is favored

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[100] A recent working paper by Tausanovitch and Warshaw (n.d.) is emblematic of this point: the authors show that symbolic ideology more or less tracks with mean ideal points generated from policy positions. Yet, whether or not symbolic ideology functions in a predictive manner similar to policy-based ideology is something of an open question. Given the evidence presented in previous chapters that shows these constructs exert differentiated behavior, it is reasonable to question their role vis-à-vis selection rules.

over other, more issue-proximate candidates, shifting citizens from proximity to directional voters—effectively decoupling policy considerations from the vote choice. In turn, sorted voters may contribute to polarized legislative politics: while the average citizen often possesses a mixture of countervailing views, identity sorting pushes potential voters to act in ways that run counter to the heterogeneity (and even moderation) that characterizes those persons' attitudes. In this way, the vote choice of highly-sorted voters satisfies their strong emotional ties to their political groups by casting votes for consistent ideologues.

7.2   Preferences and evaluations within spatial politics

The spatial theory of elections begins with the premise that candidates' policy positions and voters' policy preferences can be ordered within a common, unidimensional left-right continuum (Downs, 1957). Consider, for the purpose of illustration, the matter of income taxes. When conceptualizing how individuals approach this issue, it is common to dichotomize the responses to tax policy into whether individuals believe that increasing taxes on certain categories of income is an appropriate method of raising government funds—what is traditionally considered a "liberal" approach—or whether increasing such taxes is an objectionable action—what is commonly termed a "conservative" approach. Thus, we can measure the degree to which an individual is "liberal" or "conservative" on this issue (and many others) by providing a survey item that juxtaposes these two approaches within a numbered, but bounded continuum.

The prevailing logic that underscores most models of vote choice assumes that the mathematical computation of scores assigned to a given set of many policy positions can be arrayed within this liberal-conservative axis for both candidates and voters (e.g. Rabinowitz and Macdonald, 1989; Rogowski, 2014; Tausanovitch and Warshaw, 2014). By summing and averaging an individual's preferences together, the resulting value equates to their "ideal point"—or the placement within this dimensional space that reflects the distilled character of their indexed preferences.[101] In turn, how individuals select a

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[101] There are at least two issues with this approach, one of which I will discuss at length below (whether or not individuals' latent preferences are empirically "unidimensional") and the other which I will discuss here. Problematically, as recent research shows, computational indexing of responses treats a person with strong countervailing preferences as a moderate. This approach may not be ideal insofar as this person is not moderate in the

candidate is related to the ordering of candidates within this space in relation to the prospective voter's own ideal point. Two explanations for the subsequent vote decision rely on different utility maximization functions that might be applied by voters: proximity and directional selection rules.[102]

According to the proximity model of choice, prospective voters ought to prefer candidates that are nearest their own placement within this left-right policy space. As candidates deviate from the voter's ideal point, the likelihood that that candidate will pursue policy that reflects an individual's preferences decreases, thereby rendering that candidate less desirable. Thus, the candidate that is closest to an individual's preferences ought to receive that person's vote (Hinich and Enelow, 1984).

In contrast to this approach, the directional model of voting simplifies the logic of selection by discretizing the choices involved into "sides." Instead of locational proximity governing choice, prospective voters prefer candidates that take strong positions in the general direction of their preferences because these candidates are both more reliable and committed to the voter's political cause or side. Thus, ideological extremity in a candidate maximizes the prospective voter's utility (Rabinowitz and Macdonald, 1989). Accordingly, voters should shun more moderate candidates and prefer, instead, extreme ones who belong to the voter's "team."

The common thread linking both of these approaches is that prospective voters are not only required to possess principled attitudes that translate into valid self-placements, but that prospective voters understand and evaluate information about candidates in

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technical understanding of moderate-as-neutral (Broockman, 2016). As such, the prevailing stylization of ideal points can throw off some of the predictions of models that assume this person derives more utility from a pure moderate than a candidate that supports the more important of the two extreme positions that the individual holds. In that case, the individual might derive more utility by prioritizing one extreme issue over the other and casting a vote for a candidate that will at least pursue that preference, as opposed to a moderate candidate that will support neither extreme opinion. As Ahler and Brookman (unpublished manuscript, pg. 4) note, citizens are not only "less likely to support moderate policies than politicians," but "[c]itizens also do not reliably prefer politicians who support moderate policies."

[102] A third notable selection criteria includes discounting, where "voters discount campaign pledges and judge each candidate based on the policies they expect the government to adopt if the candidate wins office (Tomz and Van Houweling, 2008, pg. 303).

uniform ways.[103] While the first requirement is difficult but perhaps not unrealistic (e.g. Zaller and Feldman, 1992),[104] the second one is perhaps more problematic in that perceptions of political actors are inevitably tinged with affect related to group memberships.[105] These assumptions present the following problem: if survey respondents are not supplied with continua that *prima facie* place candidates within policy space—informational conditions that exhibit a troubling lack of external validity—then how do individuals evaluate and, ultimately, select political candidates when they are provided the type of simple policy information that is often transmitted in political campaigns advertisements?[106] Do their group memberships bias their concomitant candidate evaluations and, in turn, shape the proximity-based "fit" of their selections?

7.3   How identity sorting shapes evaluations and choice

A growing body of research indicates that individuals are not agnostic information processors. Recent work shows that group memberships bias information processing (Nyhan and Reifler, 2010), perceptions of social groups (Alher and Sood, 2016), copartisan extremity (Ahler, 2014), and party placements (Chapter 4). As such, if citizens do not accurately, or, for that matter, reliably perceive where candidates fit within ideological space, then these tendencies ought to have consequences for conclusions drawn about the selection rules that prospective voters use to choose candidates.

This expectation dovetails with a more general disconnect within the spatial work on political choice insofar as—while scholars denote that there are sincere differences between policy- and identity-based ideology (Malka and Llekes, 2010; Ellis and Stimson,

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[103] A tertiary concern to which I will return to later involves the linkage between policy (or "operational," in the parlance of Ellis and Stimson, [2012]) and symbolic space.

[104] However, it is worth noting that the requirement that these attitudes, in turn, can be transposed into one-dimensional policy space is a condition that is often unmet (Feldman and Johnston, 2014; Lupton, Myers, and Thornton, 2015),

[105] Indeed Lewis and King (1999, pg. 22, emphasis mine) note that "the contributors to the literature on directional versus proximity voting are fighing over two central political science issues: our understanding of a basic feature of the political world—how voters make decisions—and a prominat aspect of our data collection strategies—*how randomly chosen respondents answer imprescisely worded survey questions*."

[106] At its core, this question regards how individuals both understand the relationship between policy-based messaging and the liberal-conservative space and, in turn, how they weight or translate that information into actionable decisional criteria. Studies 1 and 2 attempt to flesh out this distinction.

2012)—these differences have not been fully grappled with in the stylization of electoral choice. For instance, do perceptions regarding *policy-based* fit determine vote choice? Or is it something about liberal-conservative *identity* and, by extension, the extent to which that identity conforms to partisanship that pushes or drives how individuals resolve the tension of choosing between political candidates? Put another way, are individuals rational economizers of instrumental preferences or do they experience candidate choice as a social expression of their preferences?

In a recent working paper, Ahler and Broockman (n.d.) find that the relationship between policy information and candidate preference is nuanced. If citizens are a mixed-bag of countervailing preferences, they reason, then surely their candidate preferences ought to follow suit. In point of fact, the opposite seems to be true: while these prospective voters are computationally-moderate in the sense that the combination of their issue preferences offsets the directionality of their policy attitudes, these citizens actually prefer candidates that are, on balance, extreme. Why? Their answer to this disconnect seems to be related to how individuals connect individual policy preferences to candidates' policy stances. According to their argument, these computationally-moderate voters may actually prefer candidates who match a subset of their policy preferences that are otherwise extreme. In that case, proximity-based logic mis-estimates how those voters approach their choices.[107]

Consider, too, the research on "correct" voting (Lau and Redlawsk, 1997). This research is a variation on proximity voting insofar as it computes a matrix of an individual's preferences and beliefs to establish their ideal political profile and contrasts it with a number of candidates in a laboratory conceit. If an individual selects the candidate who best approximates their own preferences, then the voter is assumed to have selected correctly.

Absent from much of this discussion, however, is an explicit role for identity, much less the *convergence* between political identities. I expect that accounting for the integration of symbolic identities ought to affect the calculus of electoral choice, and, in

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[107] There is also the dimension of issue "importance." It may be the case, for example, that ideal points hold less relevance for the vote choice vis-à-vis the importance of particular issues. Consider the one-issue abortion voter who reliably casts a vote for a pro-life candidates, other policy-preferences notwithstanding.

particular, explain why voters may eschew issue-proximate candidates in favor of more "extreme" ones. Given that sorting narrows in-group and expands out-group boundaries, individuals who are highly-sorted may engage in a biased sense of who "best" represents their interests. In a sense, the highly sorted voter may discount proximity-based *policy* considerations and instead vote in ways that correspond to the strength of their *identities*. As such, greater sorting ought not only bias "correct" voting, if we conceive that "best" equates to most issue-proximate, but may generate a preference for more ideologically-extreme candidates—in effect, decoupling policy fit from representative preferences. Simply put, given recent findings that highlight the expressive nature of partisanship (Huddy, Mason, and Aaroe, 2015), I expect that sorting—independent policy-based proximity—should structure electoral choice.

7.4   Study 1: Candidates, policy ideal points, and sorting

To test explore the relationship among sorting, the fit between citizens' and candidates' policy preferences, and vote choice, I developed and implemented a survey-based instrument that captures how people connect explicit policy information to candidate choice. This pilot study was fielded at a large public university in the Southern United States during the spring of 2016. The survey sample consists of students who were awarded nominal extra credit for their participation, and is younger, whiter, more affluent, and more educated relative the general population (as is customary with such convenience samples). Representativeness notwithstanding, psychology research has traditionally utilized similar nonprobability samples to explore decision making. In particular, Krupnikov and Levine (2014) demonstrate that student samples generate similar estimates to representative adult samples gathered using probabilistic sampling methods.

7.4.1   Survey design

Individuals were first given a set of randomly-ordered policy questions on which they were asked to select their preferred solution to different social and economic problems. Next, they answered questions about their ideological and partisan affiliation. Subjects were then given four vignettes in random order describing fictitious candidates running in a local primary race. After reading about each candidate's issue positions, individuals were asked to make an assessment regarding whether they perceived that the candidate was a liberal

or conservative. Finally, subjects were presented with all four candidates and their policy descriptions, the information displayed in Table 7.1, and asked to select the candidate for which they felt most inclined to vote.

Table 7.1. Description of candidates

Candidate A	Candidate B
• Government should drastically cut spending and balance budget. • Same-sex marriage and civil unions are wrong. • We need to fight to overturn *Roe v. Wade*; abortion should never be legal. • The federal government has no place in creating jobs; if we remove restrictions on the private sector, then the economy will recover.	• The government can play a role in helping provide jobs for ordinary Americans. • Civil unions are appropriate, but same-sex marriage is wrong. • We should limit abortion to only those instances where the life of the mother is in danger or in rare circumstances such as rape or incest. • The present level of government spending is about where it should be. I would neither increase nor decrease federal spending.
Candidate C	**Candidate D**
• The government may help in job creation, but the private sector is more important in creating jobs. • Marriage is a right that all people should benefit from. • Abortion should be a woman's choice, but not past the third trimester. • We should increase federal spending, but we need to make sure we don't saddle future generations with too much debt	• We should continue to greatly increase federal spending. • Individuals should have the right to marry whomever they choose, regardless of gender. • A woman's right to choose is important. Abortion shouldn't be restricted. • The government should provide many opportunities to provide work for unemployed Americans.

Notes: Treatment order is randomly assigned; after reading through each vignette, subjects were asked to assess how liberal or conservative the candidate sounded.

Table 7.1 details information about the policy positions taken by each particular candidate. The same four issues were included in each vignette, including government spending, the permissibility of same-sex marriage, regulations governing abortion, and, finally, the government's role in providing jobs for the public. The particular stances within each given policy domain match stereotypical positions taken by real officials, and the numerical value associated with that position's "objective" placement in liberal-conservative space is denoted by the value in parentheses (this numerical information was not given to subjects, but informs the reader of whether the position is "liberal," low values,

or "conservative," high values).[108] Averaging the values associated with the policy positions together, it is possible to place each respective candidate in liberal-conservative ideological space. These indexed ideal points, or the *objective ideology* of the various candidates, are represented by the light-grey dots in Figure 7.1. Candidates A and B are stereotypical ideologues insofar as their policy positions are uniformly extreme and correctly sorted. Candidates B and C are more moderate candidates who possess a mixture of mostly consistent, though weak, policy prescriptions.
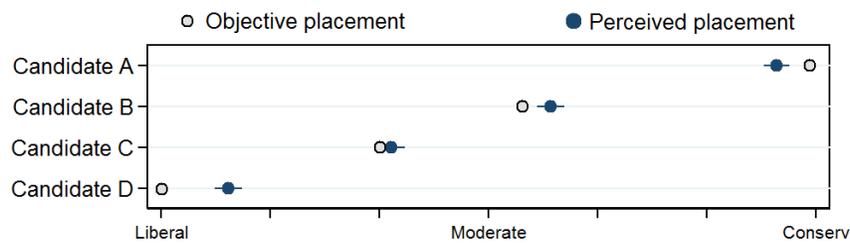
Notes: Objective placement derived from an average of the issue positions presented in Table 1. Perceived placement conveys the estimated liberal-conservative placement made by respondent after reading vignette associated with respective candidate; solid lines represent 95 percent confidence interval bands.

Figure 7.1. Objective candidate placements relative subjects' placements

7.4.2 Measures

The solid point estimates depicted in Figure 7.1 represent *perceived candidate ideology* and convey the subjective assessments that respondents made after reading about each candidate's policy positions. These estimates, bracketed by 95 percent confidence intervals, track reasonably well with the objective nature of the more "moderate" candidates. However, it is interesting to note that subjects under-estimated the extremity of the two more extreme candidates by modest margins, who were perceived to be both less liberal and conservative than their objective placements in ideological space.[109] Curiously,

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[108] Admittedly, assigning numerical values is something of a subjective judgment; that said, respondent placements track well with this coding decision's logic.

[109] In part this may be a function of respondents realizing that the issues presented to them are only a select few of many possible policies. Perhaps, then, respondents undersell their impressions of extremity without this additional context.

as Figure 7.2 illustrates, the well-sorted are not necessarily more adept or biased regarding these assessments. The well-sorted may be more slightly more "precise" in their estimation of the candidates' ideological profiles, as indicated by the smaller confidence interval bands bracketing some of the estimates, but the differences between these assessments do not significantly differ across the first or fourth quartiles of sorting.
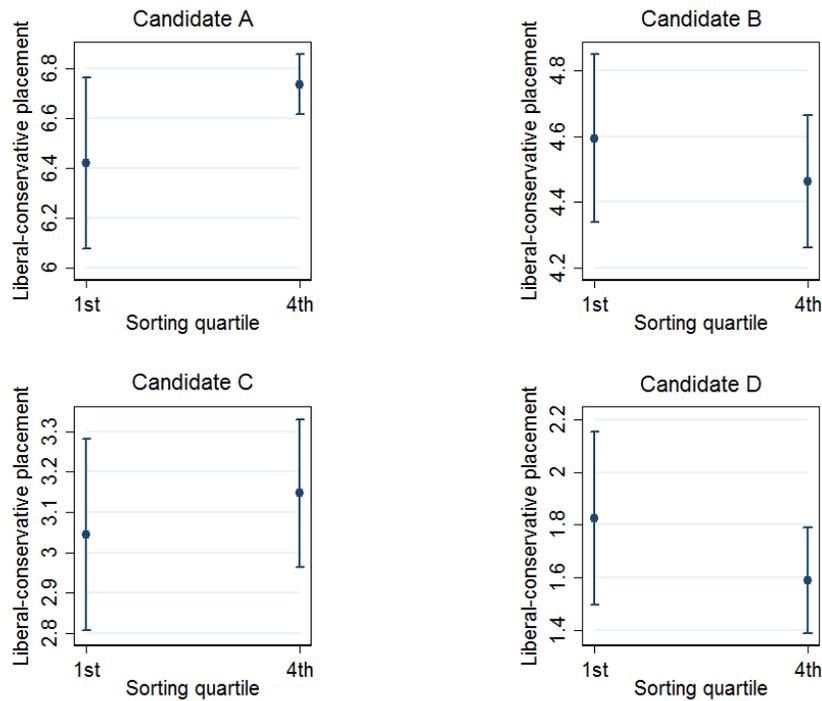
Notes: Point estimates convey the liberal-conservative placement made by subject after reading vignette describing candidate's issue positions. Values on y-axis range from 1 (extremely liberal) to 7 (extremely conservative). Brackets around estimates convey 95 percent confidence interval bands. X-axis presents first (minimum) and fifth (maximum) quintile of sorting scores. Candidate A's objective placement was at value 1; Candidate B's objective placement in space was at value 3; Candidate C's objective placement 4.25; Candidate D's objective placement was at 7.

Figure 7.2. Subjective candidate placements by subjects' sorting

Contrasting these subjective assessments with the objective ideal points of each respective candidate, I then created individual metrics of *incorrectness of candidate placement*. This variable conveys the absolute difference between an individual's perception of a candidate's liberal-conservative policy profile and the objective nature of

that candidate in ideological space. If individuals are systematically-biased in the manner in which they make these assessments, then the ability to make "more correct" assessments may decrease the likelihood that an individual will choose a non-proximate candidate.

In addition to their assessments of candidate ideology, individuals were asked about four policy items at the outset of the questionnaire from which we can construct a respondent's policy preferences. Using the traditional question format popularized by the American National Election Studies (and as described in Chapter 2), responses to these questions take the form of seven-category ordinal scales, where a liberal policy solution is juxtaposed with a conservative one. However, because the same-sex marriage and abortion items have discrete response categories (it does not necessarily make sense to juxtapose a pro-life and pro-choice response within this response set binary), values were assigned to the substantive response categories to maintain numerical parity with the seven-category items. The questions were as follows:

1. *Government spending.* Some people think that the government should provide fewer services even in areas such as health and education in order to reduce spending. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale at point 1. Other people feel it is important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. Where would you place yourself?

2. *Government and welfare.* Some people feel the government in Washington should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living. 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 their own. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. Where would you place yourself?

3. *Same-sex marriage.* Recently, the question of same-sex marriage has been an issue that has generated enormous public debate. Please select from among the following responses the position that best characterizes how you feel about same-sex marriage: Individuals should be free to marry whomever they choose (1); Civil unions are appropriate, but marriage benefits should not be extended to same-sex couples (4); Or, same-sex marriage is wrong and should be illegal (7).

4. *Abortion access.* There has been some discussion about abortion during recent years. Please select the response that best characterizes your views on abortion: By law, a woman should always have access to an abortion (1); The law should permit abortion, but only prior to the third trimester (3); The law should permit abortion only in cases of rape, incest, or when a woman's life is in danger (5); Or, by law abortion should never be permitted (7).

Next, I calculated latent ideological profiles for each subject by taking the average of the values associated with their responses. While the literature on mass ideology is not bullish on the notion that individuals possess unidimensional policy preferences (Feldman and Johnston, 2014; Kinder and Kalmoe, forthcoming), the literature on vote choice has traditionally utilized this parsimonious, one-dimensional treatment of policy preferences (e.g. Tausanovitch and Warshaw, 2014; see Ahler and Broockman, n.d. for a recent review). To reduce concern about the tension regarding whether mass opinion is unidimensional, that is, whether it is empirically justifiable to arrange an individual's preferences within liberal-conservative space, the four policy items used here were chosen for their saliency. Politicians frequently invoke these four issues during electoral campaigns, and it is not unreasonable to assume that individuals ought to connect these items to left-right space (indeed, they certainly do so for the candidate assessments). In this case, I find that a principal components factor analysis indicates that the four policy items load reasonably well onto a single factor, bolstering the justification for treating the combination of these preferences as a form of liberal-conservative ideology.[110]

With this information in hand, I then calculate the *proximity of vote selection*. This variable reflects the distance between a respondent's policy-based ideology and that of the candidate for which they voted. This item ranges from 1 to 4, where lower values indicate better or "closer" fit between candidate-respondent policy ideology. Table 7.2 reveals that more than half of the respondents selected the most optimal candidate—i.e. the candidate closest to the respondent's own indexed ideological preferences. Roughly 30 percent of individuals selected the next closest candidate in space, while only about 15 percent of respondents selected a candidate that was third-furthest from the own policy ideal point.

To test how ideology affects directional voting, two additional variables were created. First, *extreme candidates* are those candidates located at the two ideological poles. A vote for candidates A or D is coded 1, while a vote for one of the more moderate candidates B or C is coded 0. To test the comparative effect of policy- relative identity-based ideology on this item, a variable capturing *policy extremity* is operationalized by

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[110] The four items produce an Eigenvalue of 1.87, with factor loadings of at least 0.66 for all items. For a small sample of undergraduate students (n = 260), this is impressive. However, it's worth noting that most explorations of spatial voting take for granted the notion that mass policy-preferences can be categorized within liberal-conservative space (for good or ill).

folding the metric of policy ideology at its midpoint and taking the absolute value, where values of 0 (minimum) correspond to moderate attitudes and values of 4 (maximum) convey consistent, extreme attitudes.

Table 7.2. Candidate choice: Distance between candidate-subject preferences

Idealness of candidate selection by policy proximity	Percent of subjects	Avg. distance between respondent and candidate ideology
1st (best)	52.00%	0.35
2nd	30.80%	1.31
3rd	15.20%	2.22
4th (worst)	2.00%	3.65
	100.0%	

Notes: Candidate selection categories determined by taking the absolute value of the difference between candidate and subject policy ideology. Category best corresponds to scenario in which subject chose the candidate whose policy platform was objectively closest to the subject's own policy preferences; similarly, category worst corresponds to selecting candidate whose policy platform is furthest from subject's own preferences. Total subjects = 250.

Finally, information regarding a number of control variables was collected. *Male* is coded 1 for persons identifying as a man and 0 otherwise. Respondents who identified as *white* were coded 1 and otherwise, 0. *News consumption* is an ordinal variable that ranges from 1 to 7 and conveys how many days a week a respondent watched, read, or listened to the news. *Political knowledge* is an index of correctly identifying which party controlled the House and Senate at the time of the survey, in addition to correctly identifying the political branch that appoints federal judges. The variable ranges from 0, no correct answers, to 1, answered every question correctly.

Table 7.3. The effect of sorting on selecting the most objectively-proximate candidate

	Select most objectively-proximate candidate (low values = more proximate)	Select candidate perceived to be closest (low values = more proximate)	Select most objectively-proximate candidate
Sorting	1.30**	-1.05**	1.69*
	(0.37)	(0.33)	(0.70)
Policy strength / consistency	-0.12	-0.07	0.34
	(0.39)	(0.33)	(0.70)
Sorting x policy strength	-----	------	-0.80
			(1.07)
Incorrectness of Cand A placement	0.09	0.22	0.09
	(0.15)	(0.17)	(0.15)
Incorrectness of Cand B placement	0.11	0.11	0.11
	(0.21)	(0.22)	(0.21)
Incorrectness of Cand C placement	0.05	0.15	0.06
	(0.12)	(0.14)	(0.12)
Incorrectness of Cand D placement	0.24	-0.01	0.23
	(0.18)	(0.16)	(0.18)
Male	0.22	-0.73*	0.21
	(0.38)	(0.35)	(0.37)
White	-0.29	0.19	-0.28
	(0.27)	(0.25)	(0.27)
News consumption	-0.13*	0.06	-0.13*
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Political knowledge	-0.30	-1.00*	-0.32
	(0.48)	(0.49)	(0.48)
1st cutpoint	0.19	-1.55**	0.37
	(0.54)	(0.55)	(0.60)
2nd cutpoint	1.64**	-0.23	1.83**
	(0.54)	(0.53)	(0.60)
3rd cutpoint	3.24**	0.48	3.43**
	(0.63)	(0.53)	(0.68)
N	254	254	254

Source: Sample of LSU undergrads, Spring 2016
Notes: *$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$

7.4.3   Results

Beginning with the first column presented in Table 7.3, I model whether a respondent cast a vote for the most ideal or policy-proximate candidate. Recalling that the outcome variable ranges from 1, most issue-proximate, to 4, furthest candidate from the respondent's ideal point, the estimates constitute log-odds ratios of the effect of a given covariate on the idealness of choice. The results indicate that any systematic bias in the way that individuals understand where candidates fit within policy space is unrelated to vote choice (the series of four items capturing the difference between perceived and objective candidate ideology, *"incorrectness of candidate [a-d]"*). Further, I find that consistent, strong policy preferences do not shape candidate selection.

Moving to the coefficient for sorting, I find that the relationship between sorting and candidate selection is strong and positive. As individuals become better sorted, the likelihood of selecting the candidate closest to their policy preferences decreases. To illustrate the contours of the effect of sorting, Figure 7.3 plots point estimates for those persons with the weakest and strongest levels of sorting. Here, the y-axis conveys the probability of casting a particular vote; the optimality of that choice depicted along the x-axis. Two observations are warranted. First, the likelihood of casting a vote for a candidate that is proximate to an individual's bundle of policy preferences is modest for all respondents. However, those persons with weak, cross-cutting identities are more much likely to select candidates that are more proximate to their own policy preferences in three of four categories of candidate optimality.

Interestingly, however, there is some evidence that, while policy-based fit decreases as sorting increases, individuals actually perceive that their candidate selections are the best fit to their overarching preferences. Consider Model 2 in Table 3, which models candidate selection based on perceived distance between a given candidate's liberal-conservative placement and the individual's own ideological self-placement—in effect, the optimality of perceived ideological proximity. Here, the coefficient produced for the sorting term is actually *negative* and significant. As individuals become better sorted, the likelihood that they select a candidate that they *think* is closest to their own identity increases substantially. Thus, sorting increases the perceived liberal-conservative fit with a candidate even as it renders individuals less likely to select the candidate most proximate to their policy-based preferences.
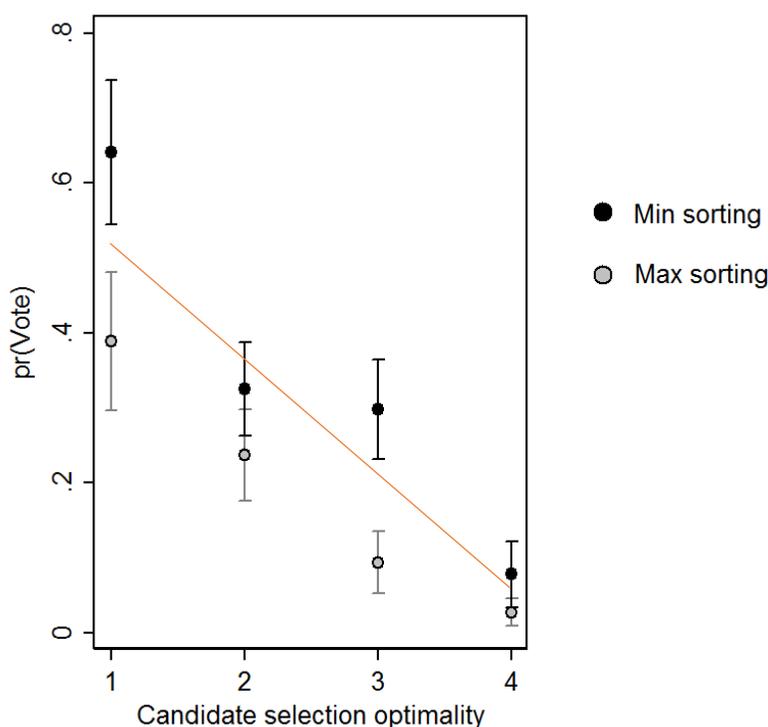
Notes: Y-axis conveys probability of candidate selection. X-axis values are candidates who, in descending order, represent best-to-worst fit between selected candidate's policy profile vis-à-vis subject's policy preferences. Vertical lines bracketing point estimates depict 95 percent confidence intervals. Point estimates for "min" and "max" are 1st and 5th quartiles of sorting, respectively. Solid red line is fitted marginal effect averaged across candidates.

Figure 7.3. Marginal Effect of sorting on candidate selection optimality

On the whole, these results indicate that higher levels of sorting predictably bias individuals toward "less-optimal" candidates—presumably turning the highly sorted into what are traditionally understood as "directional" voters.[111] Further, Model 3 bears this conclusion out: the marginal effect of casting a vote for the candidate most proximate to

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[111] While it is tempting to ask whether this finding is normatively troubling, posing this question implicitly assumes that individuals *ought to* vote according to their aggregated instrumental policy preferences. If this result conveys anything, then it may be the realization that voters do not strictly reason using policy-based criteria to differentiate among candidates. Recent research, in fact, suggests that voting is a distinctly expressive act (e.g. Huddy, Mason, and Aaroe, 2015). In that case, policy proximity is a probably a second-order concern. If true, then treating a voter with highly-sorted identities and mixed-attitude as somehow voting against their preferences is wrongheaded.

the individual's policy-based preferences is not contingent on the interaction between strength / consistency of preferences and sorting. Even at minimal levels of policy-based consistency, identity-based sorting is sufficient to decrease the likelihood that an individual chooses a candidate who best-reflects their underlying policy preferences.

7.5   Study 2: Policy proximity, sorting, and vote choice in the 2008 presidential election

Study 1 shows that, when given information regarding the policy platforms of multiple candidates, the highly-sorted, prospective voter tends to prefer more extreme candidates, even when their policy preferences convey they are matched to more moderate candidates. Having explored the relationship between sorting and choice in a multicandidate (primary) setting, I now turn to testing the insights derived from Study 1 in the context of a real-world election. While arranging candidates and voters in policy space and testing the comparative fit of vote choice is trickier in this application in that partisans reliably vote for their own candidate, the 2008 ANES Time-Series survey fields a number of questions suitable for comparing how perceived proximity to a presidential candidate and sorting affects the likelihood of casting an in-party vote. I expect that, while policy-based fit ought to predict lower rates of defection, the effect of sorting on vote choice should be appreciably stronger.[112]

7.5.1   Measures
The dependent variable in the following analyses is *cast in-party vote*. I take the vote choice variable provided by the ANES and transform it so that an individual who identifies as a Republican and voted for McCain is coded 1 and otherwise 0 (i.e. Obama or third-party vote). I then do the same for Democrats who voted for Obama, coded 1, and otherwise 0. Thus, any person who casts a vote for their party's candidate, about 60 percent of all

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[112] Why in-party voting? This variable is ideal because sorting is not a "directional" variable; rather it is a measure of the strength / overlap between political identities. In effect, it is nonsensical to model choice between the two candidates as a simply a function of sorting.

respondents, is coded 1 and those persons who either voted for a third- or out-party candidate, coded 0.

To construct a measure of policy similarity with an in-party candidate, I first construct a measure of a respondent's own *policy ideology*. To do so, I utilized responses to eight, seven-category policy placements. These include attitudes toward whether the government should financially assist minorities, provide health insurance and jobs, ought to prioritize environmental protections, women's role in the home, abortion, defense spending, and general government spending. On each item, a liberal and conservative approach is juxtaposed at the values 1 and 7, respectively, with a midpoint that reflects some sort of moderate tradeoff between the two perspectives at the value 4. Individual responses are aggregated and averaged together to generate an "ideal" point in liberal-conservative policy space.

Next, I construct a similar metric of policy-based ideology for the Republican (McCain) and Democratic (Obama) candidates. Individuals were asked where they would place both candidates on the same items as above. Using the condensed 3-category partisanship variable, I create a metric of *in-party policy ideology* by assigning Democratic identifiers the indexed Obama placements and those who identified as Republican the McCain placements. *In-party policy similarity* is generated by taking the absolute value of the respondent's ideological ideal point from their ideal point of their party's candidate. I then reverse-code and rescale that item so that higher values (1) convey perfect overlap and lower values no overlap between a respondent's policy profile and their party's perceived placement (0). Figure 7.4 illustrates the distribution of these values, and it is clear that most individuals perceive modest levels of policy-based similarity with their party's candidate.

In addition to this distance-based measure of proximity, I also create a dichotomous variable that accounts for whether the out-party candidate's ideological profile was actually closer to an individual's policy-based ideology score. To generate this item, I assigned the value 1 to those partisans whose out-party candidate's perceived ideology score was *closer* to their own score and otherwise 0. Interestingly, more than 15 percent of respondents actually placed the out-party candidate nearer to their policy-based preferences than their in-party candidate.
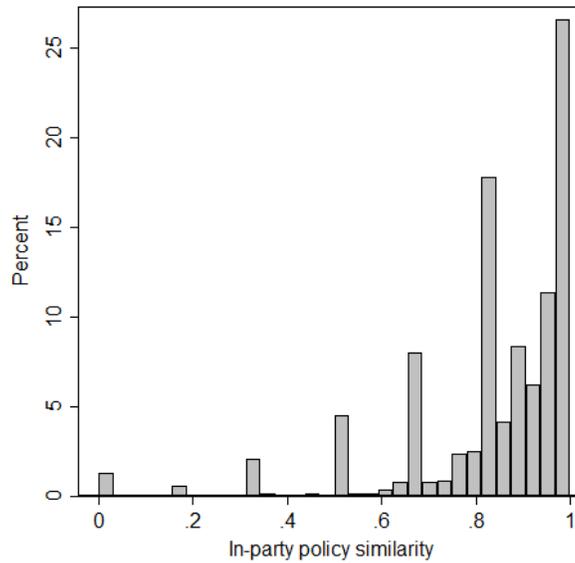
Figure 7.4. In-party policy similarity

Political knowledge comprises correctly identifying political leaders and the party that controlled the House of Representatives. Respondents were asked whether they knew what office a stated individual held (e.g. John Roberts, in which case the correct response was "Chief Justice of Supreme Court") and whether Democrats or Republicans were the majority party in the House. Responses are averaged into an index that ranges from 0, "no correct answers," to 1, "all correct answers."

An individual's level of formal *education* ranges from "some elementary" schooling, coded 1, to "advanced degree," coded 7. *News consumption* is an ordinal variable that conveys how many days that an individual admits to watching some form of news on television. Respondent race is broken down into two dichotomous variables for *white* and *black*, where identification with a racial group is coded 1 and otherwise 0. *Age* is a continuous variable that ranges from a low of 17 years to 90 years. Finally, respondent gender is coded 1 for *male* and 0 for persons identifying as a woman.

Table 7.4. Effect of sorting and policy similarity on in-party vote choice

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Sorting	2.63**	0.47	2.90**
	(0.47)	(1.82)	(0.55)
In-party policy similarity	1.58**	0.87	1.56**
	(0.53)	(0.76)	(0.52)
Sorting × policy similarity	-----	2.73	-----
		(2.30)	
Out-party candidate closest to R	-1.15**	-1.17**	-0.87**
	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.33)
Sorting × out-party candidate	-----	-----	-1.35
			(1.10)
Knowledge	-0.19	-0.19	-0.18
	(0.32)	(0.32)	(0.32)
Education	0.27**	0.27**	0.27**
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
News consumption	0.10**	0.10**	0.10**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
White	0.21	0.19	0.18
	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.27)
Black	0.77*	0.76*	0.76*
	(0.32)	(0.32)	(0.31)
Age	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Male	-0.10	-0.10	-0.11
	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)
Constant	-2.51**	-1.92*	-2.53**
	(0.71)	(0.88)	(0.71)
N	1,172	1,172	1,172

Source: 2008 American National Election Studies

Notes: Dependent variable is whether or not respondent cast vote for in-party candidate (i.e. Democrat voted for Obama, Republican for McCain). Coefficient entries represent log-odds ratios; *p<0.05; **p0.01

7.5.2   Results

Table 7.4 depicts the results of three analyses, which model a preference for an in-party candidate as a function of sorting, in-party policy similarity, whether an out-party candidate was more issue-proximate to a respondent, and a series of controls. Beginning with Model 1, the coefficient for the effect of sorting on casting an in-party vote is positive and large in magnitude. As individuals' partisan and ideological identities converge, the likelihood of casting a vote for an out-party candidate decreases, binding prospective voters to their group's presidential candidate. Yet, while sorting removes the cross-pressures that destabilize goal-directed behaviors (e.g. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, 1954; Davis and Mason, 2015), the contours of this effect are more nuanced than the log-odds estimates convey.
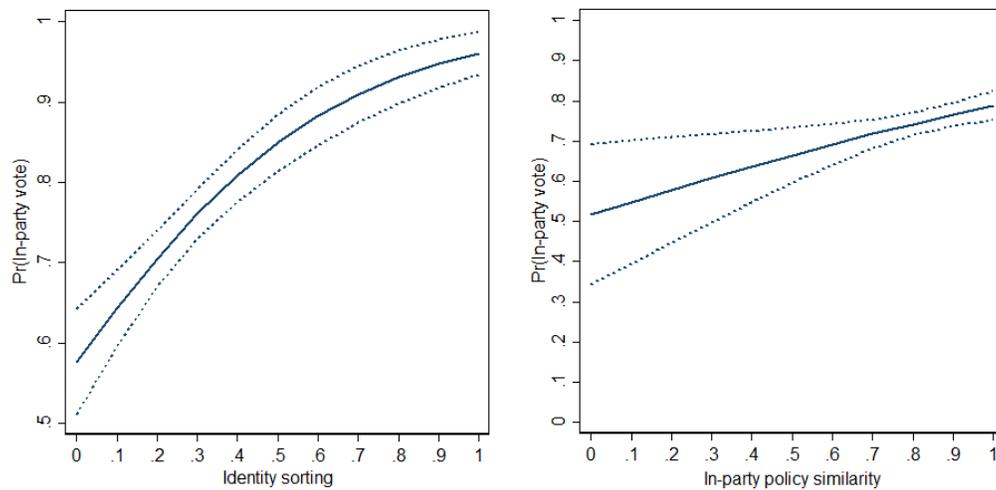
Source: 2008 ANES Time-Series
Notes: Values on y-axis convey probability of casting vote for in-party candidate. Dotted lines represent 95 percent confidence interval bands.

Figure 7.5. Effect of sorting on probability of selecting in-party candidate

To demonstrate the contours of the effect of sorting on choice, Panel A in Figure 7.5 illustrates the probability of casting an in-party vote at different level s of identity sorting. For those individuals who score near the minimum values on identity sorting (e.g. respondents who identify as a weak Democrat / weak conservative), the likelihood of casting an in-party vote is roughly 50 percent. For these voters, the ties that bind them to a

particular candidate from the party with which they nominally associate are weak enough to allow for defection. Transitioning to modest levels of identity sorting at the value 0.5 (e.g. respondents who identify as Republican / weak conservative), some of these cross-pressures disappear. Here, the probability of casting an in-party vote increases tremendously to about 85 percent—a change in roughly 30 percentage points. Even a modest increase in sorting, then, is enough to bind these individuals to their groups' candidate.

Consider, however, the difference in predicted in-party voting between a Republican identifier with a weak conservative identity (moderate sorting) and a strong Republican who identifies as extremely conservative (maximum sorting). The predicted change in the likelihood of casting an in-party vote over this range of values is roughly 60 percent less than the change in in-party voting between minimum and moderate levels of sorting. Two conclusions are warranted. First, low levels of identity convergence are related to behavioral instability. When individuals are modestly attached to one group, but are pulled in a competing direction by another, they are less likely to behave in ways that are consistent with either identity. However, these results indicate that it takes only the most minimal of changes in sorting to shift citizens toward engaging in goal-directed behaviors. Thus, moderate levels of overlap between consistent identities are sufficient to generate behavioral conformity with one's group (e.g. in-party voting).

Moving next to the effect of in-party similarity on casting an in-party vote, the coefficient entry for this variable is positive and moderately strong. This coefficient indicates that when individuals perceive that their policy preferences are near to the in-party candidate, the likelihood of casting an in-party vote increases. However, when we translate these estimates into predicted probabilities of casting an in-party vote, a caveat is warranted. Note that, in Panel B in Figure 7.5, the confidence interval bands for the effect of in-party policy similarity on vote choice are extremely wide. Recalling that this variable ranges from values 0 to 1, it is difficult to tell whether or not minimal levels of policy similarity (0.0) are distinguishable from modest ones (0.5). In fact, it seems that the effect of policy similarity on in-party vote choice is only appreciably distinct at the upper range of values (0.75 to 1.0).

The final covariate of interest in this first model is the item that captures whether a voter's policy preferences were actually closer to the out-party relative in-party candidate.

This dichotomous variable takes the value 1 when an individual's policy preferences are closer to the perceived policy placement of the out-party candidate. As expected, the coefficient associated with this variable is both negative and significant. Individuals who are closer in proximity to the out-party candidate are about 22 percentage points less likely to cast an in-party vote. While the magnitude of this effect is not as large as the coefficient for sorting, this finding indicates that attitudinal cross-pressures *do* nevertheless play a role in choice by reducing the propensity that a person who perceives that an alternative is closer to their own bundle of policy preferences.

In light of the latter two findings, a natural extension of this modeling is to inquire into whether or not the effect of sorting on choice is conditional on these two variables. Specifically, do the effects of sorting on casting a vote for an in-party candidate vary as a function of the extent to which a person is proximate to their party's candidate? Put another way, do attitudinal cross-pressures reduce the binding nature of identity sorting?

Models 2 and 3 in Table 4 analyze vote choice accounting for interaction terms that test for these relationships. Beginning with Model 2, the coefficient representing the interaction term between sorting and in-party policy similarity is large and robust, but indistinguishable from zero. In Figure 7.6, I illustrate this shape of this effect. Here, the point estimates convey the marginal effect of changing from minimum to maximum values on the policy-similarity item at varying levels of identity sorting. The grey shaded areas indicate the 95 percent confidence interval bands surrounding these estimates, which completely envelop the threshold of 0 (indicating the statistical insignificance of this effect. Simply, the effect of sorting on casting an in-party vote does not vary as individuals become more or less proximate to their candidate.
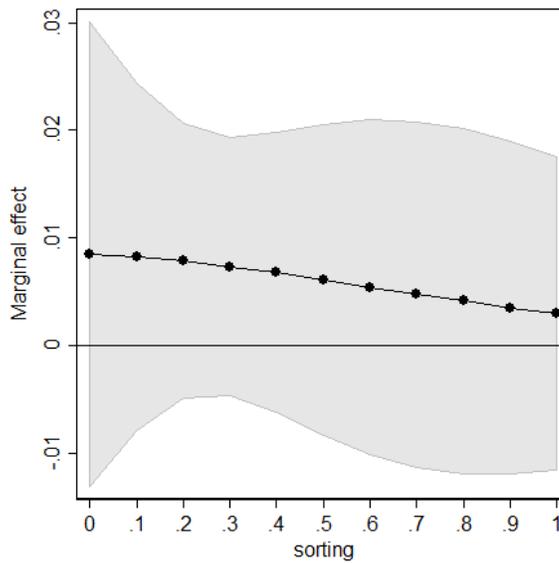
Figure 7.6. The marignal effect of low- relative high-policy similarty
with in-party candidate

Similarly, in Model 3, the coefficient for the interaction term between sorting and proximity to an out-party candidate also fails to reach conventional levels of significance. In this case, the effect of sorting on casting an in-party vote does not vary among those persons who are closer or further from the out-party candidate. In practical terms, this implies that while an individual's policy preferences might be closer to those of an out-party candidate, the binding nature of sorting can overcome these attitudinal cross-pressures. Provided that an individual's identities are sufficiently strong and overlapping, the likelihood that they will cast a vote for their party's candidate is still very high, *even when they may be closer in ideological proximity to a different candidate*.

The prevailing logic of electoral choice stipulates that voters review candidates and evaluate their platforms (issues) and then select the candidate who best embodies their preferences. Looking at the 2008 Presidential election, I find modest evidence that perceived proximity to a candidate's issue platform affects whether an individual will defect from their in-group candidate. However, these findings also point to the conclusion

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that individuals experience vote choice as a social expression of their preferences. At modest levels of overlap between political identities, there is a high likelihood that individuals will conform to the "correct" behavior of casting a vote for their in-party candidate. The literature on choice has traditionally assumed that issue-based cross pressures will perturb this goal-directed behavior. Yet I show that even when such tensions exist, the strength of political identities and, importantly, their interrelationship is sufficient to offset the negative effects of these issue-based concerns.

7.6   Conclusion

Much is frequently made of whether or not individuals "vote against their interests." In a popular, though later criticized book *What's the Matter with Kansas?*, Thomas Frank argues that the white working class in America, which, presumably, has a more leftward-oriented "ideal point" than citizens of other groups, has been increasingly moved *rightward* by the Republican Party. As a result, these millions of voters are presumably voting against their economic interests by casting votes for Republican candidates who will undercut their economic wellbeing. Bartel's (2006) pointed critique of this narrative aside, Frank's argument fails to account for the power of social and political identities. Even if voters had policy ideal points that betrayed their material interests, they might nevertheless vote in line with their preferences insofar as electoral choice is a *social* or *expressive* behavior. When individuals sufficiently feel like a part of a political group—when their partisan and ideological identities converge—then they are acting in a rational manner by satisfying or conforming to these group goals. Indeed, this point is complimented by work on "correct voting" (Lau and Redlawsk, 1997), which explores whether or not individuals make decisions that best-reflect their "true" or latent preferences.

This question has again sprung forth recently. In the latest iteration of this scenario, the 2016 election of Donald J. Trump to the United States Presidency was met with widespread confusion. If Donald Trump flouted the rule of law, undermined the desirability of a free press, attacked women and minorities, railed against a popular healthcare law, and promised to build a wall across the southern United States, then why would so many people who directly opposed those various platform planks ignore the implications of those polices and, instead, cast a vote for him?

The results of this chapter indicate that, while policy preferences are clearly related to choice, individuals do not necessarily approach elections as policy-maximizers. Identities don't function as a running tally of positive and negative policy considerations. Instead, these group memberships compel individuals to act in ways that conform to the interests of their group, *even when their own interests and preferences might otherwise push citizens to vote for candidates that more closely approximate their attitudes.* At its core, this finding speaks to the tensions between the proximity and directional theories of voting. As sorting increases, it seems to be the case that individuals with strong and consistent identities will prefer politically extreme candidates, even when their own policy preferences are otherwise mixed. In effect, then, sorting appears to decouple policy-based proximity from the vote choice.

On the one hand, this type of behavior is rational and expected. A rich literature in social psychology finds that individuals conform to group behaviors and interests even when their personal beliefs oppose those actions. On the other hand, the normative consequences of this behavior are probably a cause for concern. When individuals satisfice their political identities at the expense of cross-cutting issue preferences, then they may prefer candidates whose *modus operandi* is counter to many of their sincere beliefs. Consider the alarm conveyed by participants in a focus group of Trump voters polled by a well-known special interests group. "I guess I've been living in a bubble," one respondent remarked. "If he does sign this into law [proposed healthcare restrictions], then it's gonna cause more disruption in our society," communicated another. Yet these concerns, which would have been raised in the pre-election period to astute observers, did not trouble these prospective voters.

The power of sorted identities is significant. Even if individuals have not become appreciably more extreme in their attitudes over time, modest levels of sorting are sufficient to shift the criterion for choice from proximity to directional selection rules. As such, it is this linkage that may overwhelmingly responsible for pushing politics into uncivil and polarized territory. The politicians who are elected may not be the ones that citizens need, but they certainly are the ones that they want.

Chapter 8: Conclusion: Sorted? Polarized? Who Cares, Anyways?

Polarization is about more than just sorting, but sorting is polarization anyway

Noel, *Mischiefs of Faction*[113]

A core finding within social psychology research reveals that individuals struggle to maintain competing or disconfirming beliefs—that people often seek to reduce the mental stress or discomfort that possessing contradictory beliefs, ideas, and values generates. In other words, the average person does not deal well with cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Research in political science has been slower to account for this finding, but work shows that individuals update their evaluative preferences to conform to their political choices (Caplan, 2001; Mullainathan and Washington, 2009; McGregor, 2013) and resist information that disconfirms their prior beliefs (Nyhan and Reifler, 2010). On the one hand, it is curious that ideologues often hold countervailing and contradictory views (Claussen, Tucker, and Smith, 2015; Ellis and Stimson, 2012). Yet, on the other hand, perhaps this inconsistency is unsurprising given the evidence that systematic constraint within citizens' belief systems is low (Converse, 2000).

The concept of sorting, as presented in this dissertation, reflects an alternative approach to understanding the cohesion and consistency of individuals' preferences and provides insight into two important debates within the broader study of political opinion, generally, and mass polarization, specifically. The first, to which I allude above, regards the coherency of mass opinion and turns on whether or not the relationship between an individuals' beliefs and partisanship are systematically constrained. The second involves the extent to which Americans' preferences have become more or less extreme over time— whether sorting is a feature or derivative of what is colloquially called "polarization."

Beginning with the first sentiment, if partisanship functions as the fundamental lens through which individuals assess and navigate the political environment, then it provides a yardstick by which to gauge the consistency of public opinion without placing an undue informational burden on the average citizen, whose knowledge of current events and grasp on political minutia is poor. Low levels of political acumen notwithstanding,

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[113] http://www.mischiefsoffaction.com/2014/06/polarization-is-about-more-than-just.html

partisanship functions as a useful backdrop against which the coherency of social, economic, and political preferences can be judged.

The findings presented in Chapters 2 and 3 address the ongoing, and, frankly, oft-misunderstood, debate regarding whether or not the mass public is "polarized." If sorting is polarization, then this polarization is oversold in both its scope and practical effects. Compositionally, if we treated sorting only as a form of matching between ideology and partisanship, then the extent of that matching has more or less hit a ceiling—even as elite polarization continues to accelerate, matching among these preferences has not kept pace. Based on existing party sorting research, this finding is unexpected. Elite polarization may clarify where the parties stand, but, if individuals are unable or disinclined to understand *what* these divisions mean, then matching between partisanship and ideology predictably stagnates over the period of time between Levendusky's work in *The Partisan Sort* and the 2012 election.[114]

The reality is that, while some amount of matching exists among issue preferences and sorting, the subsequent, substantive effect of that issue sorting on political behavior is relatively modest compared to that of identity sorting. Individuals who possess maximal levels of issue-based sorting are less likely to hold biased evaluations of political groups and engage in political participation compared to those persons with sorted identities. In this respect, the long-standing quest to understand the dimensionality of public opinion may miss the elephant in the room that such constraint is beside the point. Provided that individuals' identities are sufficiently sorted, they satisfy a minimum condition of practical constraint: insofar as the convergence between political identities constitutes the removal of cross-pressures that generate instability in evaluative and behavioral outcomes.

Second, the epigraph above is pithy, though a point of serious debate. Sorting—as it has been defined in the singular unifying text on the subject—is functionally treated as *separate from* polarization (Levendusky, 2009). Matching is separate from distribution. But sorting, as defined here, is part and parcel "polarization" in that it accounts for matching and extremity. If readers take one thing away from this work, then let it be this: matching is a minimalist treatment of the degree to which two quantities are related; a far more useful—theoretically, empirically, and analytically—approach is to allow sorting to

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[114] As of March, 2017, the data for the 2016 ANES Time-Series surveys have yet to be released.

account for the full breadth of the underlying survey response. In that case, Noel is correct in his assessment that "sorting is polarization, anyway." But be that as it may, based on the public opinion analyzed throughout Chapters 3 and 4, it would seem that the mass public is only modestly sorted, much less "polarized." While the variance on individual survey items may have decreased over time, it is inaccurate to paint the mass public's configuration of ideology vis-à-vis partisanship as extreme.

Beyond exploring the compositional nature of partisan sorting, this dissertation also answered questions about the foundations and consequences of the identity sorting. In Chapter 4, I showed that the conventional wisdom regarding the foundations of sorting—that the correlation between partisanship and ideology within the mass public is a direct response to elite polarization—is flawed in two important ways. First, the type of polarization to which individuals respond matters. Using an original experiment, I showed that exposure to policy-based polarization has a negligible effect on the extent to which individuals' political identities converge; instead, symbolic elite cues are the primary antecedent of sorting. Second, because perceptions of elite cues are inherently shaped by group memberships, I showed that sorting is almost wholly a function of perceptions of out-group extremity and dissimilarity rather than perceived polarization.

These findings support a social identity-informed theory of sorting. Although Greene's (1999, 2000, 2002) pioneering work on partisanship persuasively argued that counting oneself a member of the Democratic or Republican Parties constitutes a form of social identity, this perspective has been slower to trickle into the larger behavioral milieu (most recently, Huddy, Mason, and Aaroe [2015]). Be that as it may, given that identity-based sorting embodies the convergence between two social identities, these findings constitute much-needed evidence that ties the relationship between symbolic political identities to symbolic, group-based cues.

In Chapter 5, I explore how the convergence between individuals' partisan and ideological identities affects their propensity to value compromise. I find that citizens with sorted identities are less likely to voice normative support for compromise, with one important caveat: this effect is isolated among those with right- but not left-leaning identities. These differences disappear, however, when respondents are queried about the specific extent to which one's "side" deserves greater deference in the policymaking process. Here, sorting drastically reduces the extent to which individuals are willing to cede

resources to one's out-group—even for those persons who lack a consistent framework of interconnected ideological values. In sum, this disconnect is emblematic of the tension between abstract principles and episodic behavior that scholars have observed regarding attitudes toward public goods. While individuals idealize compromise as a democratic value, sorting reduces one's propensity to accommodate out-group demands.

These findings are not particularly encouraging. A willingness to value and pursue compromise is necessary for the sustainability of democratic governance. The brinksmanship that characterizes elite communication and behavior in Congress now seems to characterize intergroup relations within the mass public. Sorting exacerbates intergroup exchange by binding individuals to their political teams. If citizens are to live peaceably, then sorting may undercut some of the normative barriers that prevent ill-treatment and facilitate improving the status quo.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I show how sorting shapes vote choice. Traditional models of electoral choice are predicated upon parsimonious and optimistic, though perhaps unrealistic, assumptions regarding how citizens translate and understand complex policy information. While policy preferences are undoubtedly related to choice, individuals do not necessarily approach elections as policy-maximizers. Instead, these group memberships compel individuals to conceptualize choice as an expression of their symbolic identities. At its core, this finding speaks to the tensions between the proximity and directional theories of voting. As sorting increases, it seems to be the case that individuals with strong and consistent identities will prefer politically extreme candidates, even when their own policy preferences are otherwise mixed. In effect, then, sorting appears to decouple policy-based proximity from the vote choice.

These findings have implications for prevailing explanations of elite polarization. This research presumes that, in order for the mass public to be responsible for elite polarization, the citizenry would need to exhibit extreme orientations that were temporally prior to legislative extremity. Given that the existence of mass polarization is mixed at best (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope, 2006), the mass public is more or less let off the proverbial hook as it relates to responsibility for elite polarization (Barber and McCarty, 2013). However, the findings presented in Chapter 6 indicate that individuals who exhibit modest levels of identity sorting prefer, on balance, more extreme representatives. In other words, attitudinal extremity notwithstanding, sorted individuals may exacerbate legislative

polarization by helping to elect more extreme officials, even when they possess a heterogeneous mix of policy preferences that are better matched to less well-sorted and extreme representatives.

Moving forward, there remain questions unaddressed by this project for which future work might consider. First, the role that the media plays in shaping sorting within the campaign context is unclear. Campaign research indicates that these events boil down to effectively communicating information to (Drew and Weaver, 2006; Dimitrova et al., 2014) and provoking emotional responses from prospective voters (Redlawsk, Civettini and Lau, 2007). While past research has shown that campaigns can have an exogenous effect on partisanship (Gerber, Huber, and Washington, 2010), whether or not campaigns trigger *convergence between* political identities remains an open question. If the informational prerequisites of identity sorting are relatively minor, however, then we ought to see greater convergence between political identities throughout the course of a campaign.

So, too, is information-gathering behavior's relationship to sorting unclear. Arceneaux and Johnson's (2013) work demonstrates that a media-rich environment complicates how individuals access information germane to political evaluations and decision-making. While traditional (Sunstein, 2001) and social media (Conover et. al., 2012) usage are related to increased polarization, past research on sorting has not developed a cohesive framework for understanding how iterative exposure to these news sources affect sorting. Davis and Dunaway (2016) find that the raw availability of media has only a minor effect on sorting in the aggregate, but future work would do well to examine the microfoundations of the usage of media vis-à-vis sorting.

Third, the emotional (affective) and cognitive foundations of sorting have not been sufficiently examined. Consider the large literature that links emotions to information-seeking behavior. Within the Affective Intelligence literature (e.g. Marcus, Neuman, and Mackuen, 2000), fear plays a special role in motivating an active search for information and, potentially, a reconsideration of one's prior beliefs. In this vein, fearful citizens may, in turn, be more likely to match their ideological preferences to their partisan ones in response to such anxiety. If anxiety is resolved by assuaging one's doubts—and, importantly, if individuals are fundamentally motivated to reduce cognitive dissonance (e.g. Caplan, 2001; Nyhan and Reifler, 2010)—then anxious citizens ought to be more

likely to exhibit greater comity between their ideological and partisan preferences. Future research on sorting should account for the role of such emotions.

These extensions notwithstanding, this dissertation argues for greater theoretical and empirical precision in understanding the convergence between ideology and partisanship within the mass public. In particular, the relationship between liberal-conservative and partisan identification is a dance that has significant consequences for the character of the larger party system. Given the negative repercussions that well-matched and strong political identities generate—and an incentive structure that trades on this symbolic, but simple information—campaigns and political leaders alike are faced with a perverse incentive to play upon these psychological group attachments. Ultimately, understanding the compositional structure of this facet of sorting provides insight into why American political discourse has become increasingly uncivil and intemperate despite meaningful changes in the constraint of public opinion over time.

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Appendix A – Chapter 4

1   Description of controls

The analyses in Chapter 3 employ a number of controls. *White* and *Black* respondents are coded 1 and otherwise 0. *Male* is coded 1 for a respondent who identifies as a man and 0 for respondents who identify as a woman. Respondents residing in states that comprise the *Old South*, or those persons living in states that were a part of the original Confederacy, are coded 1 and otherwise 0.

      Education is coded differently for the CANES Time-Series than it is for the standalone 2012 ANES Time-Series survey. In the CANES, education is coded as a six-part item that ranges from 0, "some elementary education" to 1 "graduate degree." In the 2012 iteration, education is measured using a finer-grade instrument that ranges from the grade that a respondent finished all the way through earning a doctorate degree. This generates sixteen separate categories, which are rescaled to range from 0 to 1.

      Political interest is measured as a three-category item in the CANES, where individuals are asked how much they are interested in elections. Respondents who reply "not much interested" are coded 0, while those who are "somewhat" and "very much interested" are coded 0.5 and 1.0, respectively. In the 2012 CANES Time-Series survey, individuals are asked how often they pay attention to politics and elections. Reponses take one of five categories that vary from "Never," coded 0, to "Always," coded 1.

      Finally, *political knowledge* is operationalized in the CANES as whether a respondent correctly identifies the majority party in the House of Representatives, coded 1, and otherwise, coded 0. In the 2012 ANES Time-Series survey, knowledge is operationalized as an index of whether a respondent correctly identifies the majority party in the House, the Vice President, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Respondents who offer no correct answers are coded 0, while correctly identifying all three items yields a score of 1.[115]

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[115] The reason for different political knowledge items is related to the absence of common and consistent knowledge items in the individual Time-Series surveys dating back to 1984.

Appendix B – Chapter 5

1   Study 1 measurement details

Table B1. Descriptive statistics for Study 1

Variable	# of Obs	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min value	Max value
Conditions					
Symbolic – avg polarization	194	-----	-----	0	1
Policy – avg polarization	182	-----	-----	0	1
Symbolic – distribution polarization	178	-----	-----	0	1
Policy – distribution polarization	202	-----	-----	0	1
Symbolic – text polar (no graphic)	190	-----	-----	0	1
Control condition	156	-----	-----	0	1
Controls					
White	1102	0.784029	0.411681	0	1
Black	1102	0.048094	0.214063	0	1
Age	1099	36.71156	12.83805	18	100
Education	1100	3.549091	0.875482	1	5
Male	1078	0.512987	0.500063	0	1
Income					
Internet	1100	5.607273	3.040572	1	12
Knowledge	1102	0.647913	0.477838	0	1
News consumption (frequency)	1102	0.533424	0.235632	0	1

Source: 2016 Amazon.com mTurk sample
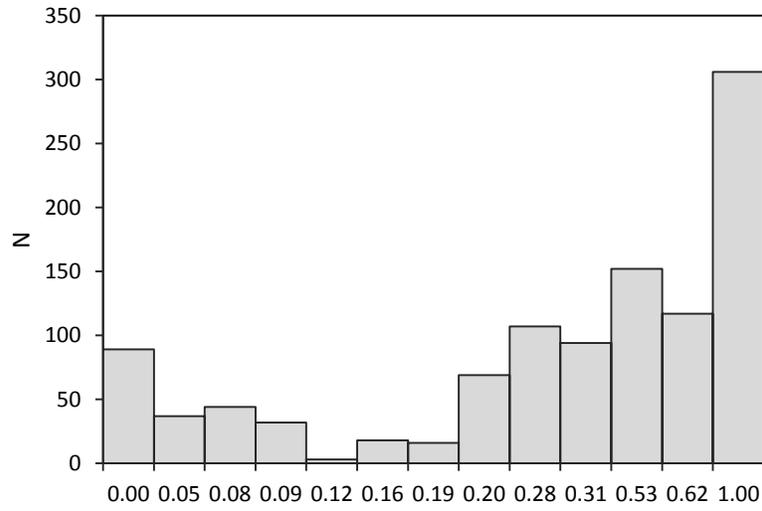
Notes: Higher rates of sorting are observed in the mTurk sample relative what we would expect in a more demographically-representative sample (the sample here is disproportionately young, educated, and politically knowledgeable, all of which are related to increased propensities of sorting). Still, this does not present a problem for the task at hand, per se, because we are only interested in relative sorting rates across conditions and whether exposure to elite cues affects sorting. That we actually observe more sorting, in general, makes observing treatment effects slightly more difficult given the higher baseline rate of sorting.

Figure B1. Distribution of sorting scores in Study 1

Table B2. Partisan-ideological sorting as a function of elite cues (Study 1)

Conditions	b	*s.e.*
Symbolic – avg polarization	*0.064*	*0.038*
Policy – avg polarization	-0.010	0.040
Symbolic – distribution polarization	0.013	0.040
Policy – distribution polarization	-0.002	0.039
Symbolic – text polar (no graphic)	0.061	0.039
Controls		
White	**0.065**	**0.029**
Black	0.095	0.061
Age	-0.001	0.001
Education	0.018	0.013
Male	**0.086**	**0.022**
Income	0.001	0.004
Internet	-0.038	0.024
Knowledge	*0.072*	*0.040*
News consumption (frequency)	**0.013**	**0.005**
Constant	0.223	0.072

Notes: Analyses use robust standard errors; italicized coefficients / standard errors represent p<0.05, bolded coefficients p<0.01
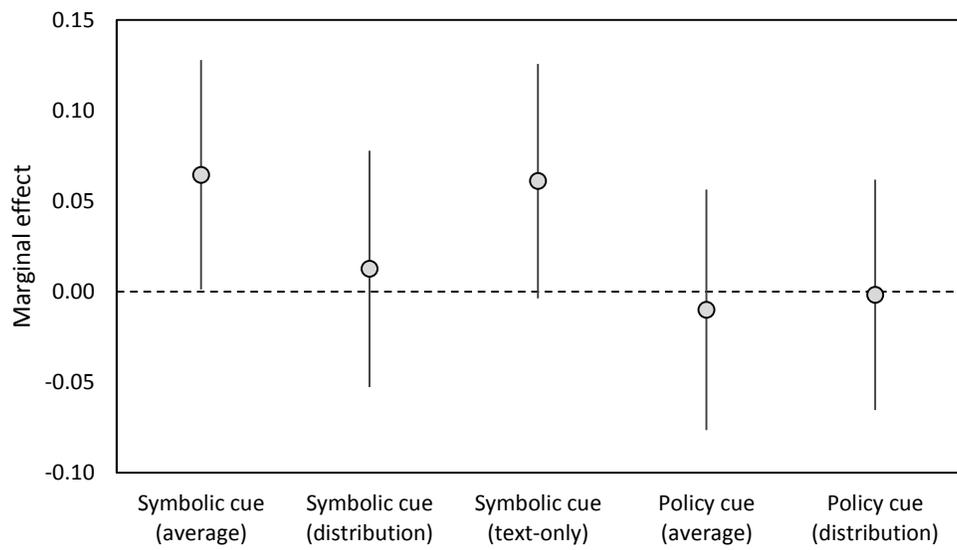
Notes: Marginal effect estimates correspond to Table A2.

Figure B2. Partisan-ideological sorting across elite polarization conditions

2   Study 2 measurement details

Table B3. Summary statistics for Study 2

Variable	# of Obs	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min value	Max value
Dependent variable					
Partisan-ideological sorting	28892	0.248506	0.230018	0	1
Symbolic placements					
Perceived party differences	29621	0.660152	0.207602	0	1
In-party ideological extremity	27127	0.632396	0.233434	0	1
Out-party ideological extremity	26758	0.698697	0.253707	0	1
In-party ideological similarity	23382	0.811806	0.172437	0	1
Out-party ideological dissimilarity	23123	0.435124	0.254177	0	1
Policy-based placements					
Perceived policy differences	31627	0.563603	0.139762	0	1
In-party policy extremity	28643	0.54956	0.181085	0	1
Out-party policy extremity	11922	0.583276	0.19185	0	1
In-party policy similarities	28544	0.812512	0.166	0	1
Out-party policy dissimilarities	14369	0.292866	0.220631	0	1
Controls					
White ID	55674	0.818157	0.385719	0	1
Black ID	55674	0.112198	0.315612	0	1
Hh Income	50338	0.472474	0.286912	0	1
Male	55674	0.448051	0.497299	0	1
Age	53455	45.40993	17.25246	17	99
Old South	55674	0.276162	0.447102	0	1
Political interest	50815	0.503093	0.377545	0	1
Knowledge of House majority	55674	0.424292	0.494239	0	1
Protestant ID	55674	0.60989	0.487779	0	1
Year counter	55674	1982.409	18.07997	1948	2012

Source: CANES Time-Series
Notes: Data weighted by sample weights provided by ANES

Coding information and Distribution of sorting scores

Identity-based sorting comprises the overlap between partisan and ideological self-placements, in addition to the strength of those identities. Specifically, we might pursue the following operationalization:

Generate "Overlap of IDs" = | PID – IDEO| + 1   [1]

Reverse code "Overlap" so that high values convey more overlap   [2]

Fold PID and IDEO to create measures of "strength"   [3]

Multiply three items together: Overlap × PID strength × IDEO strength   [4]

Resulting scores rescaled to range from 0 "no overlap, weak IDs" to 1, "perfect overlap, strong IDs"
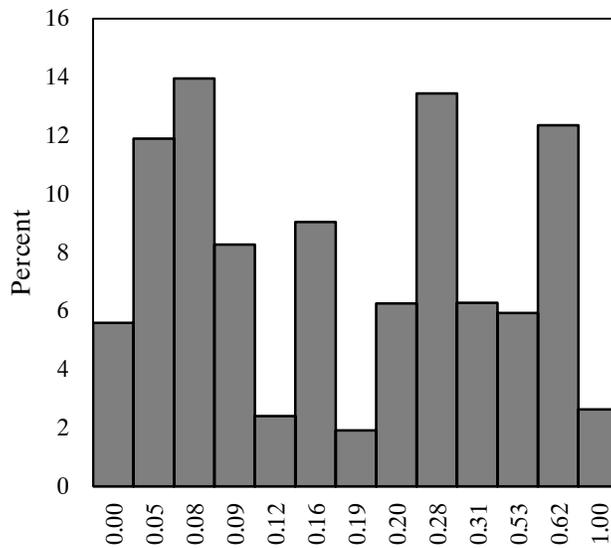
Source: CANES Time-Series, 1972-2012
Notes: Data weighted by sample weights provided by ANES

Figure B3. Identity-based sorting in the CANES Time-Series
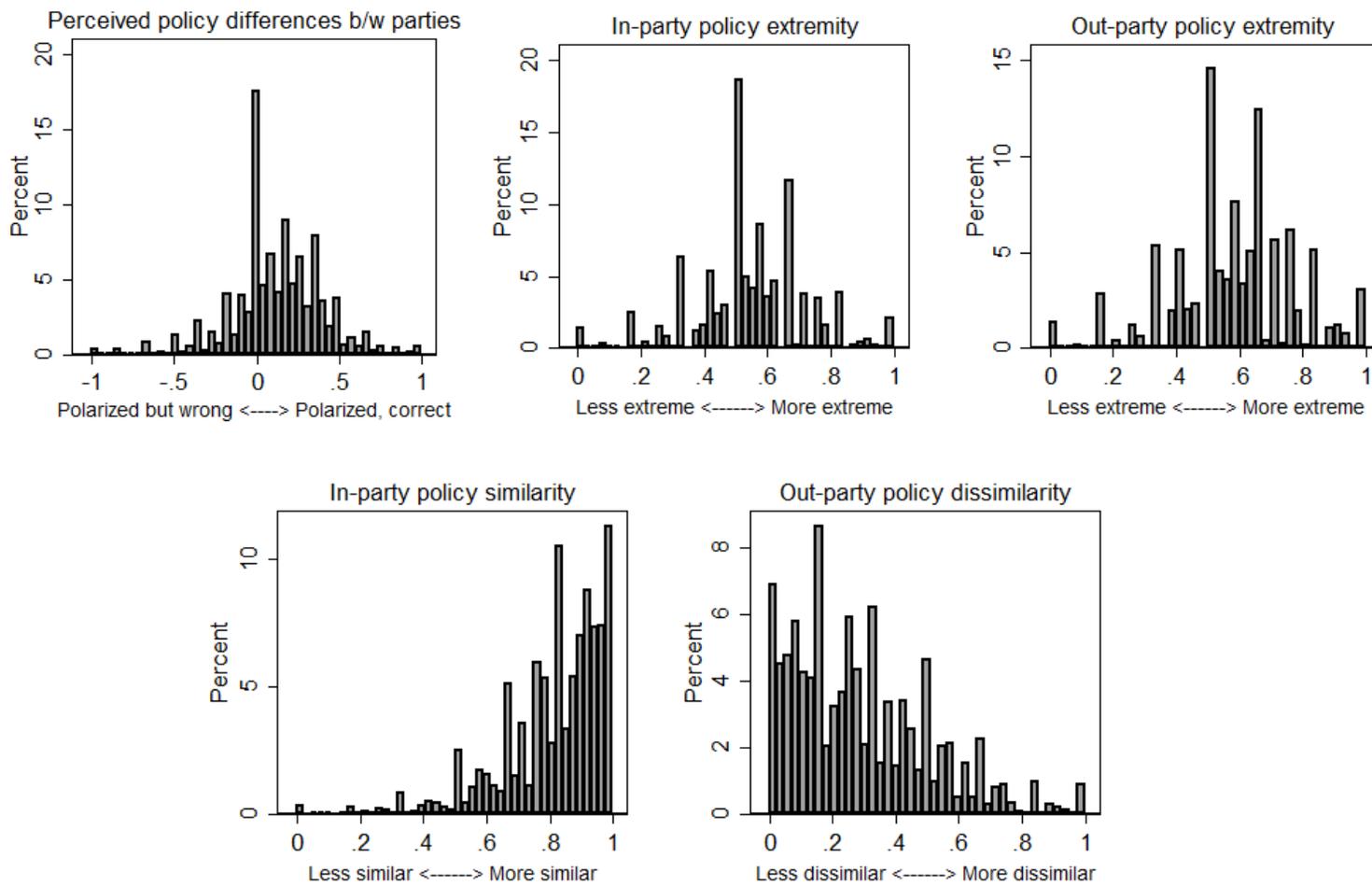
Figure B4. Policy-based assessments disaggregated by group membership

Table B4. Sorting and group assessments (Table 2 in manuscript)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Symbolic assessments			
Perceived ideological differences	0.33**	-----	-----
	(0.02)		
In-party ideological extremity	-----	0.17**	-----
		(0.02)	
Out-party ideological extremity	-----	0.22**	-----
		(0.04)	
In-party ideological similarity	-----	-----	0.17**
			(0.03)
Out-party ideological dissimilarity	-----	-----	0.65**
			(0.03)
Policy-based assessments			
Perceived policy differences	0.12*	-----	-----
	(0.04)		
In-party policy extremity	-----	0.05*	-----
		(0.02)	
Out-party policy extremity	-----	0.07*	-----
		(0.03)	
In-party policy similarity	-----	-----	-0.04
			(0.02)
Out-party policy dissimilarity	-----	-----	0.02
			(0.02)
Controls			
White	0.02**	0.01	-0.01
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Black	0.02*	-0.01	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Hh income	0.01	0.01	-0.02
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Male	-0.00	0.01	-0.00
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)

Table B4 *continued…*

	(1)	(4)	(7)
Age	0.00	0.00*	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Old South	-0.01**	-0.00	-0.01*
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)
Political interest	0.02	0.02	0.02
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.02)
Know House majority	0.04**	0.03**	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)
Protestant	0.02**	0.05**	0.03**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)
Year counter	0.00*	0.00**	-0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Constant	-2.44*	-4.11**	0.62
	(1.01)	(1.23)	(1.29)
R2	0.13	0.14	0.50
N	20,458	8,393	8,330

Source: 1972-2012 ANES Time-Series
Notes: Analysis matches "Table 2" in the main manuscript.

A closer examination of the differences of group assessments across forms of sorting

The associated manuscript argues that group cues are not evenly related to identity-based sorting. One potential objective to the validity of the conclusions drawn from these analyses is that I have "moved the goal posts" by exchanging the omnibus measure of sorting employed in *The Partisan Sort* with an identity-based one. Table A5-1 replicates Levendusky's (2009) original analyses by regressing his measure of "awareness of elite differences," which aggregates policy and identity-based cues together, on his measure of sorting. This dependent variable is a form of sorting that 1) aggregates policy preferences and symbolic identities together, and 2) only captures "matching" between and not the strength of the constituent ideology / partisanship parts. I juxtapose this analysis by breaking down this omnibus measure of sorting into policy- and identity-based components. As I would expect, the awareness of group differences is not evenly related to these constituent components.

Transitioning to the next set of analyses in Table B3, I break down these cues into their respective group "types" to examine how these various assessments differentially affect symbolic and policy sorting (the analyses in the main body of the associated manuscript do not include this comparative analysis). Two conclusions are immediate. First, symbolic assessments exert an extremely strong effect on partisan-ideological (identity) sorting, while policy-based assessments exert a severely muted effect. Conversely, symbolic assessments contribute little to policy-based sorting, while policy-based assessments are strong correlates of policy-based sorting. Combining these items together in an omnibus metric "group assessments," however, totally obscures these differences. Clearly, the relationship of group assessments vis-à-vis sorting is predicated upon these nuances, which prior research has not explored.

Table B5. Comparing the effects of elite cues on different forms of sorting

	Levendusky	Issue sorting	Identity sorting
Awareness of elite differences (policy & symbolic cues)	0.33**	0.15**	0.26**
	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.03)
White	0.01	-0.01*	0.02**
	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Black	0.06**	0.07**	0.02
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Hh income	0.05**	-0.01	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Male	0.00	-0.01**	-0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Age	-0.00	0.00*	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Old South	-0.02**	-0.01	-0.01**
	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Interest	0.02	0.02	0.02
	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Know House majority	0.05**	0.01**	0.04**
	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Protestant	0.03*	0.01	0.02**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Year	0.00*	-0.00	0.00*
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Constant	-3.76*	0.29	-2.78*
	(1.50)	(0.73)	(1.30)
R2	0.12	0.08	0.12
N	23,140	23,140	20,458

Notes: *p<0.05, **p<0.01

Table B6. Disaggregating the effects of group assessments on various forms of sorting

	Levendusky sorting		Issue sorting		Identity sorting	
Symbolic assessments	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Perceived polarization	0.17**	------	0.06**	------	0.17**	------
	(0.01)		(0.01)		(0.01)	
In-party similarity	------	0.21**	------	0.10**	------	0.17**
		(0.03)		(0.02)		(0.03)
Out-party dissimilarity	------	0.36**	------	0.14**	------	0.65**
		(0.03)		(0.02)		(0.03)
Policy assessments						
Perceived policy differences	0.16*	------	0.11**	------	0.06*	------
	(0.06)		(0.04)		(0.02)	
In-party similarity	------	-0.10	------	-0.21**	------	-0.04
		(0.06)		(0.03)		(0.02)
Out-party dissimilarity	------	0.48**	------	0.39**	------	0.02
		(0.06)		(0.03)		(0.02)
Controls						
White	0.01	0.00	-0.01*	-0.00	0.02**	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Black	0.06**	-0.05**	0.06**	-0.03*	0.02*	0.00
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.03)
Income	0.05**	0.07**	-0.01	-0.00	0.01	-0.02
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Male	0.00	0.03**	-0.01**	-0.01	-0.00	-0.00
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Age	-0.00	0.00	0.00*	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Old South	-0.02**	0.01	-0.01	-0.00	-0.01**	-0.01*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Interest	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
	(0.05)	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.02)
Knows House majority	0.05**	0.02**	0.01**	-0.00	0.04**	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Protestant	0.03*	0.03**	0.01	0.02**	0.02**	0.03**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)
Year	0.00**	0.00**	0.00	0.00**	0.00*	-0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Constant	-3.70*	-3.68**	0.03	-1.25*	-2.21*	0.62
	(1.33)	(0.73)	(0.64)	(0.43)	(1.02)	(1.29)
R2	0.12	0.45	0.08	0.41	0.13	0.50
N	23,140	8,330	23,140	8,330	20,458	8,330

Source: 1972-2012 ANES Time Series

Table B7. Modelling for Figure 5

	1972	1976	1978	1980	1982	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994	1996
In-party similarity	0.03	0.07*	0.06*	0.07	0.07	0.13**	0.07*	0.03	0.01	0.06	0.05	0.15**
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Out-party differences	0.52**	0.56**	0.55**	0.49**	0.59**	0.49**	0.53**	0.56**	0.58**	0.56**	0.66**	0.61**
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
White	-0.00	0.02	-0.04	-0.01	0.03	0.01	-0.00	0.04*	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.03*
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Black	0.06	0.06	-0.05	0.01	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	0.00	-0.02	-0.00	-0.00	-0.03
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Income	0.01	-0.01	-0.02	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00	-0.02	-0.02	0.02	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Male	0.01	-0.00	0.02	0.03*	-0.01	0.01	0.01	-0.00	-0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age	0.00*	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	0.00**	-0.00	0.00	-0.00*	-0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Old South	-0.00	-0.00	0.00	-0.01	-0.00	-0.01	-0.02*	0.00	0.00	-0.00	0.01	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Interest	0.03**	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.06**	0.05**	0.03*	0.05*	0.03*	0.04**	0.07**	0.05**
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Know House majority	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.04**	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.04**	0.00	-0.00	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Protestant	0.01	0.01	0.02*	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.02*	-0.00	0.03**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Constant	-0.02	-0.10**	-0.01	-0.06	-0.10	-0.08*	-0.03	-0.10**	-0.00	-0.09**	-0.06	-0.16**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)
R2	0.44	0.44	0.41	0.38	0.43	0.39	0.40	0.42	0.45	0.43	0.53	0.51
N	1,213	1,118	1,120	734	692	1,203	1,238	1,089	1,044	1,429	1,107	1,104

Table B. Modelling for Figure 5 *continued*….

|	1998	2000	2004	2008	2012
In-party similarity	0.10*	-0.02	0.12*	0.12**	0.21**
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.02)
Out-party differences	0.58**	0.55**	0.63**	0.67**	0.67**
	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.02)
White	-0.03	0.00	-0.00	-0.02	-0.02
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Black	-0.05	-0.07	-0.09**	-0.06*	-0.05**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Income	0.03	-0.08*	0.06**	0.09**	-0.04**
	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.01)
Male	-0.02	-0.01	-0.00	-0.03*	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Age	-0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Old South	-0.01	-0.02	0.01	-0.00	-0.01
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Interest	0.04*	0.09**	-0.03	0.09**	-0.06**
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.01)
Know House majority	0.02	0.01	0.03	-0.02	-0.01
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Protestant	-0.00	0.03	0.04**	0.06**	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Constant	-0.03	0.06	-0.17**	-0.24**	-0.13**
	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.03)
R2	0.42	0.38	0.50	0.54	0.51
N	813	423	741	655	4,394

Appendix C – Chapter 6

Figure C1. Probability of selecting elected official who will compromise among persons with right-leaning identities.
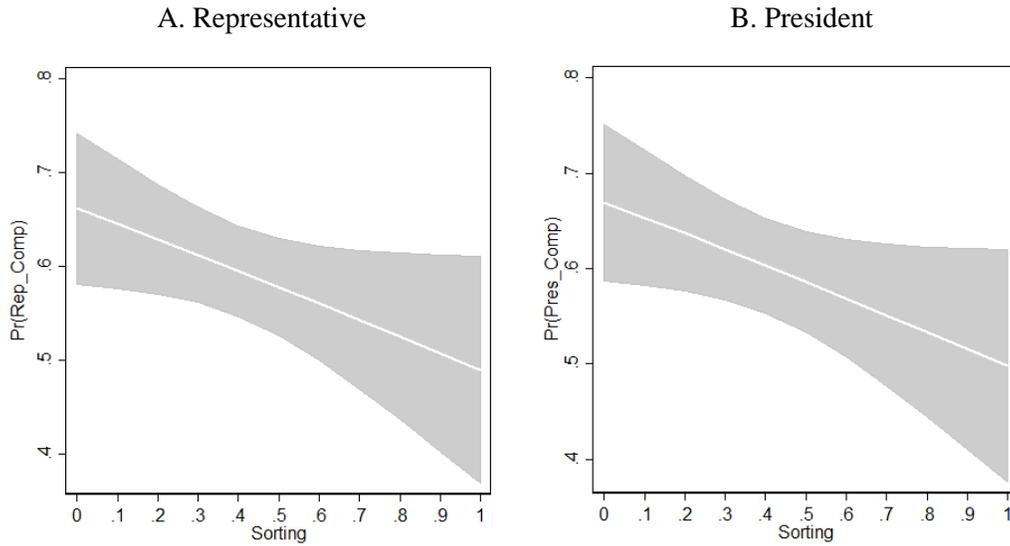
Source: ANES Evaluations of Government Survey
Notes: Estimates correspond to Table 1 in Chapter 5

Figure C2. The effect of sorting on willingness to negotiate by value consistency
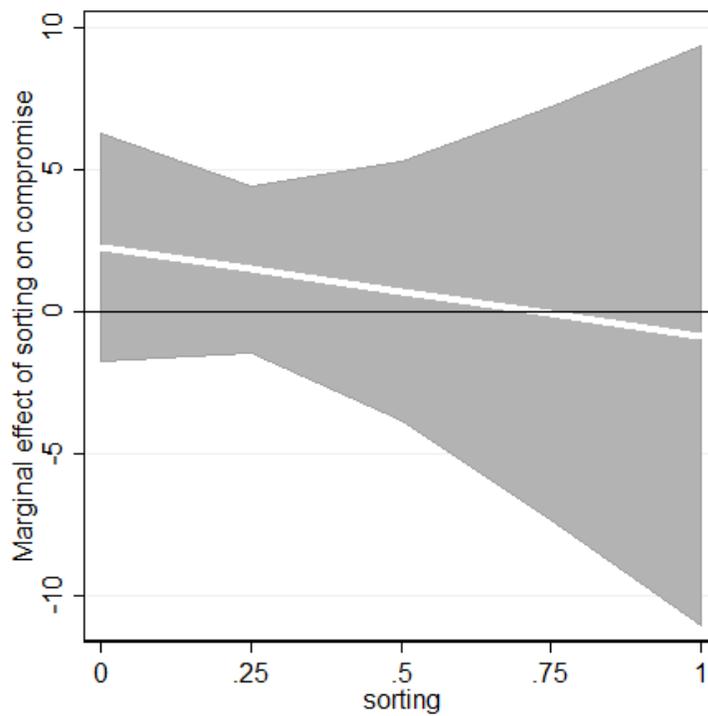
Notes: Figure depicts the significance test between low- and high-value consistency across gradations of sorting. Clearly, given the large overlap in the shaded area (95 percent confidence intervals) with the value 0, the difference between estimates at varying levels of values consistency is insignificant.

Appendix D – IRB approvals

ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST

LSU

TO: James Garand
            Political Science

FROM: Dennis Landin
            Chair, Institutional Review Board

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

DATE: May 31, 2016

RE: IRB# E9948

TITLE: The relationship between portrayals of polarization and political opinion

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: _New Protocol_

Review Date: _5/31/2016_

Approved_____ X _____ Disapproved_____

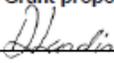Approval Date: _5/31/2016_   Approval Expiration Date: _5/30/2019_

Exemption Category/Paragraph: _2a_

Signed Consent Waived?: _Yes_

Re-review frequency: _(three years unless otherwise stated)_

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable)

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman _____

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –
Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE:** When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc. Approvals will automatically be closed by the IRB on the expiration date unless the PI requests a continuation.

*All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at http://www.lsu.edu/irb

ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST

LSU

TO: Matthew Hitt
           Political Science

FROM: Dennis Landin
           Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: February 11, 2016

RE: IRB# E9764

TITLE: Connecting sorting to information processing, biased perceptions, and candidate choice

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: New Protocol

Review Date: 2/11/2016

Approved_____X_____ **Disapproved**_____

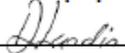**Approval Date:** 2/11/2016   **Approval Expiration Date:** 2/10/2019

Exemption Category/Paragraph: 2a

Signed Consent Waived?: Yes

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable)

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman _____

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –
Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE:** When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc. Approvals will automatically be closed by the IRB on the expiration date unless the PI requests a continuation.

All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at http://www.lsu.edu/irb

VITA

Nicholas T. Davis received his bachelor's degree from Taylor University in 2010. He then worked in a bike tools factory for a year, which, in some respects was similar to graduate school: repetitive tasks with poor pay. Prior to completing his Masters at LSU in 2015, he started working full-time at the Graduate School. Between the job and toddler, the fact that this document is now finished is a minor miracle. Nick is scheduled to receive his PhD from LSU in May, 2017.