Polarization in U.S. Presidential Nomination Campaigns

by

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(Under the Direction of Paul-Henri Gurian)

Abstract

This research presents a theory of political polarization which argues that changes in American society, political culture, institutions, media, and technology combine to create conditions favorable to political polarization at the mass and elite levels through a process known as party sorting. As ideological conservatives sorted into the Republican Party and ideological liberals sorted into the Democratic Party, each party became ideologically homogenous. Homogeneity allows ideological polarization amongst political elites, political activists, and the American electorate to increase because it promotes ideological extremism and discourages ideological moderation through "group think." Without the presence of liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats to raise alternative viewpoints, to oppose the party's status quo on issues, and to foster compromise with the opposition party, ideological extremism increases and the two parties diverge ideologically.

The dissertation empirically demonstrates two important effects that political polarization is having on the American political system. Analysis of the American electorate reveals a sharp increase in polarization between Republican and Democratic voters over the past decade. The preferences of Republican and Democratic voters are increasingly divergent. The analysis then examines the ideological distribution of all presidential primary candidates since 2000 using ideal point estimation. The analysis reveals that individual primary candidates are becoming more ideologically extreme, creating more ideologically extreme candidate fields. There was a sharp increase in ideological extremism between the 2008 and 2012 Republican contests with many 2012 Republican candidates far to the ideological right of comparable Republican candidates in earlier cycles. By providing empirical evidence of mass level polarization and elite polarization outside of congressional elites, the dissertation makes an important contribution to the political polarization literature.

Index Words: political polarization, nomination campaigns, ideology, political behavior, voters

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Dedication

For my dad, and for Shanoah Dog, my brave little friend

Acknowledgment

I would be remiss if I didn't start off this acknowledgment by recognizing the great costs that completion of this dissertation and doctoral degree imposed on my family. On my husband, who had to deal with my multiple mood swings as I wrestled with one statistical package or another. My sweet baby Gabriel, who had to endure the horrors of daycare and the never-ending cascade of terrible illnesses that result when large numbers of children are condensed into small, enclosed spaces. Of course, being relatively new additions to my world, both the husband and baby's sacrifices pale in comparison to those made by my eldest son Naquoia. That poor kid spent his entire childhood dealing with me as a student. First as an undergraduate at my beloved University of Oregon (Go Ducks!) and then for graduate school, 11 years in total. Being the child of a single mom pursuing higher education while juggling a professional job, Naquoia's sacrifices are immeasurable. There's a saying that it takes a village to raise a child. Well, it definitely takes one to produce a PhD! So thank you to my parents and to my parents-in-law for helping me achieve this dream.

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There was no way I could get through all of that without at least one Go Ducks!

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v. Non-Supporters)

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Introduction

The research presented in this dissertation tackles one of the most pressing and complex puzzles in modern American politics: political polarization. Hardly a day goes by without a headline or news story documenting the partisan warfare and gridlock that seems to be holding our entire political system hostage. At the academic level, political polarization has been primarily investigated in two related, but distinct areas of research. One research area has focused on developing and testing theories of elite polarization, while the other has focused on determining if mass-level polarization is occurring. The research on elite polarization has been focused largely on Congress and has produced convincing evidence of increasing ideological polarization in Congress. However, the findings from research into mass-level polarization has been less conclusive. Some scholars find little empirical evidence supporting the so-called "Culture War" hypothesis which claims that the American public is polarized ideologically (Dimaggio, Evans, and Bryson 1996; Evans 2003; Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2005, 2008; Fiorina and Levendusky 2006; Fiorina and Abrams 2008; Fiorina 2009). While political elites, political activists, the political media, and opinion leaders are highly polarized, average Americans remain ideologically moderate. These "average Joes" are increasingly forced to choose between polarizing candidates representing polarized political parties. As Morris Fiorina explains it in his 2009 book *Disconnect: The Breakdown of Representation in American Politics*, it's the voting choice that is polarized, not the actual voter. However, other scholars do find evidence that the American public exhibit evidence of ideological polarization finding a decline

in the number of moderates (Campbell 2006) and evidence of ideological separation (Abramowitz 2006, 2010, 2012; Abramowitz and Saunders 2008).

The lack of consensus in the mass polarization literature and the limited reach of exploration into elite polarization makes this a rich area for additional scholarship that can make an important scholarly contribution. When quality scholarship yields contradictory conclusions it is a worthy undertaking to examine the research conducted, offer new theories, and empirically test those theories to provide some clarity. This is particularly important for political polarization research because of the normative implications political polarization has for nearly every aspect of American government. Indeed, a great deal of the media and academic commentary on political polarization is framed in such a way that presents political polarization not only as a problem, but a problem that should or must be solved if the country is to be able to respond to pressing public policy concerns such as immigration reform, economic malaise and inequality, and climate change. If we accept the premise that political polarization is problematic for American democracy then reducing political polarization is desirable. Therefore, it is imperative that we understand political polarization including its causes and consequences. While previous research has advanced theoretical arguments regarding polarization at the mass and/or the elite levels, there has yet to be a complex theory that explains why polarization is occurring, and what effects polarization is having on political institutions, political actors, and within the American public. This research is a step towards that goal.

The research conducted here aims to address three important questions regarding political polarization. How did political polarization develop and what mechanisms are driving it? How pervasive is political polarization? What effects does political polarization have on political institutions and on political actors? This research presents a theory of political polarization which

argues that elite and mass-level polarization is dynamic, interconnected, and interactive. I argue that changes in American society, political culture, and technology combined with the emergence of the post-civil rights era party coalitions created conditions favorable to political polarization at both the mass and elite levels through a mechanism called party sorting. I then empirically test two important effects that political polarization is having on the American political system. I hypothesize that despite some research findings to the contrary, ideological polarization *is* occurring at the mass level. My analysis produces significant empirical evidence of ideological changes in the electorate, particularly in the last decade. I then argue that elite-level polarization cannot be confined to congressional elites if the mechanisms driving polarization are system-wide and are not institutionally specific. If the theory of political polarization offered in this research has any merit, then elite-level ideological polarization must be shown to be occurring outside of Congress. As such, I hypothesize that there is increasing ideological extremism in presidential nomination campaigns. My analysis finds evidence that presidential nomination candidates are becoming more ideologically extreme.

The outline of the dissertation is as follows. Chapter 1 conducts a comprehensive literature review of both mass-level and elite-level polarization. Chapter 2 offers a theory of political polarization which asserts that major changes in American political and social culture, as well as important demographical, technological, and institutional changes over the past 60 years led to important changes in the electoral coalitions of the Republican and Democratic Parties which in turn changed their ideological composition through a mechanism known in the polarization literature as "party sorting." I posit that rather than being distinct from ideological polarization, party sorting is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for ideological polarization because ideological polarization is most conducive within ideologically homogenous political

parties. Up until the 1960s, there were significant numbers of liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats. High levels of ideological overlap between the parties fostered political compromise and encouraged ideological moderation. Liberal Democrats were moderated as they sought the support of liberal Republicans. Conservative Republicans were encouraged to moderate in order to find common ground with conservative Democrats. As the post-civil rights southern and northern realignments sorted ideological conservatives into the Republican Party and sorted ideological liberals into the Democratic Party, ideological overlap decreased. As Republicans became reliably conservative and Democrats became reliably liberal political elites and voters sorted themselves accordingly. The correlation between party identification and ideology increased sharply. Lacking incentive to seek out opposition party ideological allies and with increasing ideological homogeneity leading to "group think," the two parties began to move to the ideological extremes. Much scholarly attention has focused on whether changes we see among political actors are evidence of party sorting or evidence of ideological polarization. It is argued here that rather than being a distinct phenomenon, party sorting serves as a *mechanism* for ideological polarization at both the mass and elite levels.

Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 move on to test hypotheses regarding the effects that political polarization is expected to have on the broader American political system if the theory of polarization offered in this research has merit. Chapter 3 proposes and empirically tests the hypothesis that mass level polarization is occurring and produces significant evidence of mass-level polarization in the group in which polarization matters the most: voters. Chapter 4 theorizes that elite-level polarization is not limited to members of Congress and is occurring among presidential nomination candidates. It is hypothesized that presidential nomination candidates are experiencing increased levels of ideological extremism. Using ideal point estimation I provide a

measurement of the ideology of presidential nomination candidates and find evidence of increasing ideological extremism in presidential nomination contests. Both analyses provide empirical support for the occurrence of political polarization.

In Chapter 5 I attempt to better explain the shift to the far right that the 2012 Republican field took by examining voter preferences in the 2012 Republican electorate in Iowa to explore differences in ideological extremism between Tea Party Republicans and non-Tea Party Republicans. It is believed that mass polarization in the Republican Party led to the emergence of the Tea Party, and the emergence of the Tea Party has pushed Republican nomination candidates to the ideological extremes. The analysis reveals that there are substantial differences in ideological extremism between Tea Party Republicans and non-Tea Party Republicans participating in the Iowa Caucuses. Tea Party Republicans are significantly more conservative both according to self-identified ideology as well as on policy issues than non-Tea Party Republicans and make up the clear majority of the Republican electorate in Iowa in 2012. Further, Tea Party support is found to be a significant predictor of intention to vote for a candidate other than Mitt Romney in the 2012 Iowa Caucus.

In the conclusion (Chapter 6) I summarize the dissertation's findings and contribution to the political polarization and presidential nomination campaigns literature. The limitations of the research presented in the dissertation are discussed, and areas that require additional study are examined.

Chapter 1

Elite & Mass Level Political Polarization

Elite-Level Political Polarization

Elite level polarization research has largely focused on Congress. In their 1997 book *Congress,* Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal introduced an innovative method for measuring the ideology of members of Congress using roll call voting through a spatial modeling technique they called NOMINATE. By the time the authors updated *Congress* in their 2007 book titled *Ideology and Congress* and issued a more substantively-focused 2006 book titled *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches* with new co-author Nolan McCarty, NOMINATE had become the academic gold standard for measuring the ideological composition of legislative bodies across the world. The analyses of the ideological changes in Congress produced using NOMINATE scores provide compelling empirical evidence that the 113th Congress is more ideologically polarized than at any other time since the Civil War. Figures 1-A and 1-B show the ideological distribution of the 88th Senate and the 88th House which started in January of 1963. The 88th session of Congress is chosen because it is the last session of Congress before passage the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* and the *Voting Rights Act of 1965* which solidified the southern realignment set into motion by earlier civil rights debates in Congress, by the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, and by efforts by the federal government to enforce that decision such as the forced integration of Little Rock Central High in Arkansas

Figure 1.1-A: 88th Session of the Senate   Figure 1.1-B: 88th Session of the House
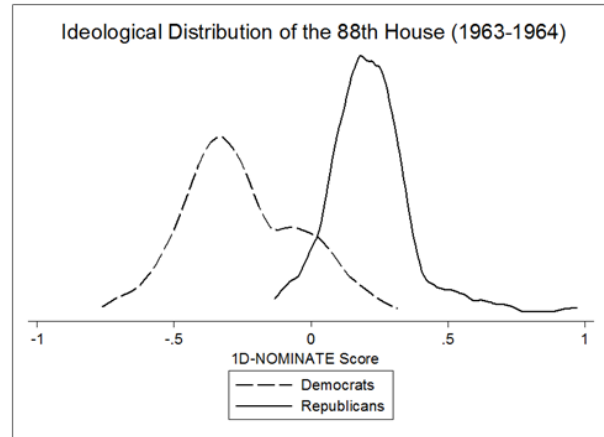
Figures 1.1-A and 1.1-B: Ideological Distribution of the 88th Congress

in 1957. The distribution plots reveal that in both chambers, not only was there a robust number of ideological moderates, there were also a fair number of ideologically conservative Democrats and liberal Republicans.

However, analysis of both chambers from the most recent session of Congress (the 113th) reveals a very different Congress, at least ideologically. Figures 1.2A and 1.2B demonstrate just how polarized Congress has become. There is no remaining ideological overlap between the political parties. In fact, there are scarcely any ideological moderates remaining in either chamber. It is also worth noting that congressional polarization is asymmetrical. Although conservative Democrats have disappeared, much of the drift to the extremes of the ideological distribution is being driven by Republicans members of Congress. In the House of Representatives, 81 members of the Republican caucus have first dimension NOMINATE scores greater than 0.8 while not even one Democrat scores that high on the liberal side of the scale. This is likely a function of two things. First, centrist and conservative Democrats are not being replaced by more liberal Democrats in the way that moderate Republicans are being replaced by conservative Republicans. Instead, many moderately conservative Democrats are being replaced

by strongly conservative Republicans. Second, it might also be a function of the intraparty ideological purging that has been occurring in the Republican congressional caucus since 2010 and the emergence of the Tea Party which will be examined in chapter 5 of this work. Conservative Republicans are being replaced with even more conservative Republicans in party primaries. Incumbent Republicans that are not being driven out of Congress through a primary challenge might be adopting more extreme positions and rhetoric in order to ward off allegations of being a R.I.N.O (Republican in name only) and the possible primary challenge that may come as a result.
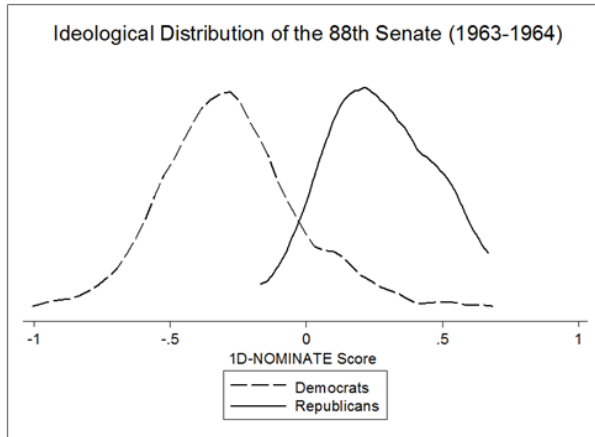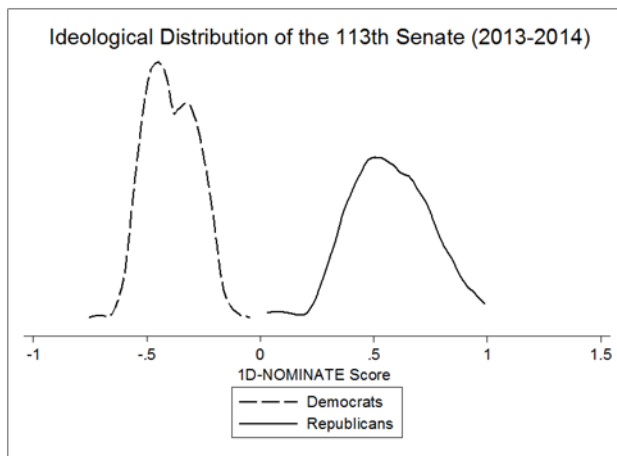

Figure 1.2-A: 113th Session of the Senate   Figure 1.2-B: 113th Session of the House
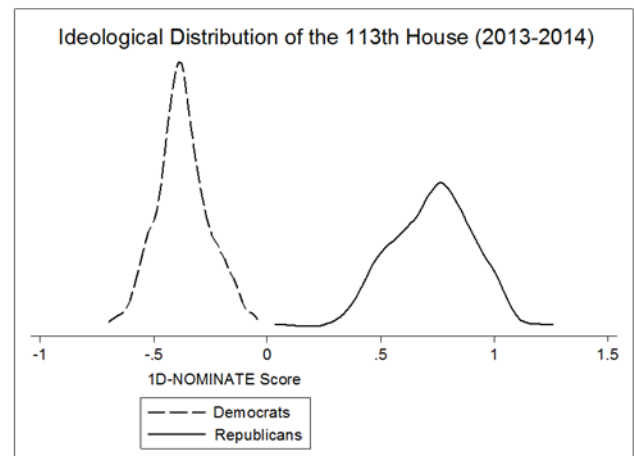
Figures 1.2-A and 1.2-B: Ideological Distribution of the 113th Congress

Scholarship on congressional polarization has focused on the effect political polarization is having on Congress as an institution. Studies have documented effects from congressional polarization such as important changes in the committee system (Aldrich and Rhode 1999; Theriault 2008; McKee 2010), the increasingly contentious Senate confirmation process (Scherer 2005), increases in the use of the filibuster and cloture votes (Sinclair 2006; Binder, Madonna, and Smith 2007) and policy stagnation (Binder 2003; Layman, Carsey, and Horowitz 2006). However, elite polarization scholarship has struggled to explain the causes of congressional

polarization. The literature examining the causes of congressional polarization have produced several conflicting findings. Although some research finds that the increases in the number of districts drawn for partisan gerrymanders and the corresponding decrease in the number of marginal (competitive) House districts to be a significant contributing factor to increasing polarization in the House (Mann 2006; Carson et al. 2007; Theriault 2008; Ladewig 2010), other research contests this claim finding little support for the gerrymandering hypothesis (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2009). Despite conflicting empirical findings the partisan gerrymander hypothesis is theoretically intuitive because the substantial shift from competitive to non-competitive districts correlate with increasing ideological distance between the parties in the House. Before the 2000 and 2010 reapportionment and redistricting cycles there were 168 "swing" districts, where the gap between partisan voters in the district is 5% or less. Two redistricting cycles later this number was down to 99, just 22% of all House seats. In addition, the percent of House districts with party registration advantages of 15% or more is quite high. Nearly 30% of House Republicans and 41% of House Democrats serve in districts in which the opposition party stands little chance of winning in the general election and in which the member's greatest electoral threat comes from their own party and the possibility of a primary challenge.[1] Given these factors, additional research into the influence of partisan gerrymanders on House polarization is needed.

The theoretical mechanisms driving elite polarization have never been fully fleshed out. In *Polarized America*, McCarty, Poole, Rosenthal argue that until the major Civil Rights legislation passed in the 1960s, political ideology was two dimensional. Along with the left/right liberal-conservative ideological space, the second dimension was based on ideological

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[1] Cook Political Report. "The Decline of the Swing Seat." http://cookpolitical.com/story/5604

positioning on civil rights issues and segregation. This, the authors argue, explains why the Democratic "New Deal" coalition maintained cohesiveness until the 1960s. Although the Democratic coalition was divided along the civil rights dimension with robust pro-segregation and anti-segregation wings, they were largely cohesive on economic liberalism. In the proceeding chapter, I argue that the divisive social issues that define today's ideological divisions between the two parties had just begun to emerge in 1960s America and both parties could be argued to endorse the socially conservative status quo. The passage of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* and the *Voting Rights Acts of 1965* finally shattered this uneasy alliance and sparked the Southern realignment (McKee 2010). By the 1970s, argue McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, the civil rights dimension had all but disappeared leaving the one dimensional ideological space of the modern era. This allowed the two parties to sort into more homogenous ideological camps and combined with rising income inequality and increased immigration, led to increases in the ideological distances between the parties. I will argue in chapter 3 that the emergence of the one dimensional ideological space as documented by McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal plays a critical role in political polarization at both the mass and elite levels.

Mass-level Polarization

While there is scholarly consensus about elite polarization, research into mass-level polarization has been inconclusive and even contentious. Much of the debate centers on whether Americans are actually diverging ideologically, or are merely "sorting" into liberal and conservative ideological camps evidenced by rising ideological homogeneity and an increase in correlation between party identification and ideology (Levendusky 2009a, 2009b; Fiorina and Abrams 2009). From this perspective as the Republican Party became more consistently conservative and the Democratic Party became more consistently liberal, voters were able to

more easily identity which party best aligned with their own ideological preferences and policy positions. As such, the mass public is "sorted, but not polarized" with polarization relegated to political elites and a small political class of donors and political activists (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2005; Fiorina 2009, 2013). The party sorting theory is supported by a recently released PEW Center for the *People & the Press report* titled *Political Polarization in the American Public* which finds substantial increases in consistent ideology. Ideological consistency is defined as Democrats holding consistently liberal issue preferences and Republicans holding consistently conservative positions. Of course, Fiorina would likely find increasing ideological consistency to be evidence of party sorting, not ideological polarization.

However, in his 2013 book *The Polarized Public*, Alan Abramowitz argues that party sorting and polarization "are two sides of the same coin". His examination of public opinion data in that book shows a decrease in the number of ideological moderates and a shift to the ideological extremes which he argues serves as empirical evidence for both party sorting *and* ideological polarization. Based on these findings Abramowitz rebuts Fiorina's claim in *Disconnect* that the public is only polarized in practice and contests Fiorina's assertion that elite polarization depresses turnout. In some ways, the party sorting versus ideological polarization debate between Fiorina and Abramowitz is more semantic than it is substantive. Both authors find modest changes in the ideological distribution of the mass public but debate the significance of the changes and whether the changes should be considered to be evidence of party sorting, ideological polarization, or both. A key point is that both researchers rely on self-identified ideology and on the distribution of policy preferences between Republicans and Democrats within narrow issue areas across a fairly broad period of time or on piecemeal analysis of issue

areas within a defined period of time. Neither Fiorina nor Abramowitz conduct a comprehensive analysis to test for increasing ideological polarization across time.

The research presented here argues that much of the conflicting findings in the mass polarization literature is a product of underdeveloped theory, methodological approach, and perhaps most importantly, timing. Party sorting and polarization are neither distinct phenomena as Fiorina argues, nor two aspects of the same phenomena as Abramowitz argues. Rather, party sorting is a mechanism of ideological polarization. As I explain above, the one dimension ideological space and ideological homogeneity created by party sorting allowed the conditions favorable for ideological polarization to emerge. I also argue that methodological approach and operationalization of polarization play an important role in producing divergent findings in mass-level polarization scholarship. In the literature, polarization has been defined as "the simultaneous presence of opposing or conflicting principles, tendencies, or points of view" (Fiorina and Abrams 2008, 566), the "separation of politics into liberal and conservative camps" (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006, 3), or even as being constructed of separate aspects such as issue alignment, ideological cohesiveness, and opinion radicalization (Gelman 2008). I believe that mass-level ideological polarization is best defined as increasing ideological divergence between partisan voters. If mass-level ideological polarization is occurring we should see an erosion of the ideological middle as ideological moderates are pulled into either the liberal or conservative ideological camps and we should also see an increase in the number of people displaying higher levels of ideological extremism as people who were already liberal or conservative become more strongly liberal or more strongly conservative.

I also argue in this dissertation that some of the conflicting findings in previous research on mass-level polarization research are a function of the time period analyzed. Morris Fiorina's

Culture Wars was released in 2005 and examined public opinion data through 2004. Yet the analysis presented in chapter 3 finds that nearly all of the ideological polarization in the mass public began after 2000 with only modest shifts until 2007, when a seismic shift begins. The shift is suggestive that mass-level polarization may have lagged behind elite and activist level polarization, but has now caught up. Had Fiorina written *Culture War* in the second half of the decade, I argue that his analysis would have found considerable evidence of ideological change. The polarization literature lacks a comprehensive theoretical explanation for how and why ideological polarization is occurring. The polarization literature has emerged piecemeal and there has been very little scholarship that attempts a holistic examination of political polarization that ties elite and mass polarization together. Part of this is the complexity involved. As I will argue in chapter 2, polarization is interactive with no single direction of causality. As such, it is difficult to test the "big picture" of political polarization. The research presented in this dissertation presents a theory of political polarization that attributes rising ideological extremism of political elites and of the mass public to massive societal and technological changes in American society over the past half century. It then endeavors to empirically test aspects of that theory regarding mass and elite polarization. It is to this theory I turn now.

Chapter 2

A Theory of Political Polarization

America's Egalitarian Revolution

The U.S., like most of the developed world, has undergone significant cultural, legal, and technological changes over the past 60 years. The 1960s marked a period of significant political, social, and cultural upheaval in the United States. The civil rights movement produced a series of legal victories that finally ended segregation and the political dominance of the white power structure in the South. The 1960s were marked by jarring events such as the Selma and the Birmingham protests, as well as the assassinations of civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and Medgar Evers and of President John F. Kennedy and his brother Bobby Kennedy. Betty Friedan's 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique* set off second-wave feminism and led to a generation of women seeking legal and cultural equality. Vietnam divided Americans and helped spawn the anti-war movement and the "counter culture" which would encourage people to "turn on, tune in, and drop out." The events of the 1960s set into motion a major cultural and social metamorphosis in America and gave rise to new "culture war" issues (Hunter 1991; Perlstein 2001; Stonecash, Brewer, and Mariani 2002; Gross, Medetz, and Russell 2011). Five decades later Americans are living in a country in which racial minorities and women are approaching full legal equality, where the prominence of religion in the public sphere has eroded, and where many gay Americans have access to legal marriage. Someone born in the 1940s, 50s, or 60s has

witnessed a dramatic transformation of American political culture. Here I examine how each of these legal, social and cultural changes help foster a political environment conducive to ideological polarization.

Over the past 50 years, gender roles in America have radically transformed. The legal empowerment of women allowed for the emergence of new and divisive "culture war" issues such as the reproductive and other health issues, educational access, pay and job discrimination, family leave, and maternity policies. Each decade brought about more gains for women and more challenges to the status quo. In the early 1960s most American women were legally and behaviorally subservient to men and access to family planning services was just being realized. Women were first granted universal access to contraceptives with the *Griswold v. Connecticut* 1963 decision and by 1973, legal abortion came with the *Roe v. Wade* decision. Other legal changes for women in terms of access to higher education, collegiate athletics, liberalized divorce laws, and the codification of sexual assault laws and domestic violence laws gave rise to a generation of women who came of age in a system of legal and economic egalitarianism. In 1970 women aged 25-64 held just 11% of college degrees. By 2011, they held 37% and women accounted for 47% of the overall labor force.[2] As women became economically empowered, they also became politically empowered. They increased their overall share of the electorate moving from a minority of the electorate in the 1960s (48%) to the majority in of the electorate in 2012 (53%). Since 1980, a persistent gender gap emerged with women voters consistently preferring Democratic presidential candidates. Democratic presidential candidates have won a majority of the women's vote in five of the last six presidential elections.

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[2] Women in the Labor Force-A Data Book. U.S. Bureau of Labor & Statistics. 2011.

During the same period, the civil rights movement brought about massive cultural and political changes which were largely achieved through federal legislation and through judicial fiat. In the early 1960s, blacks in the South still lived under the "Jim Crow" system and many public schools still resisted integration despite the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education-Topeka* decision. The *Civil Rights Act of 1964* and the *Voting Rights Act of 1965* accomplished what earlier efforts had not, ending segregation and enfranchising southern blacks. Passage of these laws set into motion the "Dixiecrat Revolution" which over the course of the proceeding decades transformed the South from a Democratic Party stronghold to a Republican Party stronghold. By the new millennium, black political participation in the South reached near parity with white participation and local-level office holding became racially diversified. Analysis of voting preferences by racial demographics reveal that the American electorate is divided along racial lines. In 2012, the white electorate broke for the Republican candidate at 59%-the highest share of the electorate to do so since Reagan's landslide reelection in 1984, which was aided in no small part by cross-party, so-called "Reagan Democrats." In the South, the racial gap in 2012 was astounding. CNN exit polling revealed that 89% of white voters in Mississippi and 84% of white voters in Alabama and Louisiana voted for Mitt Romney. These numbers are approaching the same level of black voter support for Democrats which on average hovers around 90% in most elections. While Barack Obama's race may play a part in driving this gap, increasing divisions between the Republican and Democratic parties regarding the proper role of government in improving conditions for racial and ethnic minorities, welfare benefits, immigration policy, criminal justice disparities, and economic policies seem to be producing an increasingly diverse electorate that is polarizing along racial lines.[3]

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[3] *Political Polarization in the American Public*. PEW Center for the People & the Press report. 2014

The 1960s marked the beginning of another important change in American political culture: the emergence of legal secularism. In the 1960s several Warren Court decisions began to redefine and reduce the influence of religion in public life. The Court invalidated religious oaths for office (*Torcaso v. Watkins* 1961), ruled that official school prayer was unconstitutional (*Engel v. Vitale* 1962), and invalidated bans on teaching evolution (*Epperson v. Arkansas* 1968). In the 1970s, the Burger Court continued the trend by prohibiting the posting of the Ten Commandments in public schools (*Stone v. Graham* 1980) and invalidating requirements that "creation science" be taught alongside evolution in classrooms (*Edwards v. Aquillard*, 1987). Even the conservative Rehnquist Court banned displays of the nativity scene inside public buildings (*Allegheny County v. ACLU 1989*). Backlash from the *Roe* abortion decision combined with what many religious conservatives saw as the Supreme Court's "war on religion" gave rise to the "religious right" which began to infiltrate the Republican Party in the late 1970s. By the 1990s, the religious right held influential positions in the Republican Party, particularly at the local and state level, and had established national interest groups such as James Dobson's group *Focus on the Family* and used this influence to push politicians and candidates to adopt socially conservative issue positions.

Along with these cultural and political changes, massive technological changes have completely transformed American political culture. Cable television news channels emerged in the early 1990s, and by 2000, "infotainment" partisan television and radio shows such as the *O'Reilly Factor* and the *Rush Limbaugh* show had become mainstays of modern political media. Partisan media and niche news sites were quick to incorporate blogs and social media. The result has been a partisan "echo chamber" on both the political Right and Left where supporters choose

to receive political information finely tuned to reinforce their ideological preferences and where the opposition is often characterized as the "enemy" (Jamieson and Cappella 2008; Dagnes 2010; Levendusky 2013; Prior 2013).

The information technology revolution has also increased the influence of ideologically-motivated interest groups. The emergence of the internet completely redefined campaign fundraising. Gone were the days in which candidates had to compel supporters to literally open their checkbooks, track down an address, and physically mail in a donation. Not only were donations easy to make online, they were also available to any supporter interested in the candidate at any time. Candidates were now able to raise funds from a wider audience and were quick to recognize the relationship between partisan rhetoric and campaign donations. Further with the creation of the Federal Election Commission database in the 1970s and the reporting requirements expanded under McCain-Feingold campaign finance regulations in the early 2000s, candidates were given access to their view supporters in a searchable format. In the internet era, *OpenSecrets* took these data and then made it more accessible both to the general public and to campaigns. To be sure, open reporting in campaign fundraising makes a positive contribution to democracy. However, it also allows candidates the ability to draw inferences about their donors and their ideological preferences. As examined in Chapter 4, the ease of fundraising in the digital era led to the emergence of increasingly specialized interest groups, many of whom were ideologically motivated and has had important implications for candidates for political office. These changes became particularly influential after the 2010 *Citizens United v. FEC* and the 2014 *McCutcheon, et al. v. FEC* Supreme Court decisions which greatly enhanced the influence of special interest groups on the electoral process (Watal et al. 2010; Scher forthcoming).

Other important institutional changes occurred since the 1970s. Both parties adopted electoral reforms suggested by the McGovern Fraser Commission, convened in the wake of the Democrats' disastrous 1968 nominating convention in Chicago. The changes led to a significant increase in the number of states using direct primaries in presidential nomination campaigns rather than elite-run nominating caucuses and conventions.[4] The effect was a shift in the center of power from the political parties and party elites directly to the voters and to the media, which in turn helped lead to the rise of candidate-centered campaigns (Kaufman, Gimpel, and Hoffman 2003). Direct primaries were also adopted at the state level and for other types of elections such as gubernatorial and congressional races. Over time, the direct primary became institutionalized. This "grassroots revolution" also increased political activism among average citizens. The campaign professionals of the past were joined by partisan activists whose involvement is based on deeply held ideological beliefs (Fiorina 2005, 2013) and by ideological donors with deep pockets and since 2010, the ability to contribute large sums of money to support the candidacies of their preferred candidates. In addition, state-level direct democracy ballot initiatives allowed citizen activists and interest groups to put new, often divisive issues on the political agenda.

Another institutional change was the proliferation of partisan gerrymandering for seats in the House of Representatives. In the wake of the *Voting Rights Act of 1965* the pro-segregation power structure in the South used racial gerrymanders to dilute black political power until the Supreme Court invalidated this practice. As the southern realignment gained steam and began to spread to lower federal offices, Democrats used partisan gerrymanders to stave off insurgent Republicans who in turn, used the same technique to consolidate their own power once they took

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[4] Although direct primaries were first introduced in the Progressive Era, they did not become common-place until the 1970s.

control of the process (Bullock and Rozell 2010). As the advantages of partisan gerrymanders became evident, more and more state parties adopted the technique. The use of partisan gerrymanders hit new highs in the 2010 reapportionment and redistricting process. Today, only 1/3 of congressional House districts are considered marginal (an electoral advantage of one party at 10% or less) and only 1/4 are truly competitive (an electoral advantage of one party at 5% or less).[5]

House gerrymandering has reached an apex and despite modest empirical support in research conducted thus far, it seems likely that gerrymandering affects congressional polarization. As the number of districts that were gerrymandered for partisan advantage increased, candidates running in House elections adapted to increasingly partisan electorates by adopting issue positions favorable to their respective party's base. As Anthony Downs argues in his 1957 seminal work, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, politicians are rational actors who seek to maximize vote share. As such, politicians will position themselves at the ideological median to attract the highest number of voters. Where that ideal point is, is a function of the ideological and partisan composition of the electorate. If a candidate faces an electorate comprised of a nearly equal number of Republican and Democratic voters, the ideal point will be near the ideological middle. A candidate will need to position themselves there to attract as many voters in the center as possible. If he does not, then he risks ceding that ideological territory to his opponent. In a congressional district that has been gerrymandered to create a significant electoral advantage to one of the parties, the ideological location of the median voter changes. The median is no longer centered on ideological moderation, but rather, is centered squarely within one ideological camp. If the electoral advantage is sizable enough, a House candidate

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[5] Data on congressional districts is from 2014 Cook Political Report.

need not attract *any* votes from Independents or opposition party voters. Such a member can secure election (or reelection) purely through support of their partisan voters. As such, these candidates have an electoral incentive to move toward the ideological extremes. For incumbents, failure to do so can draw a primary challenge which can turn a seat that would be safe in the general election into a competitive contest for the party nomination. This too encourages ideological extremism because the best way to stave off a same party challenge in a gerrymandered district is to give challengers no ammunition to challenge or ideological sincerity and allegiance to party orthodoxy.

I argue that over time, partisan gerrymanders in the House of Representatives led to an increase in ideological extremism in the House, which in turn contributed to rising ideological extremism in the Senate. House candidates responded to electoral pressures from partisan electorates by becoming more ideologically extreme. Increasingly, members of Congress faced ideological litmus tests. In the 1970s, a third of House districts were electorally competitive between the two parties. After the 2010 redistricting cycle less than 15% of House districts were truly electorally competitive (within 5%). As such, the number of members of Congress with an electoral incentive to be ideologically moderate and to be open to compromise with the opposition party had decreased dramatically, while the number of members electorally incentive to be ideologically extreme and non-conciliatory to the opposition party had increased dramatically. This, combined with ideological homogeneity through party sorting, led to increasing levels of polarization in the House of Representatives, which in turn, began to push the Senate to polarize. Senators found themselves under increasing ideological pressure by their House counterparts. Senators from solid "red" and "blue" states were particularly affected because they too faced lopsided electorates and direct primaries driven by political activists and

base voters. Because much of each party's legislative agenda and platform is transmitted to the public through media coverage of Congress, increasing ideological extremism in Congress spread to other political actors, other institutional settings, and to "average" Americans. The congressional parties set the legislative agenda and I argue, the tone. As the parties polarized in Congress, ideological extremism began to spread through the broader political system. As their congressional counterparts became more ideologically extreme, other political actors followed suit. They were pushed by their congressional counterparts to support ideologically extreme issue positions on a range of issues.

Finally, demographic changes aided by non-European immigration into the U.S. and rising income inequality have also played important roles in fragmenting the American public and increasing the policy divide between the two parties (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006). Changing demographics and modern immigration patterns are altering the racial and ethnic makeup of the electorate. It is predicted that the U.S. will become majority-minority by mid-century and U.S. children will become majority-minority as early as 2020. Ten states already have minority-majority populations for children including Texas and California. The 2012 presidential election saw the white portion of the whole electorate decrease by 2 percentage points, dropping from 74% in the 2008 election to 72% in 2012. While 2 percentage points seems modest, in this context it can be decisive. The longer term trend is even more pronounced with a decline in the non-Hispanic white electorate of 15% since 1976. Obama only received 39% of the white vote in 2012, down from 43% in 2008 although his share of the overall electorate was down 4 percentage points from 2008. There is a substantial racial divide in the electorate. Some white voters may feel threatened by the changing composition of the country and this may manifest itself through more extreme political ideology. Growing income inequality

has also been found to be contributing to polarization. Although supporters of both parties are affected by the growing inequities of wealth distribution in America and are still experiencing fall out from the financial collapse, each group faults different policies and supports different proposals on how best to address economic issues.

Party Sorting as a Mechanism of Political Polarization

The institutional, legal, social, demographic, media, and technological changes set party sorting into motion. Party sorting refers to the process by which over time, the correlation between party identification and ideology increased. Economic and social conservatism became the defining ideology of the modern Republican Party, just as economic and social liberalism became the defining ideology of the Democratic Party. Through party realignment in response to the civil rights legislation in the 1960s, conservative southern Democrats and liberal northern Republicans gradually disappeared. Conservative Democrats in the South were gradually replaced by conservative Republicans, and liberal Republicans in the North were gradually replaced by liberal Democrats. Today's party coalitions are ideologically homogenous and increasingly divided along demographic, religious, and cultural lines. I argue that this transition is both a product of, *and a contributing factor to*, political polarization. As political polarization became more pervasive, it also became self-reinforcing. Polarization has itself become a major contributing factor to increasing ideological extremism and political gridlock because polarized behaviors produce reactionary responses. When one party digs in their heels and obstructs the other party's agenda, the other party responds in kind or with an even more rigid and uncompromising position. As such, the parties begin to push each other to the ideological extremes and each new polarized action produces yet another even more polarizing reaction.

Party sorting serves as an important mechanism for ideological polarization. There are three aspects of party sorting: the emergence of a one dimensional ideological space, a strong correlation between ideology and partisan identification, and views that are consistently conservative or liberal. The three aspects of party sorting create conditions that are favorable for ideological extremism, and by extension, political polarization between the parties. Rather than being distinct from ideological polarization, party sorting is necessary for ideological polarization because ideological polarization occurs more readily within ideologically homogenous political parties.

It is important to explain how and why ideological homogeneity promotes ideological extremism, and by extension political polarization. Up until the 1960s, there were significant numbers of liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats. High levels of ideological overlap between the parties fostered political compromise and encouraged ideological moderation. Liberal Democrats were moderated as they sought the support of liberal Republicans. Conservative Democrats were encouraged to moderate in order to find common ground with conservative Republicans. As the post-civil rights southern and northern realignments sorted ideological conservatives into the Republican Party and sorted ideological liberals into the Democratic Party, ideological overlap decreased. As Republicans became reliably conservative and Democrats became reliably liberal political elites and voters sorted themselves ideologically. The correlation between party identification and ideology increased sharply. As the parties became ideologically homogenous, incentives to seek out ideological allies in the opposing party decreased. Over time, this allowed the two parties to move to the ideological extremes.

By creating ideological homogeneity party sorting promotes ideological polarization amongst political elites, political activists, and the American electorate because it promotes

ideological extremism and discourages ideological moderation through "group think." Group

think occurs when a desire for conformity and harmony among a group of individuals results in

the suppression of alternate viewpoints or challenges to the prevailing view point. Loyalty

becomes defined as strict adherence to party orthodoxy, leading to collective confirmation bias.

Confirmation bias refers to the tendency for individuals to interpret new information in such a

way as to reinforce their previously held beliefs (Plous 1993; Westen 2007). Without the

presence of liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats to raise alternative viewpoints, to

oppose the party's status quo on issues, and to foster compromise with the opposition party,

ideological extremism increases.

Figure 2.1 illustrates this process. Previous to the 1960s, the two political parties were

ideologically heterogeneous. The southern Democrats were ideologically conservative while

northern Democrats were ideologically liberal. For the Republicans, northern Republicans tended

towards ideological moderation or sometimes liberalism and western Republicans were more

conservative. At this time, there were virtually no southern Republicans. Thus, the Republican

Party was made up of both liberals and conservatives, and the Democratic Party was made up of

both liberals and conservatives. The changes described above created the conditions for party

sorting to occur. Party sorting allowed for the emergence of a unidimensional ideological

spectrum in which in turn, allowed for the emergence of ideological distinct and divergent

parties. Political elites, political activists, and voters sorted themselves into ideologically defined

party coalitions. Activists, elites, and voters are each being affected by *and contributing to* rising

ideological extremism. Activists ideologically push elected elites and send signals to rank and

file voters. Voters respond by adopting more ideologically extreme issue positions. Political

elites respond to ideological changes within the electorate and adapt more extreme issue

positions. The outward bounds of the ideological spectrum increase as group think sets in and polarization becomes interactive and self-reinforcing.
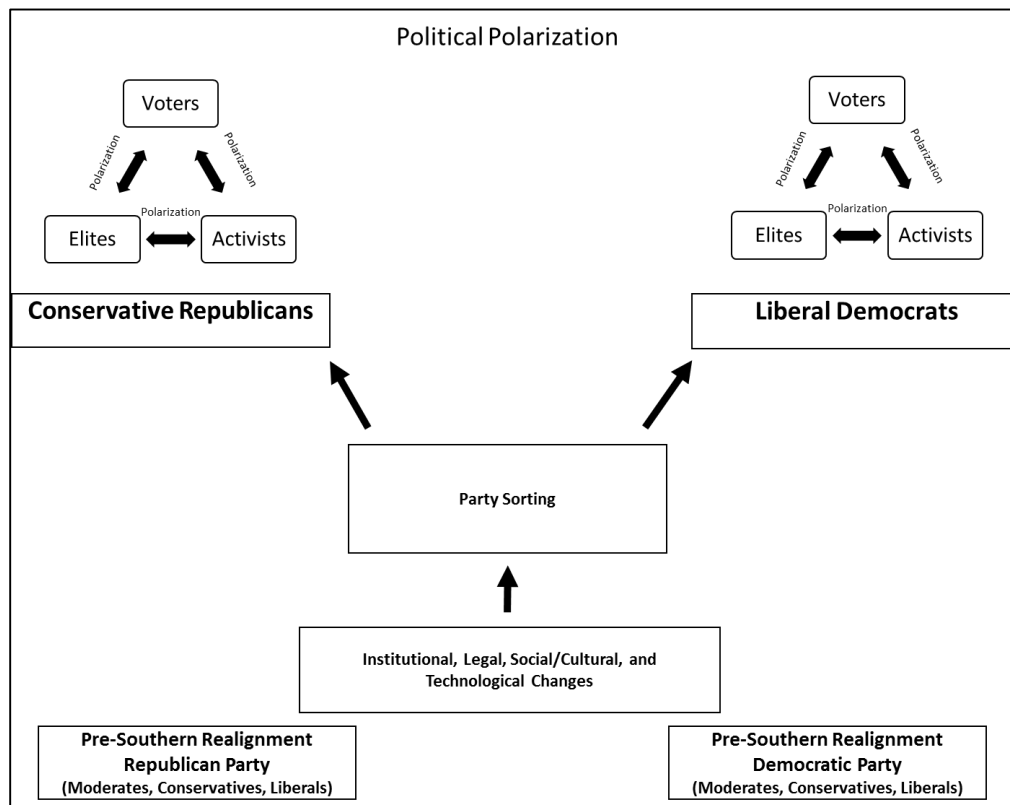
Figure 2.1: Political Polarization

There are considerable complexities involved in empirically testing the theory of polarization. If the theory of political polarization is to be considered a credible explanation then two critical conditions must be met: there must be evidence of increasing ideological extremism at the mass level and there must be evidence of elite polarization outside of Congress. At the mass level, the theory of polarization argues that the American public is becoming more ideologically extreme and that political polarization between partisans is increasing. If this is occurring then we should see an erosion of the ideological center as moderates become more liberal or more conservative and increasing bi-modality in the ideological distribution as conservatives become more conservative and liberals become more liberal. If the theory of

political polarization is to be found credible than it is equally important to produce empirical

evidence of ideological polarization among non-congressional elites. If elite polarization is

confined to congressional elites, then institutional-specific explanations for political polarization

such as partisan gerrymandering become more persuasive. However, evidence of political

polarization in non-congressional elites is suggestive that something larger and more complex

might be at work.

Why Presidential Nomination Campaigns?

The broader electoral system is likely to be affected by congressional polarization

because presidential candidates share an important characteristic with members of Congress:

both are required to take issue positions. Members of Congress accomplish this through their

vote while candidates accomplish it by engaging in campaign activities such as speeches,

advertising, debates, and media appearances. Further, a segment of each presidential primary

field is made up of current and former members of Congress. This is important for two reasons.

First, compared to governors or other non-congressional candidates, candidates coming from

Congress should bring heightened ideological extremism with them to their presidential

nomination campaigns. As the parties have diverged ideologically in Congress, candidates from

within the institution as well as those from outside it have been encouraged to align their own

positions with the party's congressional legislative positions. As Congress represents the

legislative apparatus of the party it is primarily responsible for dictating the overall party's policy

priorities and positions. Presidential nomination candidates are likely responsive to changes in

issue positioning and ideological extremism in their respective party's congressional caucus. As

the two parties diverged ideologically in Congress, they also diverged in many specific issue

areas such as taxation, immigration, climate change, social issues, and health care. As

congressional Republicans began to reject comprehensive immigration reform in the mid-2000s, John McCain, formerly a strong supporter of comprehensive immigration reform, may have felt pressured by his congressional colleagues to reposition himself on the issue to win the 2008 GOP nomination. Conversely, as the Democratic caucus began to diverge ideologically from the congressional Republicans on the Iraq War, Hillary Clinton was likely pressured to modify her initial support of the war as she contested Barack Obama for the Democratic nomination. An empirical examination may reveal that these examples are part of a larger, and more importantly, systematic pattern.

By their very nature, campaigns are contentious and combative. Campaigns are designed to highlight differences between two or more competing candidates and to force the candidates to compare and contrast themselves with their competitors through the adoption of distinct policy positions. Since their inception, presidential elections have been especially contentious affairs with both sides engaging in mudslinging and heated rhetoric in their attempt to sway a majority of voters to support them. Traditionally, general election campaigns often produce ideological moderation as the two party's candidates chase the median voter (Downs 1957). Each candidate's campaign does its best to promote itself positively and their opponent negatively in a highly charged, competitive environment.

Primary elections seem to be unlikely venues for ideological polarization because competitors are from within one party and as such hold comparatively homogenous views. In addition, the primary electorates of each party are more ideologically homogenous, particularly now that party sorting has occurred. I argue that presidential primaries are likely to be affected by political polarization because nomination contests have undergone institutional and technological changes that are likely to encourage ideological extremism.

In the modern system, elections seem to have become omnipresent leaving some to conclude that we have what is known as the permanent campaign. This phenomenon is most common in elections for the House of Representatives, as members of the House face election every two years and seem to begin their next campaigns shortly after being sworn in after the last one. Senators have it a little better. Their six year terms still provide considerable insulation from the constant electoral pressures their House counterparts face. A controversial vote at the beginning of a six year Senate term may be forgotten, if not forgiven; pushed to the back of voters' minds by more recent issues. Yet, the same vote cast by a House member can be fatal to a member's reelection goals. The permanent campaign has even altered the modern conceptualization of the "lame duck" period of a presidency, increasing it from the last year in office to just after the midterm elections. For both the presidency and for Congress, the permanent campaign may be caused by or contributing to overall polarization. Elections do not happen in a vacuum. If the rest of the political system is experiencing changes from increased polarization, it seems reasonable to suspect that polarization is affecting the electoral system as well. This study seeks to fill a substantial gap in the literature by presenting a theory of issue-based campaign polarization in presidential primary elections.

Presidential primary elections provide an attractive area for exploring what effects, if any, polarization is having on the electoral process. Presidential nomination campaigns are intra-party affairs in which participants generally hold relatively similar views on policy and share a basic ideology (liberal or conservative). Although policy differences exist between candidates considered to be on the fringes of the party ideologically and those seen as moderate, the differences should not be as stark as those that will exist between the two eventual nominees of each party. This allows for a more precise analysis of policy-positioning than the often stark

contrast of inter-party candidate positions. If polarization is affecting the primary process, evidence of change over time in issue position-taking by primary candidates should be evident. Additionally, presidential primary elections are an attractive area for further polarization research because they involve a large number of political actors and institutions encompassing several aspects of the broader political system ranging from the mass voting public, partisan voters, activists, elites, candidates, and even the media.

Several important changes that might contribute to increasing ideological extremism of presidential nomination candidates have occurred over the past few decades. The sharp increase in the use of direct primaries after the McGovern-Fraser Commission led to frontloading. Frontloading refers to the pattern of states moving their primary or caucus dates up the calendar in an effort to increase their state's influence on the nomination process. States engage in this behavior because the early contests serve as gatekeepers; their results serve to winnow the field from 5-10 office-seeking candidates, down to 2 or 3 candidates (Norrander 2000, 2010; Mayer and Busch 2004). In most cycles, the identity of the eventual nominee is known by the conclusion of Super Tuesday, which is usually held in March. The competition may drag on for a few more weeks even though it is clear who the eventual nominee will be.

Aldrich (2009) argues that frontloading has created such importance on fundraising acumen during the early primaries that the role of voters has been diminished. Instead, much of the power lies with what he calls "the nomination elite" made up of "office holders, activists, resource providers, campaign specialists, media personnel, and the like" (Aldrich 2009: 33). The "money primary," which is also referred to as the "invisible primary," requires candidates to demonstrate financial viability as far out as one year before the Iowa caucus, which can present a substantial obstacle to second and third tier candidates who usually lack the organization and

fundraising acumen to compete, although the advent of the internet age has helped to equalize this somewhat.

In conjunction with frontloading, Aldrich points to the death of matching funds starting with George W. Bush's successful candidacy in the 2000 cycle as an important mechanism behind the decreased importance of rank and file voters in the modern nomination system. Today's candidates need a lot more money, and need it far earlier to compete than candidates in 1976 and 1980 did. This becomes important when considering exactly who or where this type of money comes from. Increasingly candidates are turning to sources such as activists, interest groups, highly partisan voters, PACs, and since 2010, SuperPACs, to fundraise. La Raja and Wiltse (2011) find that there has been a sharp increase in ideological extremity among donors to presidential campaigns since 2000 and uncovered evidence that candidates will strategically exploit polarization to spur donations. Each of these sources of campaign funds may encourage candidates to adopt more extreme positions as they fight for coveted resources.

The sharp increase in number of debates during the invisible primary may also be contributing to rising ideological extremism. Since 2000, the number of primary debates has exploded, growing from a total of 3 debates in the Republican primary contest in 2000 and 2 Democratic Party debates in the 2004 cycle, to 16 debates for the Republicans and 19 for the Democrats in the 2008 cycle. The 2012 Republican nomination battle brought 30 debates total from a one-party contest. A Pew study conducted in July of 2007 found that 40% of respondents had seen at least one debate and a similar study in October of 2011 found that 36% of Republican respondents had seen at least one Republican debate and that a third of those

respondents indicated that what they had seen on the debate affected their vote choice.[6] The increase in the number of debates may be a function of a changing media environment which offers so many more options for airing or at least streaming these debates than before. The sharp increase of primary debates in the last two cycles may serve as a mechanism partially explaining why issue positions have become more important and more visible to voters, in turn partially explaining why candidate positions have become more extreme since 2000. Indeed, the Republican Party tightened the rules regarding sanctioned debates for the upcoming 2016 Republican primary citing the number of debates, individual debate rules, and the ideological nature of some of the groups hosting the debates as factors that contributed to increasing ideological extremism in their 2012 contest.

The increased number of debates, particularly during the invisible primary have also contributed to changes in the campaign media environment. Without election returns to report, invisible primary coverage focuses mainly on "horse race" coverage and is disproportionately focused on the top tier of candidates. With 23 pre-Iowa debates in 2008 from the two parties combined, horse race news coverage was likely presented in conjunction with media reports regarding debate performance including highlights and video clips of the debates. These clips were often issue-focused, increasing the salience of issue positions to viewers many of whom are potential voters. Not only did the frequency of debates serve to highlight issues differently but they also served as opportunities for candidates to distinguish themselves from their competitors on issues, force competitors to take public positions on issues that they may or may not have wished to confront, and perhaps locked candidates into more extreme positions. The 35

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6 Pew Research Center Oct. 13th-16th 2011 N=1007

combined debates in 2008 and the 30 Republican debates in the 2012 cycle put participants on the public record at a rate unseen before and in a format in which the candidates themselves retains very little control. Both mainstream and partisan media coverage of the debates is substantial and although it is most likely to focus on gaffes or controversial segments, it usually covered more substantive aspects of the campaign such as position-taking as well.

Today's media environment is rich and some areas are highly polarized. The creation of the 24-hour news networks and their emphasis on politically-focused editorial formats as well as the emergence of internet news sources and blogs has allowed for a dramatic increase in the amount of coverage devoted to political news. It has allowed for the development of what is known as niche news: overtly partisan reporting that is focused on attracting ideological viewers. Although claims that media standard bearers such as the "Big Three" networks evening news casts and major newspapers present a strong partisan bias, research attempting to quantify biases have largely affirmed that they present largely centrist information (Lowry and Shidler 1998; D'Alessio and Allen 2000) and studies that attempt to "ideologically" score news outlets reveal that large media outlets are centrists (Pyror 2013). However, partisan media sources such as the editorial programs on FOX News and MSNBC, talk radio, and political blogs have been found to have a polarizing effect on those who are the most likely to use them: partisan viewers. Levendusky (2012) finds that partisan media makes "relatively extreme citizens even more extreme" by creating what Sunstein (2007) terms an "echo chamber" effect where media practitioners and their viewers are subjected to a barrage of information pre-tailored to fit their world views.

Less studied is how partisan media outlets affect the behavior of the elites that are covered by them. A staple of a successful partisan nationally syndicated radio or television show

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is interviewing politicians and other political elites as well as other opinion leaders. These interviews present politicians with opportunities to reach constituents, enhance their national prominence, prime issues, and frame debates, and spread their messages. Because the viewers are highly likely to be partisan supporters who are fairly well-ideologically aligned with them, politicians may use these platforms differently than they would platforms aimed at regular rank and file voters such as *Meet the Press* or *60 Minutes*. Whether or not this is the case is beyond the scope of this research but it presents a possibly rich avenue for future exploration. This research argues that due to the wealth and breadth of these platforms, primary candidates are increasingly using them to communicate with possible supporters. The nature of these shows allows coverage to extend beyond the horse race and delve deeper into the substantive issues of the campaign. They may also encourage these candidates to discuss their issue positions more comprehensively and in an ideologically compatible environment which may encourage issue extremism.

What happens in the echo chamber does not always stay in the echo chamber. Outlandish public comments may be picked up by cable news and end up covered by mainstream media like the controversial comments regarding rape that 2012 Missouri Republican Senatorial candidate Todd Akin. In addition, campaign-killing gaffes made during interviews to even low-key, non-partisan media outlets sometimes find their way to the opposition's echo chamber such as Herman Cain's gaffes on Libya made during an interview to the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* in September of 2011.

Although partisan news is typically associated with polarization between the parties, it is possible that the polarized media environment is contributing to intra-party polarization as well. Presidential candidates, particularly resource starved second and third tier candidates

increasingly rely on partisan news sources and social media to reach supporters. Social media in particular provides candidates with the opportunity to highlight policy differences between themselves and their competitors, attack their competition, or to show how strongly committed they are to party orthodoxy. Seeking to fill airtime and attract viewers, the cable news networks provide even lower-tiered candidates interview opportunities. Often competing interviews are aired on the same network on the same evening and candidates are asked to respond to policy and other related statements issued by their competitors, practically in real time. The increasingly polarized media environment may be encouraging and/or enabling ideological extremism in presidential nomination contests.

What would we expect to see if presidential primary campaigns have become more polarized? If primaries are becoming more polarized than we would expect to find evidence of ideological change in presidential nomination candidates. Chapter 3 presents evidence that the mass electorate is highly polarized. If the electorate is polarized then we should find evidence of increasing ideological extremism among presidential nomination candidates as they seek the support of primary voters. This dissertation makes three important contributions to the political polarization literature. First, it offers a theory of political polarization which examines the multiple mechanisms driving elite and mass-level polarization. It asserts that elite and mass level polarization are being driven by the same factors and are in fact, dynamic, interconnected and interactive. Second, it produces substantial empirical evidence of ideological polarization in the electorate. Finally, the research presented here develops a reliable and direct methodology to measure the ideology of presidential nomination candidates and provides for the long overdue ability to measure the ideology of candidates within a common space. It then uses this innovative

measure to extend elite-level polarization into presidential nomination campaigns and in doing so, demonstrates that elite-level polarization is not confined to the halls of Capitol Hill.

Chapter 3

Political Polarization in the American Electorate

Claims of mass political polarization has long been in search of compelling empirical evidence. *Culture War: The Myth of a Polarized Public* (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2005) set off a robust academic debate regarding the ideological composition of the American public. Over the next decade, research into ideological polarization at the mass level found itself divided between those scholars whose research findings produced evidence of mass polarization and those whose research instead produced evidence of "party sorting" which attributes ideological changes in the mass public to an increase in the correlation between party identification and political ideology. Responding to clearer policy positions by party elites and party activists, conservatives sorted into the Republican Party and liberals sorted into the Democratic Party (Layman and Carsey 2002; Levendusky 2009). While political activists and political elites became more ideologically extreme, average Americans still held largely moderate positions on most issue positions and had merely "sorted" into the appropriate political party.

The research presented here argues that much of the conflicting findings in the mass polarization literature is a product of underdeveloped theory, choice of methodological approach, and perhaps most importantly, timing. I utilize a unique dataset of aggregated public opinion data from the *PEW Center for the People & the Press* to present a new measure of mass ideology. I find that in the period analyzed (1987-2012), there have been significant, non-linear changes in

the ideological distribution of the American electorate, particularly after 2007. As most of the previous scholarship on mass polarization ends with data from 2008, significant short term changes in the ideological make up and distribution of the electorate has been missed. In short, I argue that the theory of mass polarization was merely a theory ahead of its time. In the last few years there is significant ideological divergence in the segment of the mass public that matter the most: voters.

Measuring Mass Political Polarization

The General Social Survey, Gallup, and the American National Election Survey have all been used in previous scholarship on mass polarization. However, a major weakness of these data are that other than self-identified ideology, few questions are asked with enough regularity and over a long enough time period to reliably test theories of change over time. Up to now, research into mass polarization has been hindered by the lack of data that provides a common set of questions and gathered using a common and stable methodology. For example, in *Culture Wars? The Myth of a Polarized Public* (Fiorina 2005) was relegated to examining change over time on only two policy issues: abortion and opinion on the legality of homosexual relationships.

Fiorina's claim to have thoroughly debunked the culture war hypothesis rests primarily on the modest changes Fiorina found in the distribution of preferences of Republican and Democratic partisans on these two policy issues as well as on modest changes in the distribution of self-identified ideology. For the rest of his analysis, Fiorina relies on a comparison of preferences on a self-placement on the ideological spectrum as well as on a host of issues and views between Red State and Blue State residents in 2000 and 2004 and finds that Red State and Blue state residents are "centrists" who agree on issues ranging from immigration and school vouchers to the death penalty. He finds significant preference differences between these two

groups on only two issues: gun control and gay rights. Although Fiorina's analysis is insightful

and interesting, it falls well short of thoroughly debunking the culture war hypothesis. The

choice to group all Red State residents and all Blue State residents rather than testing for

differences between Republicans and Democrats is curious and seems to serve better to test

geographic polarization hypothesis rather than an ideological polarization hypothesis, which tend

to be thought of in partisan terms. Although an analysis comparing preferences of partisans in

2000 and 2004 would not have been able to provide much insight into change over time, it would

have been helpful to measure the distance in preferences between partisans on these policy issues

if one hoped to get a sense of whether or not there is an ideological divide in the mass public.

The public opinion data used in this analysis comes from the P*EW Center for the People*

and the Press American Values Survey (1987-2012) dataset. The dataset is well sorted for testing

a change over time hypothesis because unlike the American National Election Survey and the

General Social Survey, the dataset aggregates "values" questions that were asked consistently

over a 25 year time period. Each question selected in this analysis was asked with exactly the

same wording and exactly the same response categories in every iteration of the survey providing

25 years of consistent data. This provides a substantial benefit in the ability to use the data to

draw reliable inferences about changes in the ideological distribution of the electorate over time.

Rather than rely on separate examinations of each policy question, I selected eight questions

from the dataset which were consistently asked over the 25 year period. The questions used to

create the ideology scores covered a wide range of domestic policy topics ranging from the

proper role of government to gay rights (a full list of the questions and wording used is available

in the appendix). The eight questions were then combined into a new variable called *Ideology*

Score which was created by converting the response categories from "completely agree,"

"mostly agree", "mostly disagree," or "completely disagree" to numerical values designed to measure the ideological strength of the response.[7]

In this analysis, policy preferences serve as a proxy for ideology and are preferable to the traditional self-identified left/right ideological scale because those scales tend to suffer from underestimation bias. Some respondents may report themselves as ideologically moderate because of the negative stigma of the liberal or conservative labels. By measuring ideology indirectly by measuring the ideological strength of each respondent's policy preferences question I am able to reduce the estimation error effect and develop a more reliable measure of ideology. In addition, because respondents amass a cumulative score based on a range of domestic policy questions, the measure is more reliable because if the respondent has a particularly strong opinion on one policy or issue, but not on any others, their overall score will reflect that. This helps avoid erroneous classification and provides a fuller picture of each respondent's ideological makeup. However, it is important to acknowledge that only respondents who offered substantive answers to at least seven of the eight issue/policy questions are included in the analysis. This means that the measure is inherently biased towards respondents willing to provide a substantive answer to nearly all questions. The result could be a systematic overestimation of ideological extremism due to the fact that respondents with higher levels of political knowledge and sophistication also exhibit stronger ideological dispositions. However, even if this is the case, at least the overestimation is systematic and applies to all types of respondents analyzed (voters and non-voters, partisan and pure independents) albeit perhaps not in equal measure.

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[7] Cronbach's alpha was conducted to measure how suitable these variables were to use for an additive scale. The Cronbach's alpha score is .61, which is considered within the acceptable range.

Another strength of the ideology score is the broadness of the PEW Values Survey. The PEW Values Survey is not conducted as a normal political survey. Most political surveys, including those run by PEW include questions designed to measure support for current elected officials, candidates for federal office, and for issue positions that are dominating the public agenda. The PEW Values Survey avoids these questions, and as such, there are less questions included that might trigger a respondent's partisanship. Granted, the survey covers political topics such as the respondent's view on the proper role of government and on social welfare programs. However, these questions are less specific compared to many questions used in modern surveys.

There are also several possible issues or weaknesses with the ideology scores that should be acknowledged. First, the response categories did not contain a "moderate" or "middle of the road" response option. The only option given to respondents other than agreeing or disagreeing with the statement was a "don't know/refused" option. As such, it is possible that some respondents chose the "don't know/refused" response as a proxy for moderation on the issue. Unfortunately, there is no way to distinguish these respondents from those who selected the "don't know/refused" category for other reasons. As such, respondents that did not answer at least seven of the eight questions are excluded from the analysis. Another possible issue is the survey's use of "mostly" and "completely" (agree or disagree) rather than "somewhat" and "strongly" (agree or disagree). The "mostly" and "completely" response categories present the respondent with a very different choice than if they were asked if they "somewhat" or "strongly" (agree or disagree) with a statement. It is unclear whether "somewhat" and "mostly" would be equal in a respondent's eye and the lack of a "neither agree nor disagree" option might further compound this effect. However, the overall structure of the four substantive response categories

are set up so that most respondents should be able to recognize that the "mostly" indicates some rather than full support of the statement.

A second possible weakness is that the ideology score is comprised of only domestic issues. Although the entire dataset contains some foreign policy questions the decision to exclude them is based on two factors. The foreign policy questions were either specific to a time period smaller than the overall period analyzed (use of wiretapping post 9/11 for example), or in which the country's main national security threat changed over time (Cold war vs. terrorism). Therefore, it is important to knowledge that the ideological space examined in this research should only be understood as domestic ideological space.

A third possible issue with the ideology scores could be that each of the eight questions carry the same weight or influence in determining each respondent's ideological score. It should be acknowledged that this is almost certainly not the case. Some respondents will value the role of government in the economy questions more heavily than questions regarding the proper role of government in promoting equality and social welfare or vice versa. But here again, the broadness of the questions in the PEW Values dataset provide an important advantage. Aside from the question regarding homosexuals in the classroom, the questions used in this analysis are not asking about particular issues such as abortion or gun control but rather "big picture" preferences such as the proper role and size of government.

There are several other important limitations of the analysis presented in this research. First, the PEW American Values dataset is not panel data. Each year's sample contains new respondents. As such, changes from one cycle to the next and across time may be due at least in part to the use of different respondents in each iteration. Unfortunately, no panel data suitable for the methodological approach taken in this research exists that spans a time period as wide as the

PEW data. The American National Election Survey started collecting panel data regularly

starting with the 2004 presidential election cycle. However, they do not have panel data from

earlier cycles. In addition, their panel data follows respondents through an election cycle, but not

across election cycles. Therefore, the PEW data are the best for drawing inferences regarding

changes across time, even given the yearly variation in the sample size and population. The

demographic data from each iteration included in the aggregated dataset was examined to ensure

that from year-to-year and from the first year in the dataset until the final year the demographical

composition of respondents and that the sample weights assigned by PEW were maintained

during the statistical analysis. As such, the respondents in each iteration were representative of

the overall population of voters in each cycle, as well as representative across cycles. This allows

the data to be examined for changes over time.

Second, the surveys for the early years (1987, 1988, 1989, and 1990) were conducted as

face-to-face interviews rather than telephone surveys which was the method used for the

remaining interactions. Therefore it is possible that respondents were less forthcoming in their

responses on some issues/policies in the face-to-face interviews than perhaps they would have

been over the telephone. Because the analysis draws comparisons between the two types of

surveys, it is important to consider this distinction when examining the across-time results.

Third, to an extent, all survey data are time bound. For example, responses to a question asking

about race relations might be affected in an iteration in which an event or events have heightened

racial tensions such as during the riots in Los Angeles in 1992 in the wake of the acquittal of four

police officers in the beating of African American truck driver Rodney King, or the protests that

erupted in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 over the officer shooting of Michael Brown. Media

coverage of the event and the protests afterward almost certainly primed respondents of surveys

conducted during this time period to assign a higher level of importance to this issue and due to media framing effects, it would be expected that along with race, partisanship and ideology would at least in part condition a respondent's response to questions dealing with race. That being said, combining several policy questions across different issue/policy areas greatly reduces this possibility and when the eight questions are examined across time separately, there is no evidence that this is occurring.

For the analyses, respondents are separated into two groups: those who indicated they frequently or often voted and those who did not vote often or at all. Theoretically, it is expected that non-voters will be less ideologically extreme than their voting counterparts. In total, the analysis includes 22,087 respondents who met the qualifications for an ideology score. Table 3.1 displays the breakdown between voters and non-voters by party identification. Respondents who identified themselves as independents were asked a follow-up question probing them if they identify closer to one party or the other.

Table 3.1: Party Breakdown of Respondents Included in the Analysis

Democratic Voters (includes Ind. Leaners)	8,175
Democratic Non-Voters (includes Ind. Leaners)	2,482
Republican Voters (includes Ind. Leaners)	7,345
Republican Non-Voters (includes Ind. Leaners)	1,784
Pure Independent Voters	2,301
Total	22,087

Those who selected a party were combined into the party categories. Only those respondents who insisted they did not identify with either party were coded as pure independents. Appendix D contains a full table with the total number of respondents by party identification and race in each individual year. Table 3.2 reflects the aggregated racial breakdown of each group.

Table 3.2: Racial Breakdown, by Party

	White	Black	Other	DK/Ref	Total
Democratic Voters (includes Ind. Leaners)	5,949	1,789	385	52	8,175
Democratic Non-Voters (includes Ind. Leaners)	1,691	559	212	20	2,482
Republican Voters (includes Ind. Leaners)	6,904	159	240	42	7,345
Republican Non-Voters (includes Ind. Leaners)	1,540	109	125	10	1,784
Pure Independent Voters	1,189	215	168	29	2,302

Ideological Extremism in the American Electorate

The individual ideology scores calculated for each respondent was aggregated to create a mean ideology score for each year included in the analysis. Appendix G provides descriptive statistics of the final score and of the individual questions used to calculate it. The aggregated mean ideology scores allow for measurement of changes across time and for measuring the ideological distance between groups. Figure 3.1 shows the distribution of the mean ideology scores for Republican voters, Democratic voters, and pure Independent voters in each year included in the analysis. The data reveal significant changes in the mean ideology scores both between the three groups, as well as within groups across time. There are several important findings from the analysis. First, it is important to note that both Republican and Democratic

voters have become substantially more ideologically extreme in the last decade. The mean ideology score for Republican voters nearly triples from a mean of 0.12 in 1987 to a mean of 0.35 in 2012 and the mean for Democratic voters nearly quadruples rising from a mean of -0.06 in 1987 to a mean of -0.27 in 2012. The mean ideology scores reveal evidence of asymmetrical polarization. Like their congressional counterparts, Republican voters have shifted far to the ideological right.
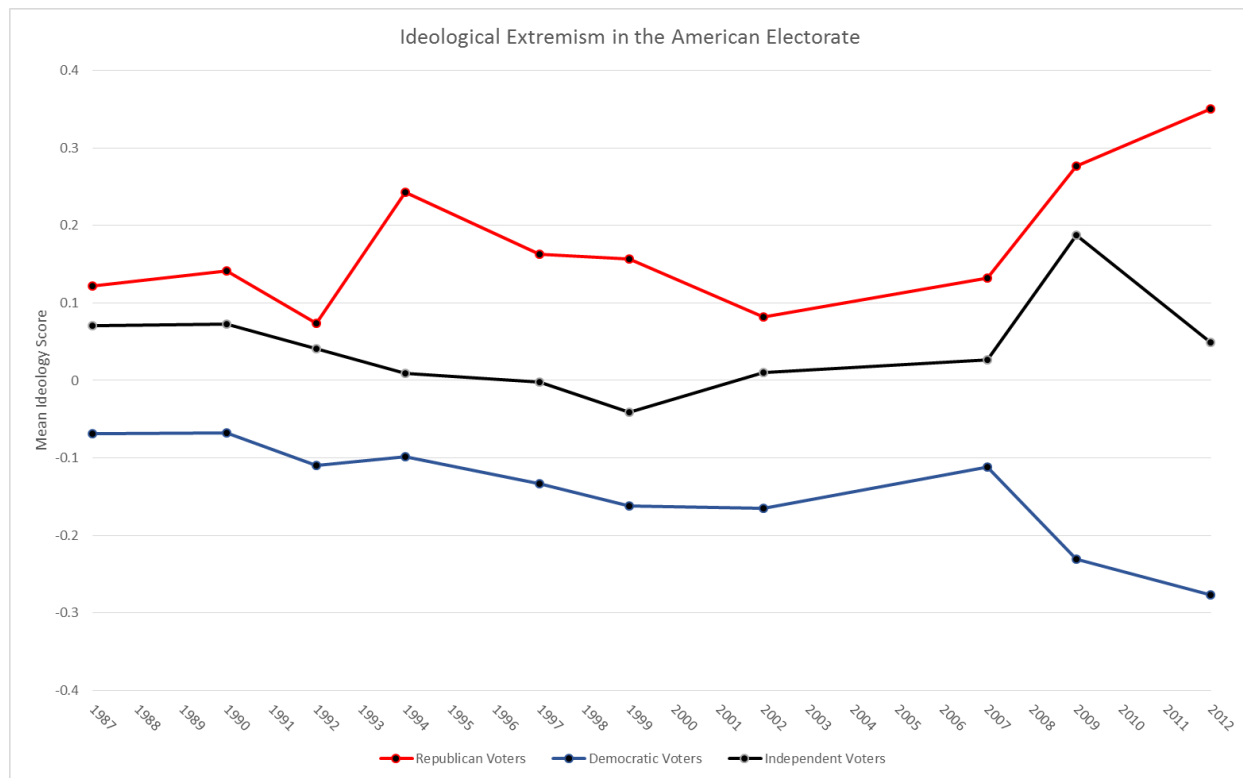

Figure 3.1: Ideology of the American Electorate, 1987-2012

It is also interesting to find that although the entire time period reveals linear growth in the strength of ideological extremism for partisan voters overall, the change in the mean ideology score between each iteration is not monotonic. For example, there is a substantial uptick in

extremism for Republican voters in 1994 which declines by 1997 and stays fairly level though the early and mid-2000s before increasing sharply again in 2009.

These findings are suggestive of two things. First, Republican voters may be sensitive to the presence of an opposition-party President. The mean ideology score for Republicans in 1992 is quite low coming in at a 0.07. It is important to note that the 1992 survey that year conducted in the late spring and therefore before Bill Clinton's successful run for the presidency. However, the mean ideology score for 1994 increases sharply coming in at a 0.24, more than three times higher than the 1992 mean. It is possible that ideological extremism is at least in part a function of opposition control of the White House, at least for Republican voters. This could also explain why there is a sudden and extreme uptick in the mean extremism score for Republican voters in the 2009 and 2012 iterations, as these correspond with President Obama's tenure. A second explanation could be that in 1994 Republican voters are responding to partisan signaling from their congressional delegation. 1994 is a notable year in American politics because it was the year of the Gingrich revolution in the House of Representatives, where the Republican Party took control of the House for the first time since the Great Depression aside from 2 sessions (1947-1949 and 1955-1957). It is possible that Republican voters were affected by the heightened campaign rhetoric and brash campaigning style that Gingrich is credited with helping to pioneer. It is interesting that only Republicans exhibited a change in ideology that year and perhaps lends support to the party-signaling explanation.

Given the relative flatness of the distribution from the late 1990s and mid-2000s, it is not surprising that studies like Fiorina's that focused on this time period found relatively few changes in the ideological composition of the electorate. The sharp increase that starts with the 2009 analysis could indicate that mass polarization effects are only beginning to emerge, at least

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among engaged citizens who vote. The atypical increase in the 2009 and 2012 cycles occurs for both parties as well as for pure Independents. For the independents, it's possible that the sharp increase and then immediate sharp decrease in mean ideology scores between 2009 and 2012 reflects heightened fears from the economic collapse and recession more than a meaningful change in ideology. Of course, one could argue that the growth in extremism from Republicans and Democrats is also a reflection of the economic collapse. However, the fact that the growth continues to sharply increase between 2009 and 2012 for Republican and Democratic voters, but immediately falls back down for pure independent voters seems suggestive that something more is occurring than merely short term effects from the 2008 financial crisis.

A final observation is just how ideologically moderate self-described pure Independents actually are. With the exception of the 2009 iteration, the mean ideology score for pure independents remains stable and clustered around the middle of the distribution, which indicates near perfect moderation. This is an interesting finding as it demonstrates that people who consider themselves to be true independents also possess near perfect ideological moderation.

The Ideology of Voters vs. Non-Voters

This research theorizes that there will be a significant difference in ideological extremism between voters and non-voters. It is expected that people who rarely vote, or do not vote at all will be less likely to hold strong policy views, although it should be again noted that to be included in the ideology score, non-voting respondents had to express a substantive opinion on at least 7 of the 8 survey questions that comprise the ideology score. Figures 3.2 and 3.3 show the distribution of mean ideology scores for voters and non-voters in both political parties. The analysis reveals some interesting findings. First, as expected non-voters are less ideologically extreme than their voting counterparts for both parties. However, there are noticeable differences

between non-voting Democrats and non-voting Republicans. In the time period covered in this

analysis, non-voting Republicans are more moderate than non-voting Democrats. Over the time
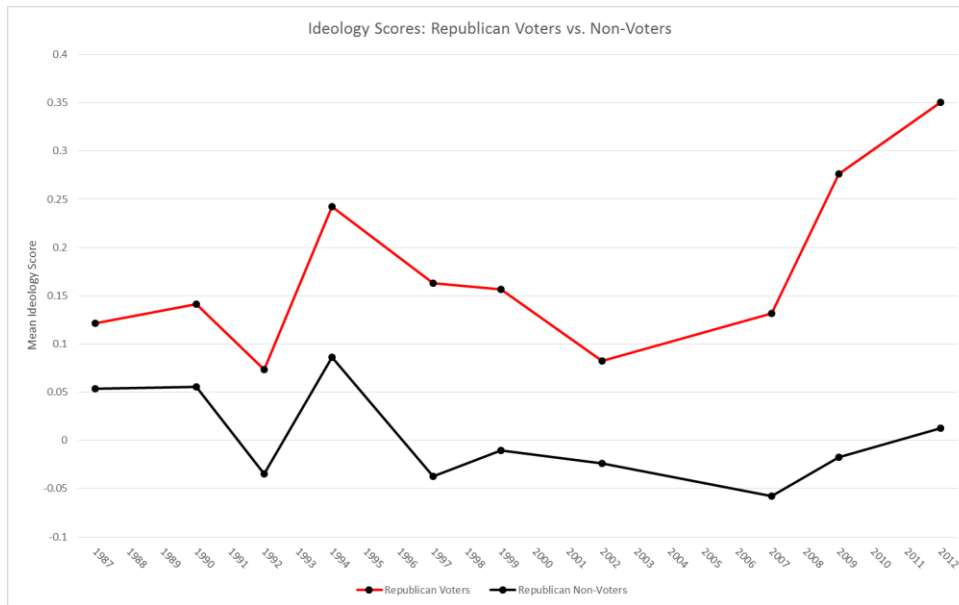

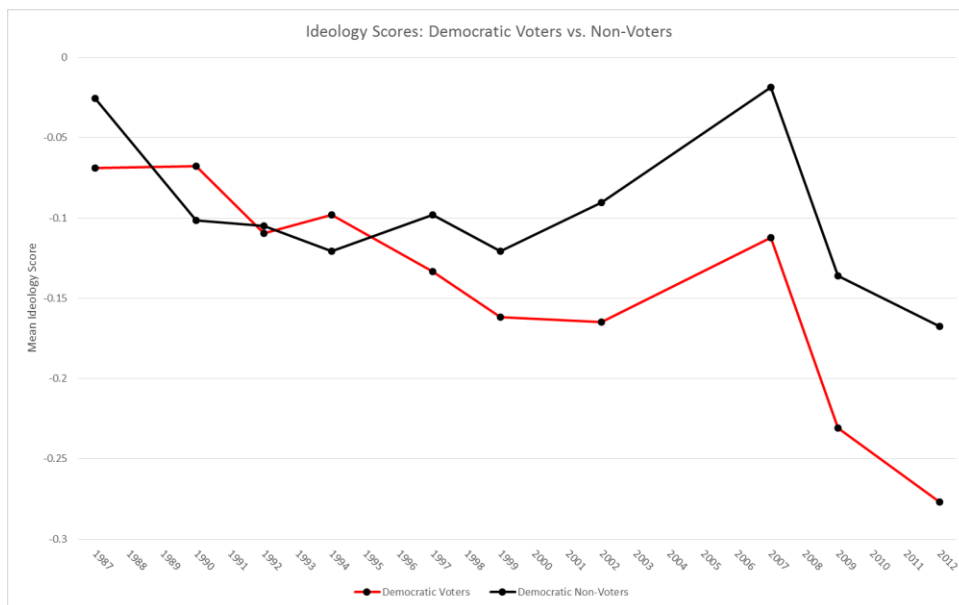**Figure 3.2: Mean Ideology Scores of Republican Voters vs. Non-Voters**

Figure 3.3: Mean Ideology Scores of Democratic Voters vs. Non-Voters

period analyzed, the overall mean ideology score for non-voting Republicans is nearly 0, coming in at 0.002. However, the mean score for non-voting Democrats is nearly 0.10. This seems to suggest that if non-voters engaged, they'd have a moderating influence in both parties and in particular within the Republican Party. This will be an important consideration raised again in chapter 5. Although there has always been a gap in ideological strength for voting and non-voting Republicans, that gap has increased dramatically since 2007. Yes, non-voters do display an upward tick in ideological extremism at the same time as voting Republicans, but what is a mild uptick for non-voting Republicans is a seismic shift for voting Republicans. As such, voting Republicans are the main driving force behind rising ideological extremism in the Republican Party at the mass level. The gap has widened on the Democratic side as well. Together, the analyses comparing voters to non-voters is suggestive that mass level polarization is most evident in voters.

Political Polarization in the American Electorate

The mean ideology scores for each party can be used to estimate the ideological distance between Republican and Democratic voters. I use the difference in mean ideology scores for Republican voters and Democratic voters to create a measure of the level of party polarization in the mass electorate in each survey year. Figure 3.4 shows the increase in party polarization in the American electorate between 1987 and 2012. The analysis reveals that ideological polarization in the electorate has more than quadrupled, rising from a spread of 0.19 in 1987 to a spread of 0.62 in 2012. It is important to reiterate that this study is using the most basic measure of political participation: the act of voting and is not examining political activists. This study finds levels of ideological extremism in average voters that are more often association with political activists

such as those who donate money to political campaigns, volunteer with campaigns, or otherwise involved themselves in some aspect of politics beyond voting.
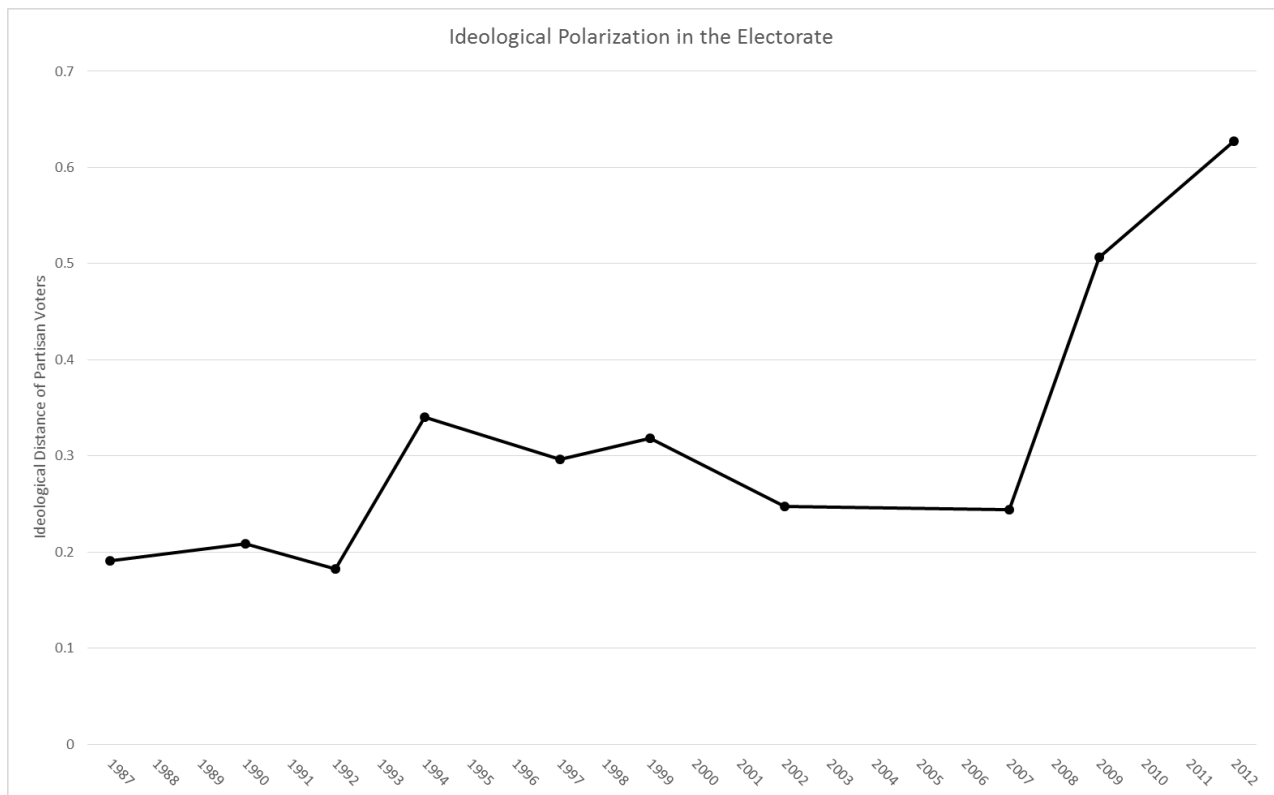
Figure 3.4: Political Polarization in the American Electorate, 1987-2012

Unlike some previous scholarship, I find that the American electorate is highly polarized along ideological lines and that there is evidence of ideological change beyond that caused by party sorting. The increase in political polarization does not occur until after 2007, two years after Fiorina released *Culture Wars*. What could be driving the change? Although the increase starts during the economic recession, it does not recede. Rather, it continues to grow in the 2012 data. Until new data is released by *PEW* it is not possible to say whether this trend of growing ideological divergence in the electorate will continue or if it will ebb as it has done before. However, my theory suggests that the divergence levels from the next survey year will produce

ideological extremism scores at least as high as the 2012 iteration. Nothing has happened to dampen or decrease the highly polarized environment of American politics since the 2012 survey was conducted. In fact, the 2012 survey was given early in 2012 and before the 2012 presidential general election. It is possible that the reelection of Barack Obama and the 2014 congressional midterm cycles have actually led to increases in party polarization. This research will be updated as new data becomes available from *PEW*.

The Ideological Distribution of the American Electorate

Distribution plots of the ideology scores for the American electorate provide deeper insights into how the ideological distribution has changed over time. The plots displayed in Figure 3.5:A-J reveal just how large the shifts in ideology in 2009 and 2012 are. The distributions for both years produce evidence of ideological divergence. The gap widens over time between the modes of ideology in the two parties with neither party's distribution centered near 0. In 2002, 55% of Republican voters had ideology scores that fell on the conservative end of score spectrum. By 2012, 83% of Republican voters did so. The shift is even more dramatic when looking at those respondents whose scores fell into the extreme range of the scale. In 1987, just 2% of Republican voters had a policy extremism score greater than or equal to 0.7. By 2012, 18% of Republican voters did. For Democrats, the percentage falling into the extremist classification barely changes, with both cycles producing less than 1% with ideology scores higher than -0.7. The distributions also demonstrate evidence of party sorting. The percent of Republican voters who received ideology scores that fell on the liberal side of the spectrum (-0.5 to -1.0) decreased from 29% in 1987 to just 12% in 2012. For Democrats the percent whose policy extremism scores fell on the conservative side of the spectrum (0.5 to 1.0) decreased from 35% in 1987 to just 20% in 2012. The findings provide evidence of both party sorting and an

increase in the percent of partisan voters whose scores fall into the extremes of the spectrum and seem to indicate that both party sorting *and* ideological polarization are occurring in the American electorate.
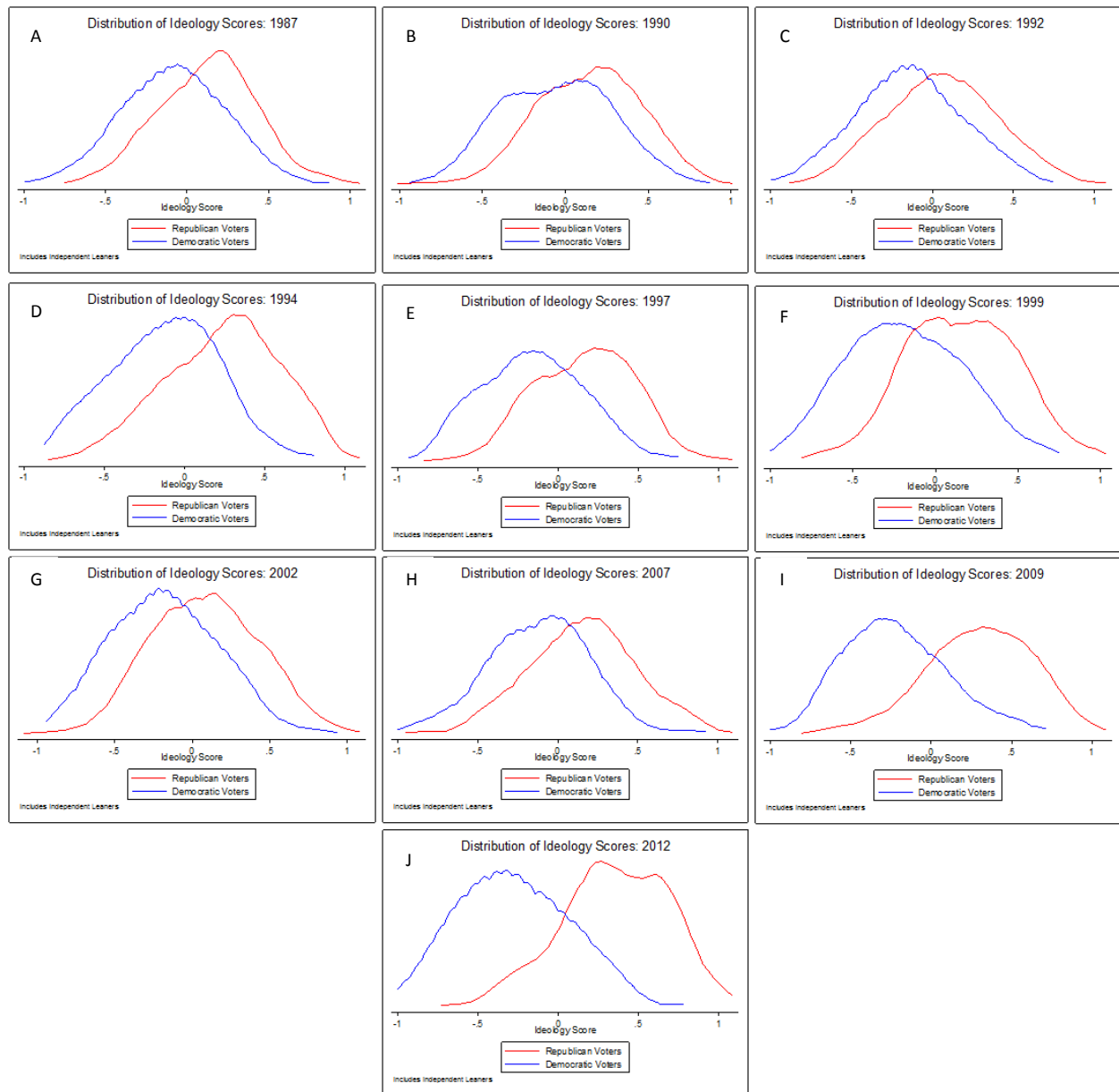
Figures 3.5-A through 3.5-J: Distribution of Ideology Scores, 1987-2012

What is less clear is whether the increases in polarization found in the 2009 and 2012 data are part of a larger trend, or if they will prove to be aberrations. Looking at the entire time period analyzed, the movement of the distributions of ideology between 1987 and 2007 could best be described as an ebb and flow. The first year in the dataset (1987) displays evidence of a higher level of ideological extremism than does 1990 and 1992. However, in 1994 the distribution for Republican voters shifts sharply rightward before receding again in 1997 and 1999. By 2002, Republican voters are significantly more moderate than their Democratic counterparts despite near ideological parity in 1997 and 1999. Republicans then shift sharply right in 2009 and 2012 with both cycles producing new highs of ideological extremism.

The pattern from Democrats is also non-monotonic. Democrats are quite moderate from 1987 through 1994, but begin to increase their ideological extremism by the 1997 iteration and become significantly more liberal in the early 2000s. They then shift toward the center of the spectrum before shifting sharply leftward in 2009 and 2012. Therefore, it is possible that data from 2014 may reveal another constriction in ideological extremism for one or both groups rather than continued expansion. However, given the increases in the percentages of Republican and Democratic voters whose policy extremism scores fell outside of the moderate classification of the scores it is expected that Republican and Democratic voters will continue to moving away from each other ideologically. The analysis will be updated when PEW releases the next iteration.

Fiorina's Vanishing Moderates

In his 2005 book *Culture War* and in subsequent research, Morris Fiorina points to the stability of ideological moderates on the self-identified ideology scale as evidence that the American public remains ideologically moderate. Fiorina correctly argues that a change in the

ideological distribution from the middle of the spectrum towards the ideological extremes must be demonstrated for the theory of mass polarization to be substantiated. Unfortunately, the *PEW American Values* dataset used in this analysis did not start asking the five-point self-identified ideology question until the 2002 iteration. In six iterations (1987, 2002, 2003, 2009, and 2012) PEW asked respondents to place themselves on a three-point scale as liberal, conservative, or moderate. On average, 35% of respondents identified themselves as ideologically moderate with very little change over the six survey years. Starting in 2002, PEW transitioned to the five-point ideology scale, which is more nuanced. This version of the scale allows the respondent to specify the strength of the ideology with options for "somewhat" and "strongly" conservative or liberal. As with Fiorina's data, analysis of the distribution of the three or five point ideological scale in the PEW data finds only modest evidence of ideological change in the American electorate. The percentage of Republican voters who describe their own ideology as "very conservative" more than doubles between 2002 and 2012 rising from 5% to 13%. The percent of Democrats identifying themselves as "very liberal" increases from 4% in 2002 to 7% in 2012. Still, the percent for both parties doubles over that ten year period and does provide some evidence of ideological change.

It is important to note though that the analysis of self-identified ideology reveals that the percent of Republican and Democratic voters who describe their ideology as "moderate" is fairly stable throughout that same time period. Most of the shift noted above comes from movement from the "somewhat strong" ideological classification to the "strong" ideological classification and not from moderates moving into one of the ideological categories. As such, if this research had focused on using self-identified ideology rather than the ideology score it would find only modest evidence to suggest ideological changes occurring in the electorate. This demonstrates

the strength of the ideology score as an alternative measure of ideology. Although self-identified ideology remains largely stagnant, the ideology scores reveal significant increases in ideological extremism and in party polarization.

The ideology scores can also be pooled to provide a cumulative measure of ideology for the entire electorate in each iteration of the survey and used to test whether or not ideological moderates have been decreasing. The pooled ideological distribution for each survey year can be compared by combining all respondents assigned an ideology score into one group (Republican voters, Democratic voters, and pure Independents) and comparing the distribution from 1987 to the distribution from 2012. It should also be noted that 1987 was a year in which respondents displayed considerable ideological extremism according to the full analysis. Figure 3.6 shows the results of this analysis and reveals that there has been substantial erosion of the ideological middle of the American electorate.[8]
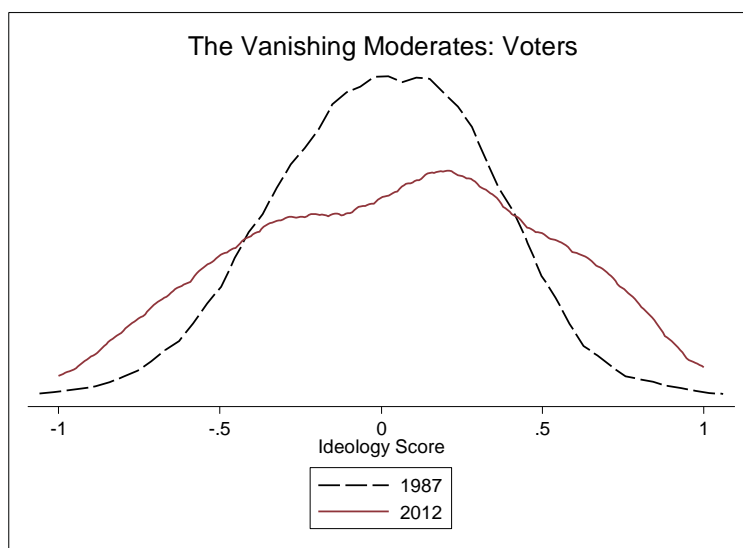

Figure 3.6: The Vanishing Moderates, 1987 vs. 2012 (Voters)

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[8] The distribution plots were also run using all respondents (voters and non-voters) with similar results.

The number of respondents clustered around the middle of the spectrum has decreased considerably and the overall shape of the distribution has become flatter as voters have shifted further out to the ideological extremes. In 1987 less than 1% of Republican and Democratic voters had ideology scores at the extremes of the scale (+ or - 0.5 or greater). By 2012, 15% of Democrats had ideology scores higher than -0.5 and 20% of Republicans had scores higher than 0.5. In 1987 60% of respondents had ideology scores in the moderate range (defined as being between -0.25 and +0.25), by 2012 that percent had decreased to just 41%. Moderates are indeed vanishing.

Conclusion

The analyses of the ideology scores presented in this chapter have produced evidence of significant ideological changes in the American electorate, particularly since 2007. Not only has the middle of the ideological spectrum eroded, but the outward bounds of the ideological spectrum have stretched as the number of people with ideological scores at the extremes have increased. The findings support the mass-level polarization thesis articulated in the interactive theory of polarization and contradict previous scholarship that finds no evidence of mass-level ideological polarization. The public, at least those in the public who are engaged in the most basic forms of civic participation (voting) are clearly not insulated from political polarization. Like their elite counterparts, regular Americans are becoming more ideologically extreme and Republican and Democratic voters are polarizing. The theory advanced in this research argues that once party sorting reached critical mass, and elites had largely sorted themselves into distinct ideological camps, the public began to follow suit. This, combined with the same societal changes that pushed elites into party sorting and towards ideological polarization eventually

created conditions in which political polarization became self-reinforcing and spread throughout the political system. Elites and activists are pushing voters to become more extreme, but voters are also pushing elites to become more extreme through the electoral connection. This should be particularly true for presidential primary elections. It is to these elections that I now turn.

Chapter 4
Polarization in U.S. Presidential Nomination Campaigns

Presidential nomination campaigns are simultaneously systematic and predictable, yet volatile and dynamic. Research into presidential nomination campaigns has produced a great deal of information regarding the presidential nomination selection process including examinations of the dynamics of candidate strategy and behavior (Gurian 1993a, 1993b; Norrander 2000, 2006, 2010; Steger 2007; Kamarck 2009), voter preferences and decision making (Bartels 1985, 1988; Williams et al 1976), and strategic voting (Aldrich, McGlennon, and Rapoport 1981; Southwell 1988; Abramson et al 1992; Rickerhauser and Aldrich 2007; Stephenson 2011). Research has focused on candidate resource allocation strategies (Gurian 1986, Gurian and Haynes 1993; Haynes, Gurian, and Nichols 1997), candidate messaging strategies (Haynes and Rhine 1998; Haynes, Flowers, and Gurian 2002), and the factors that are most determinative to a candidate's success such as media coverage (Gurian 1993c; Hagan 1996; Haynes and Murray 1998; Farnsworth and Lichter 2008, 2012; Haynes et. al 2004; Shen 2008) and fundraising (Mutz 1995a, 1995b).

Despite all of this scholarly attention, one important aspect of presidential nomination campaigns has been left largely uninvestigated. There has been very little research examining the issue positions taken by presidential nomination candidates and no analysis regarding the ideology of nomination candidates. What little research there is in this areas has focused on assessing the importance of specific issues to voters in specific contests (Abramowtiz, Rapoport,

and Stone 1991; Aldrich and Alvarez 1994; Jamieson et al 2000; Hillygus and Henderson 2009; Norpath and Perkins 2011) or examines how voters learn about, weigh, and perceive candidates' issue positions and ideology (Stone 1982; Marshall 1983, 1984; Wattier 1984; Pfau 1984; Kenney 1993; Aldrich and Alvarez 1994; Stone and Rapoport 1994; Tedesco 2001). Research on candidate ideology has been neglected for two reasons. First, it has generally been assumed (perhaps erroneously) that because primary elections are intra-party affairs, issue positioning and ideology are of less importance than they are in general elections in which candidates represent separate political parties. Second, and perhaps more importantly, research on candidate ideology has been avoided because of the difficulty of developing a method that allows for all types of candidates to be included.

The research presented in this dissertation addresses an important gap in the presidential nomination campaign literature by conducting the first direct, comprehensive examination of the ideological composition of presidential primary candidates. I argue that important institutional changes in the campaign environment such as frontloading, campaign finance, traditional media, and new media have combined with increasing levels of ideological polarization in Congress and within the voting public to push presidential nomination candidates to the ideological extremes in the most recent election cycles. It is hypothesized that ideological extremism is increasing in presidential nomination contests. To test this hypothesis an original data set of issue positions taken by presidential nomination candidates in all presidential nomination contests since the 2000 cycle has been collected. Using these data, optimal classification is conducted to estimate ideological scores for each individual candidate competing in the nomination cycle in a common, one dimensional ideological space in which candidates from all types of backgrounds can be directly compared. The ideology scores allow for the comparison of the ideology of candidates

within one election cycle, as well as across election cycles. This allows changes in the ideological distribution of nomination fields across time to be examined.

The candidate ideology scores produce significant evidence of ideological change in the cycles analyzed. The mean ideological score for Democratic candidates increase from -0.26 in the 2000 cycle to -0.46 in the 2004 cycle before receding just slightly to -0.44 in the 2008 cycle. For the Republicans the mean ideological score of the field decreases between 2000 and 2008, dropping from 0.36 in 2000 to 0.28 in 2008. However, it then increases sharply in 2012, rising to a mean of 0.45. The analysis reveals that until 2012, Democratic candidates tended to be more ideologically extreme than their Republican counterparts. However, in the 2012 election cycle, the Republican candidates took a sharp turn to the political right. Analysis of individual candidate ideology scores for the 2012 Republican field shows that several candidates who led in the polls at various points of the invisible primary were more ideologically extreme than even the most ideologically extreme candidates in earlier contests such as Alan Keyes in 2000 and 2008 and Steve Forbes in 2000. In 2012, Michelle Bachmann, Rick Perry, and Herman Cain all had more extreme ideology scores.

By finding evidence of increasing ideological extremism in presidential nomination campaigns, the research presented in this chapter supports the contention that elite level political polarization is pervasive argued in the theory of political polarization offered in chapter 2. Given that there is evidence of growing ideological extremism of non-congressional political elites, and evidence of ideological polarization in the mass electorate presented in chapter 3, two major claims of the theory of political polarization are supported. This is suggestive that political polarization is more complex and pervasive than previously thought.

Ideological Polarization in U.S. Nomination Campaigns

Academic research has produced a wealth of information on presidential nomination campaigns. Much of the early scholarship focused on proposing and testing theories regarding the strategic behavior of candidates as they sought to successfully navigate an ever-changing, dynamic primary campaign environment (Aldrich 1980; Gurian 1986, Gurian 1993a,1993b; Gurian and Haynes 1993; Mutz 1995a, 1995b; Haynes and Rhine 1998; Norrander 2000). After the disastrous nominating convention in 1968, the McGovern Fraser Commission reforms suggested a change in the Democratic Party selection system from an elite-run delegation selection system to an open, proportionally-based delegate selection system (Mayer and Busch 2004). Following the lead of the Democrats, the Republican Party also embraced institutional reforms. Over the next two decades, the number of states adopting primaries exploded. Before adoption of the reforms suggested by the Commission, more than 2/3s of the states used closed caucuses. By 2000, the overwhelming majority of states had switched to primaries which were conducted as open, semi-open, closed, or semi-closed. Open or semi-open primaries allow all voters in a state to participate in whichever party's primary process they choose and often include independents. Closed or semi-closed primaries allow partisan voters to choose a party in advance (via partisan voter registration) or to select one party's ballot at their polling location (Geer 1986; Kaufman, Gimpel, and Hoffman 2003).

The transition away from closed, elite-run caucuses to primary elections increased the importance of state primary elections and led to frontloading. Frontloading refers to states moving the dates of their presidential primary elections earlier in the calendar in response to the realization of the importance early states play in determining the eventual nominee. The frontloading process was set into motion in 1971 when Florida attempted to change the date of

their primary to second Tuesday in March, which was the same date that New Hampshire had

been holding their primary since the 1930s (Mayer and Busch 2004). New Hampshire responded

by moving their primary to the first Tuesday in March. This led to an influx of states moving

their primaries up to be closer to Iowa and New Hampshire and to what would become known as

Super Tuesday. The frontloaded system hit a new peak in the 1996 cycle. In that cycle

Republicans competed in 29 primaries in just five weeks in which 77% of their delegates were

selected (Sabato 1997; Kaufman, Gimpel, and Hoffman 2003). By the 2004 election cycle both

parties held the Iowa Caucus in the middle of January with the New Hampshire primary eight

days later. In 2008 and 2012 the Iowa Caucuses were held on the 3rd of January with New

Hampshire just five days later in 2009, and just eight days later in 2012.[9]

In the modern nominating system, the primary calendar starts earlier and is more

condensed. This has increased the importance of the pre-primary time period called the "invisible

primary" or "money primary." Also rather than decreasing their influence, it has been argued that

the frontloaded calendar has increased the importance of Iowa, New Hampshire, and South

Carolina (Scala 2003; Steger, Dowdle, and Adkins 2004; Steger 2008; Skipper 2010;

Winnebrenner and Goldford 2010). The early start to the formal campaign season and the

condensed time window between Iowa and New Hampshire and New Hampshire and South

Carolina requires candidates to adapt their campaign strategies and increases both the length and

the importance of the invisible primary season (Mayer and Busch 2004; Donovan and Hunsaker

2009). Even a candidate's expected performance in Iowa has a winnowing effect on the

nomination field (Aldrich 1980; Bartels 1988; Polsby 1989; Aldrich 2009; Redlawsk, Tolbert,

and Donovan 2011). For example, the 2000 Republican primary saw six candidates withdraw

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[9] Frontloading Headquarters.com

before the Iowa Caucuses. For frontrunners, failure to live up to expectations in Iowa can have cataclysmic effects such as the effect the loss in Iowa had on Hillary Clinton's campaign for the Democratic Party nomination in 2008. In a frontloaded primary system, nomination candidates need to establish viability long before a single ballot is cast.

Media, Technology, Campaign Finance and the Not-So-Invisible Primary

In conjunction with the institutionalization of the frontloaded primary system there have been other significant changes that are affecting the presidential nomination campaign environment by encouraging or creating conditions that are conducive to ideological extremism. Congressional polarization and mass polarization have combined with changes in the media, technological, and campaign finance environment to produce increasing ideological extremism in presidential nomination contests.

I argue that in conjunction with polarization in the electorate, congressional polarization is also contributing to increasing ideological extremism in presidential nomination campaigns. As the legislative arm for the political parties at the national level, Congress sets each party's legislative and ideological tone. Congressional debates and action drive the policy debate and attract the focus of the national media. As such, ideological extremism in Congress does not exist in a vacuum. The party's congressional delegations push other party members in other institutional settings to align with congressional policy preferences and goals. This effect is particularly powerful in presidential nomination campaigns because there are always several current or recent members of Congress competing in any given cycle. For example, in the 2008 Democratic contest Edwards, Biden, Clinton, Dodd, Kucinich, and Obama all were either currently serving in Congress, or had recently left Congress. In the 2012 Republican contest, Santorum, Paul, Bachmann, and Gingrich were all current or former members of Congress.

Candidates coming from the ideologically charged congressional environment may directly contribute to ideological extremism in the nomination contest by bringing heightened ideological extremism with them.

Candidates competing in the modern presidential nomination system realize the heightened importance their performance in Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina will play in their ability to win their party's nomination. All candidates from top-tier candidates and frontrunners to lower-tiered, office seeking candidates realize that their ability to attract financial resources to support their campaigns during the invisible primary will be key to allowing them to be electorally competitive. The first obstacle candidates face in the nomination fight is how to distinguish themselves and attract resources in a crowded field of candidates. For front-runners, this usually entails maintaining strong fundraising and poll performance. However, for non-frontrunners, there are two important strategies. Non-frontrunners attack the frontrunner, but they also attempt to eliminate their closest ideological competitor or competitors so that the competition is not siphoning off much needed resources from like-minded donors and interest groups, as well as voter support in the polls. One of the most common methods for eliminating ideological competitors is to create doubts about their ideological sincerity. To accomplish this, candidates will stake out more extreme issue positions and then challenge their competitors to follow suit. If their competitor fails to match their position it allows the candidate to claim that their competitor(s) are not true to party orthodoxy. They can then claim that they alone are the only true Republican/Democrat in the race. This technique can lead to voters questioning the sincerity of the other candidate(s). Even in cases where the competitor follows suit provides an opportunity. The candidate can then claim that their competitor has adapted the position out of political expediency rather than ideological sincerity. This can lead to candidates staking out

increasingly extreme positions as they attempt to jockey for the support of the party's base voters.

It is important to note that the opportunities to engage in ideological warfare have increased in the last couple of cycles with the emergence of three important changes that have increased the visibility of campaign activities during the invisible primary. First, the number of debates occurring during the invisible primary has increased sharply as technology has reduced the costs of transmission and has developed methods to bypass traditional television broadcasts through internet streaming. Since 2000, the number of primary debates has exploded, growing from a total of 3 debates in the Republican primary contest in 2000 and 2 Democratic Party debates in the 2004 cycle, to 16 debates for the Republicans and 19 for the Democrats in the 2008 cycle. The 2012 Republican nomination battle brought 30 debates total from a one-party contest with several debates hosted not by the traditional media outlets, but rather by ideologically motivated groups such as the Tea Party. Each debate increases the opportunity for non-front runners to attack the front runner as well as the opportunity to push their ideological competitors to the extremes. The parties seem to recognize the role debates play in encouraging ideological extremism as the Republican National Committee revised their debate rules for the 2016 cycle capping the number of sanctioned debates at nine and imposing harsh sanctions for participation in non-sanctioned debates with the hopes of reducing the opportunities for ideological warfare.[10]

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[10] Johnathan Martin. "Republicans Tighten Grip on Debates for 2016." *The New York Times* May 9, 2014. Accessed May 6, 2015. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/10/us/politics/republicans-tighten-grip-on-debates-in-2016-race.html

The sharp increase in the number of debates has combined with the emergence of the modern media, new media, and social media to bring much of the previously invisible pre-primary activity into the limelight. The invisible primary moniker has grown outdated. Not much remains invisible during the pre-primary period. This change has elevated the visibility and importance of issue positions and ideological positioning, which in turn has led to increases in ideological extremism in presidential nomination campaigns because it has lowered the costs of information access for voters while simultaneously expanding the amount and type of information available (Golbeck, Grimes, and Rogers 2010). In the pre-internet era, candidates would need to take out newspaper ads or produce television ads or campaign pamphlets/mailers to inform voters of their or of their opponent's issue positions. Now candidates have websites where they can offer 24 hour access to this information at very little cost. Of course, unlike a mailer, voters most come to the website to seek the information rather than passively receive it. However, instead of reaching a small targeted audience, candidates can reach everyone, anywhere. And because websites can host a great deal of information a candidate can choose to devote the space to their own issue positions, or to draw attention to what they believe to be negative information about their opponents or both of these things simultaneously.

Websites also led to another important change: the ability for individuals to donate money immediately to a campaign, and with very little effort. In the 1990s, if a voter wanted to donate money to a candidate then the voter would need to track down the address to send the donation, and then send the donation via check in the mail where it might arrive sometime in the next week or so with the funds only available after the check clears. In the internet era, a voter can log into a website and submit their donation into the campaign's coffers in a matter of seconds. With email, social media, and other internet-based mechanisms candidates can solicit

funds broadly, hitting millions of possible donors at once with very little up-front investment.

This change can also encourage ideological extremism because candidates see an immediate

payoff when they engage in polarizing behavior. If a candidate makes an appearance on Bill

O'Reilly's show and attacks a rival, they might see an increase in donations via their website.

This might provide an incentive to engage in more polarizing behavior.

It is important to note that these changes have happened in conjunction with a significant

expansion of the media environment and as such, substantial increases in outlets campaigns can

use for voter outreach and candidate messaging. First, through social media accounts such as

Facebook and Twitter candidates can reach millions of people at once and can engage in direct

communication with potential voters, donors, other political elites, the media, and even their

competitors (Conway, Kenski, and Wang 2013). Each tweet or post affords the opportunity for

candidates to stake out their ideological position, reach out to voters, test messaging strategies,

and attract media attention. The expanded media environment is far different from the one that

candidates faced even a decade ago. There are a multitude of political news websites such as

Politico and *Real Clear Politics* as well as partisan political blogs such as the *Drudge Report* on

the Right and *Media Matters* on the left. Research has shown that these avenues, combined with

political talk radio and the cable news networks have created a highly polarized media

environment (Pryor 2013) in which presidential nomination campaigns must be conducted.

Because of the proliferation of media outlets in the two most recent cycles, almost every

candidate, even long-shot candidates, had a permanent retinue of journalists assigned to them as

well as constant opposition surveillance hoping to catch any potential gaffe on camera. What was

once an information-poor campaign environment (Aldrich and Alvarez 1994) struggling to

attract limited media resources is now an information-rich environment with expansive media coverage creating the conditions for rising ideological extremism in presidential nomination campaigns.

The SuperPAC Era

Changes in the campaign finance environment have also had a major impact on presidential nomination campaigns and could be contributing to increases in ideological extremism. By the mid-2000s the internet had begun to emerge as a valuable tool for political campaigns. Still, digital campaigning in the 2004 election cycle was in its infancy. The internet's capabilities did not begin to become fully realized and harnessed until the insurgent campaign of Democratic presidential nomination candidate Barak Obama. The Obama campaign was the first campaign to truly unleash the power of the digital medium, particularly in terms of fundraising. The Obama campaign amassed an email contact list that would become to envy of every campaign manager in the country, Republican or Democrat. The contact info, in conjunction with the wealth of information and contact information afforded by emerging social media outfits like *Facebook* in 2008, and *Twitter* in 2012 allowed the Obama campaign machine to reach more potential campaign donors than any candidate in history and raise an unprecedented amount of money in small, individual contributions (Christenson and Smidt 2011). As discussed previously, the digital campaign environment allows candidates to reach millions of potential supporters at low costs and little effort, and it allows potential supporters the ability to initiate contact with the campaigns as well as dramatically lowered the cost of information gathering and donating.

Along with all of the digital changes in the fundraising environment, another important change was occurring: the emergence of the modern campaign finance environment sparked by

changes in campaign finance laws. By ruling that campaign donations are a protected form of political free speech in *Citizens United v. FEC* and *McCutcheon et al. v. FEC*, the Supreme Court opened the door to an entirely new campaign finance environment (Wilcox 2011). Although the Court's decision left campaign finance rules governing candidates and party political action committees largely unchanged, a loophole in the system was quickly exploited to develop a new campaign finance entity which became known as the SuperPAC. SuperPACs were able to bypass contribution limits, and in some cases, reporting requirements, by working to support candidates external to the political parties or to candidates. By "non-coordination" SuperPACs are allowed to accept unlimited donations to spend in support of specific candidates or in support of the political parties so long as they do not coordinate with the formal campaigns of the candidate they advocate on behalf of.

While these new rules did "open the floodgates to special interest money" in America's political campaigns as President Obama famously alleged in his 2011 State of the Union speech, in general, most political observers were surprised at the extent to which wealthy individual donors have been able to influence politics through large donations given to SuperPACs. In the 2012 Republican primary, SuperPACs actually outspent the candidates in some contests including the South Carolina primary which produced the single largest donation in campaign history when wealthy casino magnate Sheldon Adelson donated $5 million dollars to the SuperPAC supporting Newt Gingrich, who was able to use those funds to win the state's primary.[11] The SuperPAC era has brought important changes to the presidential nomination campaign environment that may be contributing to ideological extremism and political

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[11] Dan Eggen. 2012. "SuperPACS Dominate the Republican Primary." The Washington Post. http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/super-pacs-dominate-republican-primary-spending/2012/01/11/gIQAdcoq3P_story.html

polarization. Presidential nomination candidates have long faced a resource "catch-22."

Candidates must attract resources, which themselves are often the result of evidence of a

candidate's viability which in turn is determined by the likelihood that the candidate can win the

party's nomination. An important component of the advantages that front runners hold is that

they have achieved the perception of viability and that perception continues to bring in resources

that reinforce their viability by allowing the candidate to engage in campaign activities that

attract more resources and continue to secure viability.

The resource "catch-22" is often even more problematic for non-frontrunners or lower-

tiered candidates. They struggle to attract resources to establish viability, yet need viability to

attract resources to be competitive (Brown, Powell, and Wilcox 1995; Haynes, Gurian, and

Nichols 1997; Damore 1997; Goff 2004). The 2012 Republican primary campaign began to

change this equation. For example, the $5million donation to the SuperPAC supporting Newt

Gingrich came right after his loss in Iowa. Gingrich placed fourth in Iowa, 12 points behind the

winner, and fourth place in New Hampshire where he was 30 points behind the winner.

Nonetheless, Gingrich attracted this enormous donation despite failing to meet expectations or

establishing viability in Iowa or New Hampshire. In upcoming 2016 Republican Primary, the

nexus of SuperPACs supporting the long-shot candidacy of Senator Ted Cruz from Texas

proclaimed their intention to turn the resource "catch-22" upside down. In April of 2015, they

issued a statement claiming to have already amassed a war chest of more than $40 million dollars

to support Cruz's candidacy. In the article, the accountant for the SuperPACs stated that they

wanted to give Ted Cruz the ability to compete at the same level as the first tier candidates in the

race.[12] Because of the support of SuperPACs, candidates such as Ted Cruz may not be faced with the same resource dilemma their pre-SuperPAC era counterparts would have faced. Rather than needing to establish viability to attract resources, the candidates of the future may well be able to amass a huge war chest right out of the gate.

I argue that the presence and influence of SuperPACs can increase ideological extremism and political polarization in three important ways. First, it increases the ability for candidates at the ideological extremes to be competitive for the nomination, which in turn increases the likelihood that they will be able to exert more influence over the ideological positioning of the other candidates in the field. When ideological extremists are competitive and are polling well, they are given more prominence in debates, they have access to more campaign resources to get their message out and to run ideological attack ads, and they can engage in more campaign activities. Their competitive presence ideologically pushes the entire field. A second way the emergence of SuperPACs promotes ideological extremism in presidential nomination campaigns is due to the ideological positions candidates take as they seek the support of wealthy donors and influential interest groups. For example, in the upcoming 2016 contest it has been reported that the billionaire Koch brothers have pledged to spend $300 million in the GOP nomination contest and plan on "auditioning" five Republican hopefuls to see which will receive their considerable financial backing. One of the components that the Koch brothers will most likely consider when choosing which candidate to back monetarily may well be the candidate's stance on issues of concern to the Koch brothers such as regulatory policy and climate change. The Koch brothers are just one example of heavy hitters getting involved in financial contributions to political

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[12] Jeremy Diamond. "Network of Cruz Super pacs boast big haul." CNN 4/8/2015. Accessed 4/28/15. Available at http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/08/politics/ted-cruz-super-pacs/

campaigns. There were several other groups and individuals involved in the 2012 cycle and more gearing up for 2016.

Of course, some donors, party elites, party activists, and voters may place a higher premium on electability than on ideological congruence. These actors may encourage ideological moderation rather than ideological extremism. That being said, it is theorized that some candidates will chase the money available from ideologically motivated donors and interest groups by adopting issue positions and ideological positions that are favored by these donors. In addition, ideologically extreme candidates may be encouraged to enter the race because of the support of an expansive ideologically-motivated donor environment. The analysis presented here finds that the 2012 Republic primary produced a significant increase in ideological extremism in the Republican field. It is notable that the 2012 Republican primary was also the first presidential nomination contest to be held since SuperPACs emerged.

If the theoretical argument presented in this chapter is to be supported then I must be able to demonstrate ideological changes in presidential nomination fields over time. If elite polarization is occurring in presidential nomination campaigns we should observe two important things. We should see that individual candidates competing in the most recent fields are on the whole, more ideologically extreme than candidates in earlier cycles. We should also see that the candidate fields in 2008 and in 2012 are collectively more ideologically extreme than earlier candidate fields. Observing increased ideological extremism of presidential nomination candidates demonstrates that political polarization is occurring among non-congressional elites. This, in turn, provides support for the theory of political polarization which hypothesizes that political polarization is pervasive throughout the American political system and is occurring among a range of political actors.

Measuring Ideology

Measuring ideology is complex and no perfect measure exists. McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (2005) measure ideology for members of Congress as a function of an individual's roll call voting behavior using a multidimensional scaling technique they call NOMINATE, which stands for nominal three-step (ideal point) estimation. The authors have different versions of NOMINATE including W-NOMINATE which scales fixed ideal points within a single chamber, and DW-NOMINATE which allows for linear changes in ideal points over time and which can be used to create what they call Common Space Scores to allow for comparisons between chambers of Congress and over the entire history of Congress. Bonica (2013) measures ideology of political candidates and donors as a function of who is giving money to support an individual's campaign in a spatial context that considers the individual's contributions in the context of the entire donor universe. The Bonica scores rely on patterns of contributions to estimate ideological scores for recipients (candidates) as well as for donors.

Both methods rely on important assumptions. The various forms of NOMINATE as well as the method used in this analysis (optimal classification) assume that the individuals in the analysis have single peaked, symmetric binary preferences along a fixed number of dimensions. Both of methods make another important assumption. Both assume sincerity in order to estimate ideology with sincerity defined as individuals voting for the alternative closest to their own ideal point without thought of external factors such as consequences for those choice for the end of the game. NOMINATE scores assume that members of Congress vote yea or nay on roll call votes based on their sincere ideological preferences regarding the policy. The Bonica scores assume that donors give money to support candidates because candidates are sincere in their ideological positioning and the donor decides that their own positions align most closely with the candidate

they choose to donate to. Clearly, the assumption of sincerity is flawed with both of these measures. Members of Congress frequently cast votes for a myriad of reasons that have little or nothing to do with their sincere ideological preferences. Donors give money to political campaigns for candidates because the contest has national implications for control of Congress or because the candidate that did align best with them ideologically is no longer in the race, or is not seen as a viable candidate among other reasons.

The method of measuring ideology offered in this analysis also makes an assumption of sincerity. I use issue positions taken by presidential nomination candidates during nomination campaigns to construct a proxy measurement of ideology. In doing so, my measure makes an important assumption: it assumes that candidates take issue positions that best reflect their sincere ideological preferences, when it is all but certain not to always be true. Candidates seeking to win presidential nominations take issue positions for many reasons, including for ideological reasons. For many candidates, they will take positions away from their ideal point in order to adapt to the political realities they face as they vie for the nomination. Candidates consider many different factors when taking a position on an issue. They may consider their opponent's positions, the preferences of voters on the issue, and the preferences of other political elites, opinion leaders, and donors. That being said, candidates also take issue positions because they align with their sincere ideological preferences. Ideological congruence should be an important factor they consider when taking positions on issues. And most candidates have a developed ideological profile before they ever become presidential nomination candidates. Although candidates have some flexibility to maneuver on some issues, movement on other issues is untenable. If a candidate has an established record on an issue, or has made several public comments regarding their position on an issue, movement for sake of political expediency

is difficult. Even when candidates do change their position on an issue, it is not possible to say with certainty that the change is not reflecting a transition in their sincere ideological preferences. It is certainly not a viable electoral strategy to change one's position on an issue such as gay marriage and cite the fact that the public opinion polls have shifted as the reason for the change in heart. Generally, when a nomination candidate changes their position on an issue they site a sincere belief in the appropriateness of the new position to explain the switch.

Outside of Congress, most studies examining the ideology of political figures relies on voters' *perceptions* of candidate ideology rather than a direct measurement of candidate ideology. In their analysis of the 1988 Super Tuesday primary electorate, Aldrich and Alvarez (1994) find that issue positions can be quite important in primary elections, particularly as a means of determining candidates' strategies for choosing which issues to emphasize. However, the authors do not collect data regarding the issue positions taken by the candidates in their study. Instead they rely on voters' perceptions of the candidate's issues positions and relayed in exit polling of primary voters. As such, they construct an indirect measurement of the ideological composition of the 1988 field. In their 2010 conference paper, Mutz and Dilliplane also rely on respondents' perceptions of the 2008 presidential nomination candidates on a 7 point "ideology" thermometer using the American National Election Survey. As such, they also use an indirect measure of ideology to study the ideology of the candidates. The measure of ideology presented here makes an important contribution to our understanding of the ideology of presidential nomination candidates because it provides a direct measurement of ideology that is consistent across all cycles and consistent for presidential nomination candidates from all backgrounds. Rather than relying on assessments of a candidate's ideology from voters or other actors which are subjective, this measure relies on the candidate's own statements and issue positions to

measure ideological extremity. As such, it is not merely someone's perception of the candidate's ideology. Instead, it is derived directly from the candidate. Issue positions make a strong proxy for ideology because issue positions are a manifestation of political ideology. Collectively they are the embodiment of a candidate's worldview and political philosophy. To adapt a famous quote, issue positions are the worst way to measure ideology, except perhaps for all the others.

To measure the ideology of presidential nomination candidates I utilize McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal's ideal point estimation technique using their optimal classification R package. Optimal classification conducts ideal point estimation by taking a set of binary outcomes and finding an optimal cut point for each "vote." It then uses these cut points to optimally classify the candidates in the intervals created by the cut points. This process is repeated until the number of classification errors are minimized and cannot be further reduced. A classification error is defined by the instance of someone on the yea side of the cut point "votes" nay.

Using optimal classification I estimate ideological scores for all presidential nomination candidates since the 2000 cycle. To create NOMINATE scores McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal use all non-unanimous roll call votes for each member of Congress to estimate ideology. Each vote is recorded as a yea or nay vote. Each member's individual voting record is considered in a spatial context. For my ideology measure I adapt this strategy by substituting issue positions for yea or nay roll call voting. I record each nomination candidate as either having held an issue position or not held an issue position. Using abortion as an example, I can illustrate this method. Because I am interested in measuring differences amongst candidates within one party, a blunt measurement on an issue is insufficient. Since 2000, all Republican candidates' have been against abortion. As such, it would not tell us anything to record each candidate's position as supportive of abortion or not supportive of abortion. What I am interested in is the *degree* of

ideological differences on this issue that exists within one Republican field. For my measure, data on several possible positions on abortion for each candidate is collected. This allows for the ability to measure the strength of each candidate's view on abortion. One candidate might wish to ban abortion after 20 weeks gestation with exceptions for the health of the mother, rape, or incest. Another candidate might support a 20 week ban with no exceptions provided for rape, incest, or the health of a mother. Still another candidate might prefer an outright ban no matter the gestational stage. By differentiating between candidates on the various positions on issues, a much fuller picture of the strength each candidate's ideology emerges and variations between same-party candidates become measurable.

The issue position dataset created for this research includes a first-of-its-kind collection of positions across a wide range of domestic policy issues including but not limited to gun control, the environment, tax policy, regulatory policy, healthcare reform, immigration, crime, entitlement programs, and gay rights as well a few national security issues related to the response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The full dataset includes data for 44 presidential nomination candidates on 145 issue positions for all presidential nomination campaigns from 2000 to 2012.[13] The full list of issues included in the dataset is available in Appendix H. Candidate issue positions were gathered using primary sources such as debate footage and transcripts as well as from candidate speeches, op-eds, and interviews using materials recovered using Lexis Nexus, the American Presidency Project, candidate websites and campaign materials, candidate surveys, and websites such as On the Issues, You Tube, and the Political Guide. When collecting the data, every effort was made to ensure that the issue position was taken directly by the candidate rather than attributed to the candidate by a third party. Efforts were also made to consider the time

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[13] The dataset is being expanded for 2016 and will eventually be expanded to add earlier cycles.

period in which the issue position was taken. Whenever possible, the position taken by the candidate during the nomination contest was used. If a candidate changed his or her position during the primary period from an earlier position, the position taken for the presidential primary period was used for this analysis. Each candidate is assigned a 1 for that policy option if they hold that position, and a 0 if they do not hold that position. If the candidate's position on that issue could not be ascertained, the candidate was assigned a 9. Some issues appear in every election cycle, while others are only pertinent to one or two election cycles. Issues that are not applicable in a given cycle are coded as 9 are not included in the analysis.

Optimal classification is then used to construct one dimensional ideology scores for each candidate in the analysis. Optimal classification provides some important advantages. The most important advantage is that the method is agnostic in terms of whether a position is liberal, conservative, or moderate. The model completely removes subjectivity from the ideological scores. The model is only concerned with each candidate's pattern of 0s and 1s in relation to all of the other candidates' patterns of 0s and 1s and does not push candidates to the extremes of the scale. The data used in the analysis does not indicate whether a candidate is a Republican or a Democrat or even what issues are included in the analysis. Because of this, there is no subjectivity. A second important advantage of optimal classification is that it allows for the inclusion of issues that are not constant across cycles. This is particularly important for this analysis which seeks to examine ideology across several election cycles. Eliminating the need for consistency in which issues are included in the analysis greatly expanded the data that could be included in the analysis. A third advantage from using optimal classification comes from the ability to put all candidates within a common ideological space using a direct measurement of ideology. This is particularly important for analysis of presidential nomination candidates

because these candidates come from a mix of state and federal offices, as well as from the private sector. Previous to this study, there has been no way to compare the ideology of a governor with that of a member of Congress using a direct measure. Given that many candidates are governors, and not members of Congress, using NOMINATE scores to measure the ideology of nomination fields have never been able provide a full picture. Optimal classification allows for the direct comparison of a governor and a senator in a common ideological space.

Despite its strengths there is an important limitation of using optimal classification to measure ideology. Because there are not open contests for both parties in each cycle, it is not possible to make comparisons between individual cycles. That is to say, separate models cannot be run that calculate ideology scores that can be comparable to ideology scores in other cycles. The analysis presented in this research only covers four presidential nomination cycles, and of those four, only one contest (2008) had open competition for both parties. In 2000, the Republicans had an open primary with several viable candidates while the Democrats had an incumbent vice president running and only one other viable candidate Senator Bill Bradley. Although technically an open competition, the Democratic contest was far less competitive than the Republican contest, although Bradley did gain some traction. The same could be said in 2004 where the Republicans held a symbolic primary to re-nominate incumbent president George W. Bush and in 2012 when the Democrats held a symbolic primary to re-nominate incumbent president Barack Obama. As such, it is not possible to estimate comparable, cycle-specific ideology scores for any cycle other than 2008.[14]

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[14] Once the 2016 cycle is conducted, I will be able to analyze 2008 compared to 2016.

Because I am interested in measuring changes in the ideological distribution of nomination candidates across time, I must combine all candidates into one model to estimate scores that can be used to compare candidates between cycles. As such, all candidates over the twelve year period are considered collectively. This is problematic in two ways. First it assumes that there is little variation in the importance of or the meaning of issue positions across the time period analyzed. Each election cycle finds some issues of heightened importance over other issues. For example, in 2000 with relative peace and posterity, the major focus of the campaign was on healthcare reform, social security reform, and the appropriate response to the budget surplus. Due to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, foreign policy and national security were the top issues in the 2004 cycle. The 2008 cycle occurred simultaneously to the recession and economic crash so economic issues became the focus during the general election, while healthcare reform and ending the war in Iraq dominated the primaries. Finally, in the 2012 cycle the main focus through the primaries and the general election was on the economy and on social issues such as immigration and abortion. Optimal classification treats the relative weight or importance of each issue included in the analysis equally, although they are most likely not uniformly important. Second, because of the spatial component of optimal classification, the presence of duplicate candidates will almost certainly affect the scores. Another disadvantage of optimal classification is that it is non-parametric which means that it is a computational, not statistical test. As such, there is no statistical error for the ideal points. Despite these shortcomings, the ideology scores created through the optimal classification process provide a reliable, albeit not perfect, approximation of each candidate's ideology in a spatial context.

The Ideological Distribution of Presidential Nomination Candidates

The one dimension ideology scores produced by optimal classification scores are shown on a -1 to +1 scale where -1 represents the most liberal scores and +1 represents the most conservative score and are presented along the traditional left/right ideological continuum.[15] Figure 4.1 displays the ideological distribution of all presidential nomination candidates competing in the 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012 cycles. Party nominees are in bold. It is remarkable how well the actual distribution matches up with the excepted distribution. Candidates generally regarded to be ideologically moderate end up with moderate ideology scores, and candidates that are expected to be strong ideologues have more extreme ideology scores. There are several important findings from the analysis. First, as expected there is evidence that supports the hypothesis that presidential nomination candidates are becoming more ideologically extreme over time, particularly for the Republican candidates in 2012. That being said, the Republican nominee in every cycle including 2012 was more ideologically moderate than the Democratic nominee, even in 2000 where Democratic nominee Vice President Al Gore and Republican nominee George Bush were both quite moderate. Although there has been less ideological change with the Democratic fields, until the 2012 cycle, Democrats tended to field more ideologically extreme top tier candidates and nominees than Republicans. Although the Democratic nominee in 2004 (John Kerry) was actually more extreme than the Democratic nominee in 2008 (Barack Obama) both were further to the ideological left than their Republican counterparts were to the ideological right.

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[15] Technically, the optimal classification scores are not bounded between -1 and +1

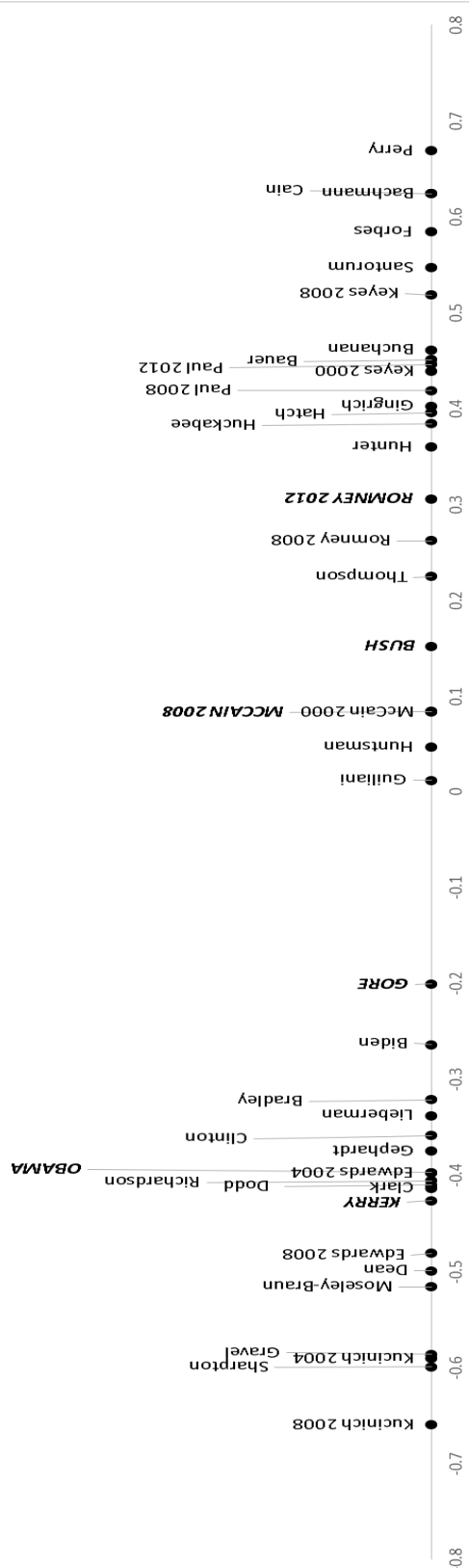# Ideology of Presidential Nomination Candidates: 2000-2012

Figure 4.1 Ideology of Presidential Nomination Candidates

(Incumbents Presidents not included)

What is most striking about the analysis is the dramatic shift to the ideological right the 2012 Republican field takes. The mean ideology score of the 2012 field is 0.45, up from 0.28 in the 2008 cycle. The shift rightward is even more apparent when one examines the candidates individually. As seen in Figure 4.2 (which shows only the Republican candidates), the right side of the graph is dominated by the 2012 Republicans. The 2012 cycle produced three of the most ideologically extreme candidates included in the analysis. These three candidates (Michelle Bachmann, Herman Cain, and Rick Perry) were significantly more conservative than even the most conservative candidates in 2008 and 2000. It is also important to acknowledge that at some point in the invisible primary, all three of these candidates were leading the polls. They were not merely issue advocacy candidates like Alan Keyes in 2008, they were office seeking candidates obtaining viability and front running status, albeit short lived. On the Democratic side, one has to look for candidates such as the Reverend Al Sharpton or Congressman Dennis Kucinich to find comparable ideological extremism and neither of these candidates were ever electorally viable. Bachmann, Cain, and Perry fell out of contention due to various gaffes and scandals, but each of them were at some point viable for the Republican nomination. Another important finding is that every viable candidate who competed in more than one cycle except for McCain, shifted to the ideological extremes from the earlier cycle to the later cycle. For example, Edwards in 2008 moved to the left from his 2004 run and Romney in 2012 moved the right from his run in 2008. Even Ron Paul became more extreme in 2012 than in 2008.
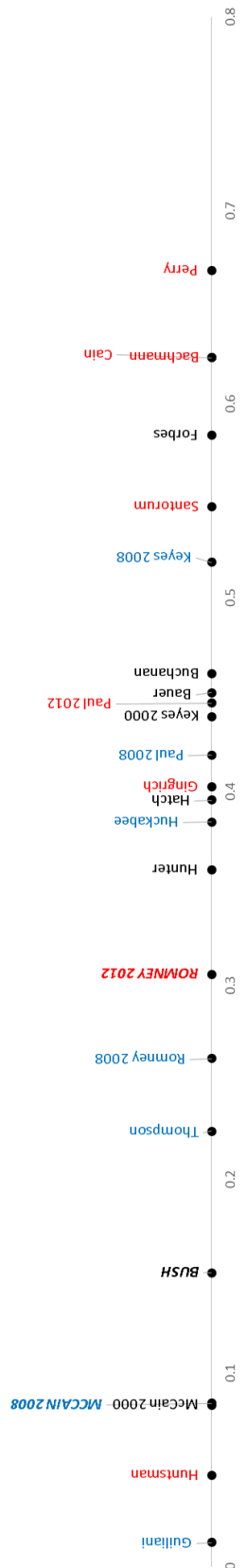
Figure 4.2: Republican Nomination Candidates 2000-2012

Black 2000 Field

Blue 2008 Field

Red 2012 Field

Figures 4.3 and 4.4 show the change in the mean ideology scores for the Republican and Democratic fields included in the analysis. The sharp increase in the mean ideology score for the Republican field in 2012 puts the Republicans at parity with the Democratic fields of 2004 and 2008. Republican candidates became more ideologically extreme but had more room to do so than their Democratic counterparts. Comparing the mean ideology scores of each field for both parties reveals increasing ideological extremism. The 2000 and 2012 Republican fields were more ideologically extreme than in the 2008 cycle. As such, ideological extremism briefly recedes before increasing sharply for the 2012 cycle. For the Democratic fields, ideological extremism increased sharply after the 2000 cycle in 2004, and although it decreased slightly, stayed high for the 2008 cycle. Despite producing evidence suggestive of movement to the ideological extremes by more recent presidential nomination candidates the analysis presented here is preliminary.
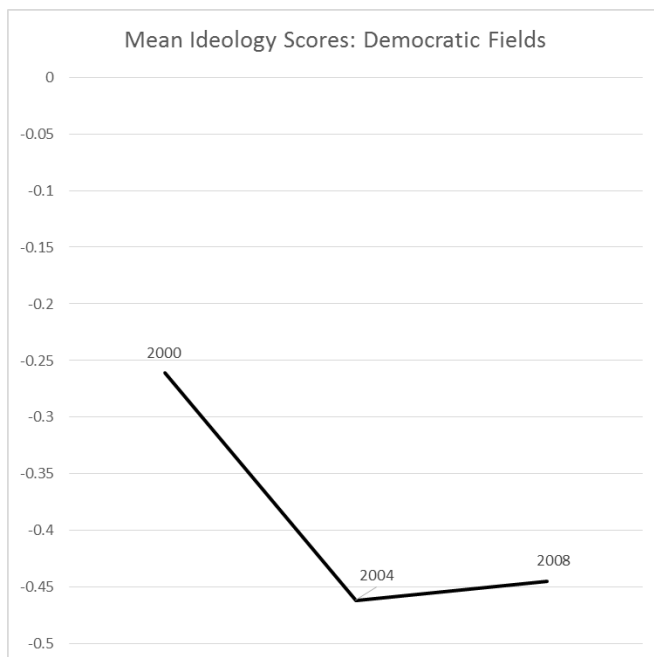

Figure 4.3: Mean Ideology Scores (Democratic Fields)
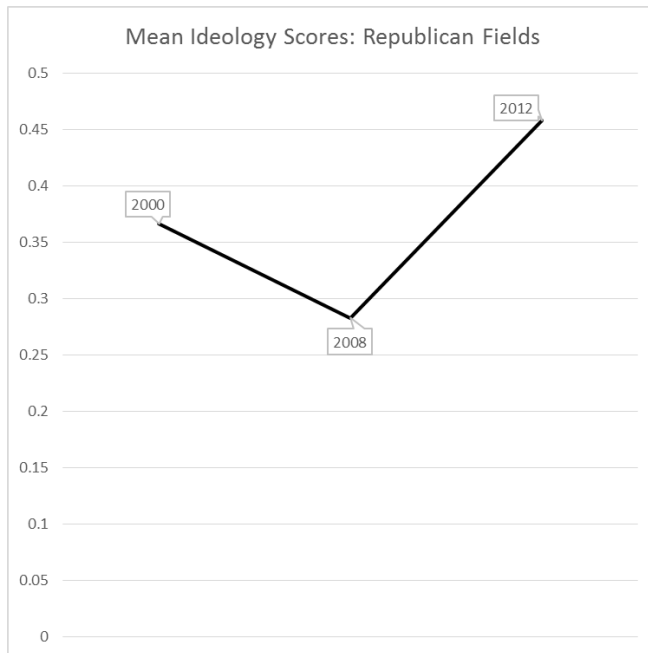
Figure 4.4: Mean Ideology Scores (Republican Fields

Including the 2016 data will provide a much clearer picture of change over time. The 2016 data will also produce a second cycle in which both parties held open primary contests, although the Republican contest will have far more candidates. With the inclusion of 2016, the analysis will include 3 open cycles for the Democrats and 3 open cycles for the Republicans. I will also be able to use the 2016 data to test whether one or both parties shift to the ideological extremes between 2008 and 2016.

Chapter 5

Polarization and the 2012 Republican Nomination Contest

Although the evidence of asymmetrical polarization for the Republican field is preliminary, it is highly suggestive and it leads to an important question. What factors contributed to the 2012 Republican field's collective shift to the ideological extremes? One possible contributing factor is pressure from Republican primary voters. If Republican primary voters have become more ideologically extreme, they could be pushing the Republican candidates to adopt more extreme issue positions and a stronger conservative ideology. The shift in ideology in the Republican field in 2012 corresponds with an important change within the Republican Party: the emergence of the Tea Party movement. This chapter further examines the electoral connection between candidates and ideological extremism by examining the influence that Tea Party Republicans had on the Republican nomination candidates in the 2012 Iowa Caucuses.

The Tea Party movement emerged in 2010 as a backlash to the election of Barack Obama, the radical steps taken by the Bush and Obama Administration to address the financial crisis, and the Democratic Party's push to pass sweeping healthcare reform legislation. What started off as a loosely affiliated grassroots movement quickly morphed into an institutional force to be reckoned with. The 2010 congressional midterms saw dozens of self-proclaimed Tea Party members elected to Congress, including some who successfully ran against what they

called "establishment" incumbent Republican members of Congress in the party primaries. All told, about 30% of candidates who were backed by or who claimed to be members of the Tea Party were successful in securing seats in Congress in that cycle. In the wake of the election, a Tea Party Caucus was formed in the House of Representatives by then congresswoman Michelle Bachmann. Republican voters also showed robust support for the newly emerged Tea Party movement. A *Wall Street Journal-NBC News* poll in October of 2010 found that 35% of likely voters identified themselves as Tea Party member, the overwhelming majority of whom identified themselves as Republicans.[16]

The 2012 Republican primary election was the first presidential nomination campaign conducted after the Tea Party emerged. Previous research on the Tea Party finds that at the grassroots level, Tea Party supporters hold more extreme views on social welfare policies than do average Republicans (Skocpol and Williamson 2012). Other research finds that the Tea Party is a reactionary movement fueled by fear of the massive changes American society and political culture have undergone in the past few decades (Parker and Barreto 2013). Earlier in this dissertation, I argue that these changes have combined with important technological and institutional changes to produce increasing ideological extremism. The emergence of the Tea Party movement may be a contributing factor to increases in ideological extremism and viability for ideologically extreme candidates in the 2012 Republican primary. As such, it is prudent to investigate the 2012 Republican primary electorate to develop an understanding of its ideological composition, particularly among those who identify themselves as supporters of the Tea Party.

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[16] Jonathan Weisman. "GOP in Lead in Final Lap." Wall Street Journal. October 20th, 2010. Available at: http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702303550904575562493014465942

The Ideology of the 2012 Republican Iowa Electorate

The data used to analyze the 2012 Republican electorate comes from a CBS News/*New York Times* poll of likely Iowa Caucus participants conducted between November 30 and December 5, 2011. Only respondents who indicated that they would be participating in the upcoming Iowa Caucus with a high degree of certainty are included in the analysis. This yielded 436 respondents who were then separated into two groups: those whom indicated that they supported the Tea Party and those who did not. This resulted in 276 respondents who supported the Tea Party and 160 who did not. Overall, 63% of Republican Iowa Caucus participants indicated that they were supporters of the Tea Party, which is a strong majority.

The survey asked several questions that were useful in exploring differences between the two groups including policy questions on abortion, gay marriage, immigration, Obamacare, and increasing taxes on high wage earners. Respondents were also asked to indicate willingness to vote for a candidate on factors such as electability versus issue position congruence, taking the Republican Party in a new direction, the importance of social issues relative to economic issues, and candidate flexibility versus issue position consistency. In addition, respondents were asked if they would be willing to support a candidate who was less conservative than they are, but who had a good chance of winning in November and/or one who did not share their views on immigration and abortion. Figure 5.1 shows that there are distinct differences between Tea Party supporters and non-Tea Party supporters on the policy issues asked about in the survey. There is a particularly large separation on the issue of repealing "Obamacare." Survey respondents were given three options on the issue: keep the law as it is, repeal parts of the law, or repeal the law entirely. More than 70% of Republican respondents who support the Tea Party indicated their preference would be a full repeal compared to only 47% of non-supporters.

The percent of Tea Party supporters who indicated that abortion should not be permitted in any case was nearly double that of non-supporters (48% compared to 25%). The issue with the least amount of separation between the two groups was illegal immigration where only 30% of
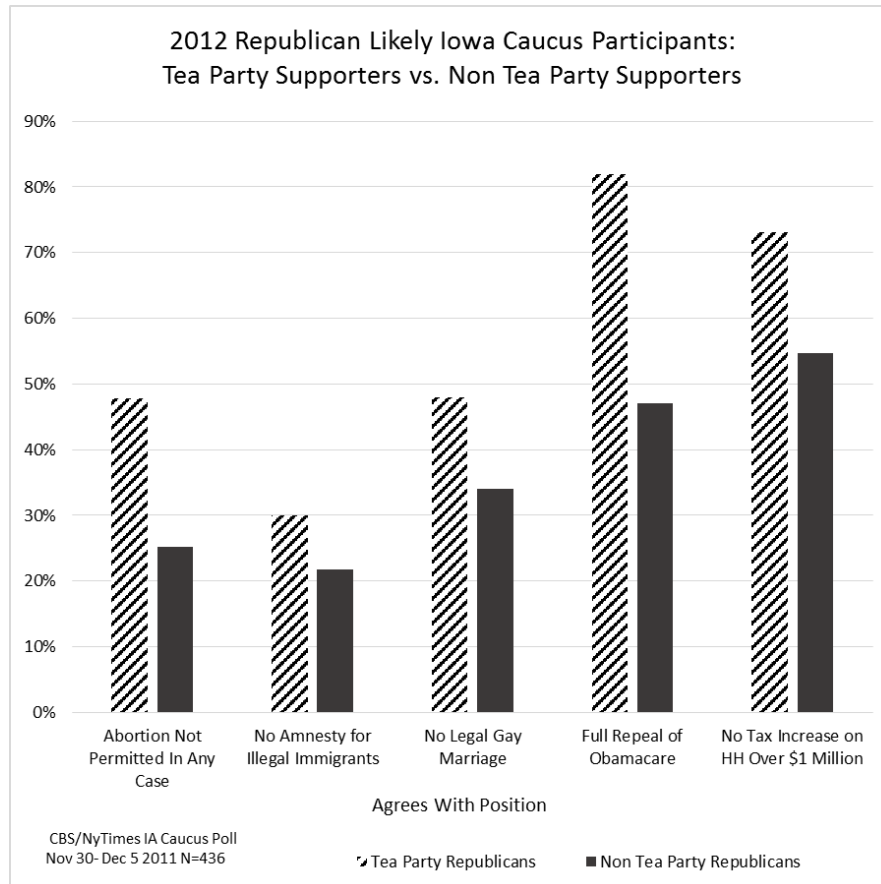

2012 Republican Likely Iowa Caucus Participants:
Tea Party Supporters vs. Non Tea Party Supporters

CBS/NyTimes IA Caucus Poll
Nov 30- Dec 5 2011 N=436

Tea Party Republicans   Non Tea Party Republicans

Figure 5.1: Comparing Tea Party Supporters and Non-Tea Party Supporters

supporters and 22% of non-supporters selected the hardline option of not granting any amnesty to illegal immigrants currently working in the U.S., a modest 8 point spread.

However, views of Tea Party and non-Tea Party supporters were remarkably similar when it came to determinants of their vote. Despite a reputation for being unwilling to compromise (Courser 2010; Skocpol and Williamson 2012), a strong majority of Tea Party Republicans planning to participate in the Iowa Caucus indicated a willingness to support a

candidate further away from them ideologically if it increased the likelihood of being able to retake the White House from the Democrats in November. In fact, as Figures 5.2 and 5.3 show, Tea Party Republicans outpolled non-Tea Party Republicans on the electability question: with 57% indicating a preference that the candidate be able win in November even if they are less congruent on the issues with their own position. Just 50% of the non-supporters felt the same way. When asked whether they would support a candidate with views less conservative than their own if they had a good chance of winning the general election, a resounding 78% of Tea Party supporters and 83% of non-supporters indicated that they would be willing to do so.
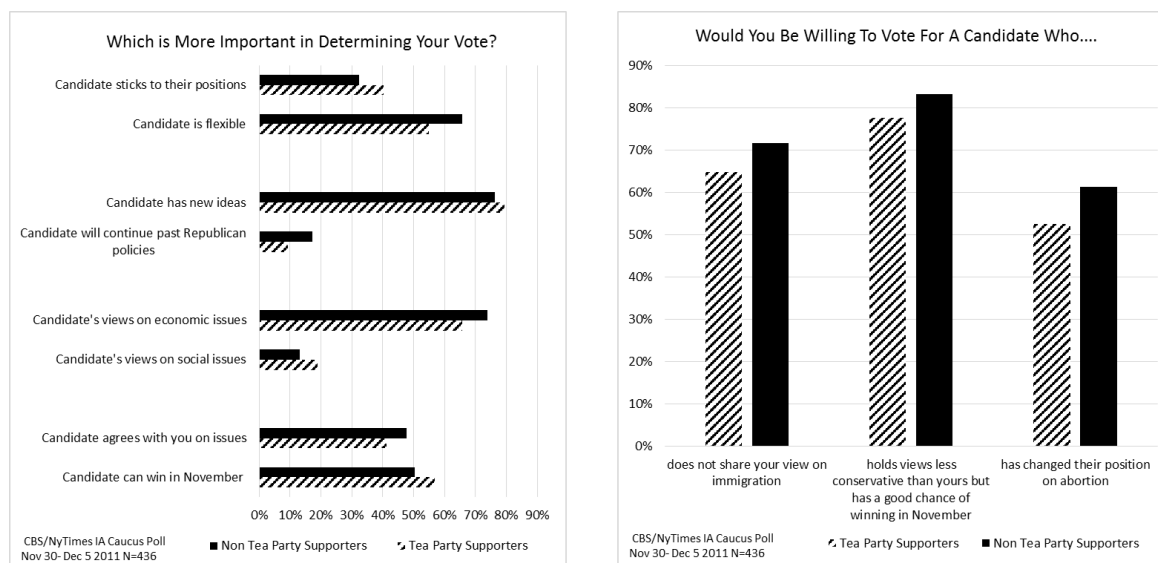
Figures 5.2 and 5.3: Determinants of 2012 Caucus Support (Tea Party Supporters v. Non-Supporters)

It is possible that what these two questions capture is the premium that Republican voters placed on removing Obama from office in an era where partisanship and polarization have heightened the stakes of party control (Fiorina and Abrams 2009; Abramowitz 2011). It is also important to remember that the respondents are all Iowa Caucus participants and highly engaged in politics. Therefore, they are operating with a relatively high level of political sophistication

and engagement. It is possible that these engaged and informed voters recognize the strategic importance of electability and their responses reflect that strategic calculation. Another interesting takeaway from the examination of preferences of Tea Party and non-Tea Party Republican Caucus participants is that 65% and 72% respectively said that they would be willing to vote for a candidate that does not share their view on immigration. This is an interesting finding and suggests that Mitt Romney may not have needed to shift as far right on the immigration issue as he did.

Tea Party and non-Tea Party Republicans were then compared to examine differences in self-reported ideology between participating in the 2012 Iowa Caucus. Figure 5.4 shows that there is sharp ideological divide between the two groups. 56% of Tea Party supporters identify themselves as "very conservative" compared to only 15% of non-supporters. This number is far higher than even the 2012 *PEW American Values* data presented in chapter 3 where a mere 10% of Republican voters identified themselves as "very conservative" or even the 2007 PEW survey of Republican Iowa Caucus participants revealed just 24% identified as "very conservative." Of course, it is important to remember that the 2008 sample grouped all Republican caucus participants together because the Tea Party had yet to emerge. However, the sharp increase in strong conservatives persists even when all Republicans participating in the 2008 Iowa Caucus are compared to all Republicans participating in the 2012 Iowa Caucus. In 2008, 24% describe themselves as very conservative. In 2012, 38% do so.

The fact that Tea Party supporters comprised more than 60% of the total Republican electorate in Iowa in 2012, and that nearly 60% of them describe their own ideology in the strongest possible terms is suggestive that the 2012 Republican field may have been pushed to

adopt more ideologically extreme issue positions as they fought to win support in Iowa. Tea

Party Republicans indicated stronger ideological preferences than non-Tea Party supporters on

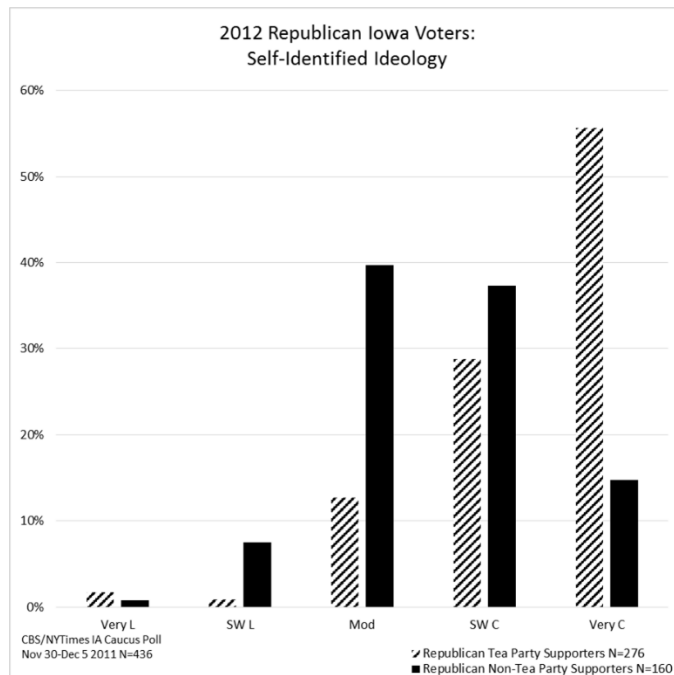every issue included in the survey. On some issues, like an outright ban on abortion and a full

Figure 5.4: Self-Identified Ideology of 2012 Republican Caucus Voters

repeal of Obamacare, Tea Party Republicans were nearly twice as extreme as their non-

supporting counterparts. Tea Party Republicans also indicated higher levels of political interest

and political engagement than non-supporters. Figure 5.5 shows differences in the levels of

interest and involvement between the two groups. Tea Party supporters were more likely to be

following the campaigns, watch a debate, or attend or host a campaign event. As such, the

candidates might have had more interactions with Tea Party Republicans than non-Tea Party

Republicans while on the stump in Iowa, where retail politics makes up a large portion of
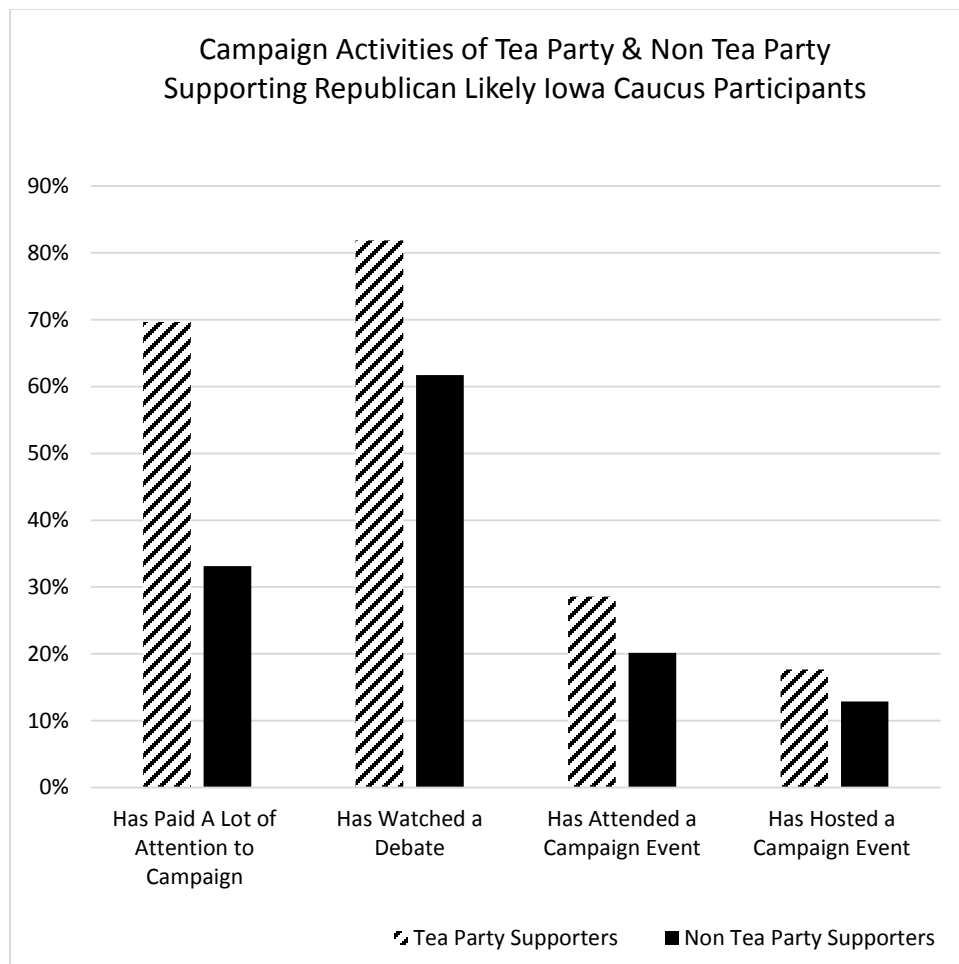
campaigning.

Campaign Activities of Tea Party & Non Tea Party Supporting Republican Likely Iowa Caucus Participants

Figure 5.5: Campaign Activities of 2012 Republican Iowa Caucus Voters

The Tea Party & the Candidates

Despite eventually awarding the nomination to presumptive frontrunner Mitt Romney, the 2012 Republican presidential primary was dynamic and volatile throughout the "invisible" primary period. The front runner in the polls changed several times before the January 3rd Iowa Caucus. In Iowa, Romney's initial lead in the summer of 2011 gave way when Michelle Bachmann, who had won the Ames Iowa Straw Poll, briefly eclipsed him. By August 2011, there was a three-way tie in Iowa between Romney, Bachmann and Texas governor Rick Perry who had just entered the race. However, missteps by both Perry and Bachmann derailed their campaigns and the so-called "not-Mitt Romney" candidate became businessman Herman Cain.

Eventually a personal scandal, inexperience, and under-preparation for the rigors of presidential politics led to an end in Cain's candidacy. In the days just before the Iowa Caucus there was a virtual dead heat in Iowa between Romney, Rick Santorum, and Libertarian-Republican Ron Paul (Burton 2014, 44-46). Although Mitt Romney was crowned the winner of the Iowa Caucus, a recount later determined that Rick Santorum had actually won. Ultimately, all three of the early contests were won by a different candidate: something that had not happened since Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina became recognized as the first three critical contests.

Unfortunately, the *CBS/New York Times* poll was conducted during a specific time period during the invisible primary. As such, it cannot tell us much about the fluidity of the race. However, it can provide a snap shot of voter preferences which we can use to measure differences in candidate support for Tea Party Republicans and non-Tea Party Republicans. It was opined by most political pundits and observers that Mitt Romney was the Establishment front runner, and that Tea Party Republicans preferred more ideologically extreme candidates, many of whom were claiming to be Tea Party Republicans themselves. At the time this poll was conducted, Newt Gingrich had been experiencing a large bounce in the polls after a strong debate performance. As such, much of the Tea Party support had temporarily coalesced around him. There are important differences in preferences between Tea Party and non-Tea Party Republicans participating in the 2012 Iowa Caucus. The analysis of voter preferences reveals that Tea Party Republicans were far less likely to indicate an intention to support Mitt Romney at the upcoming caucuses, instead preferring one of the other candidates. Meanwhile, Romney's support among non-Tea Party Republicans was almost triple that of his support among Tea Party identifiers.

In order to further assess the importance that Tea Party support plays in vote preference

in the 2012 Iowa primary I conducted logistic regression to estimate how well identifying oneself as a Tea Party support predicts an intention to support a candidate other than Mitt Romney at the upcoming Iowa Caucus. The dependent variable is a dummy variable indicating the respondent's intention to vote for a candidate other than Mitt Romney. Romney was widely viewed as the Republican Establishment's preferred candidate because he was ideologically moderate, had broad appeal, possessed strong fundraising acumen, and had a developed national organization from his previous run for the nomination in 2008. Pundits and media consistently covered Romney as the frontrunner, even when he was not leading in the polls. Having found support for ideological extremism hypothesis it is expected that the two groups also display different preferences for who should be chosen as the party's nominee.

It is hypothesized that Tea Party Republicans will indicate a vote preference for a candidate other than Mitt Romney due both to his ideological temperament and to the fact that he represented the so-called Establishment wing of the Republican Party. When the survey was conducted at the beginning of December 2011, most of the "not" Mitt Romney vote share was directed at Newt Gingrich, who was enjoying a sudden surge in the polls. Gingrich was leading among all Republican respondents who indicated they intended to caucus, with 38% of the vote share. Romney was second with 18%. Their closest competitors were Ron Paul and Rick Perry with who received 8.5% of the vote share respectively. This left too few observations dispersed throughout the rest of the field to run statistical analyses predicting support for each individual candidate. Therefore, a dummy variable coded 0/1 was used that collapsed support for all candidates aside from Romney into one category and coded them as 1 (other candidates). The model is specified as

$$\hat{p} = \frac{\exp(b_0 + b_1 X_1 + b_2 X_2 + \ldots + b_p X_p)}{1 + \exp(b_0 + b_1 X_1 + b_2 X_2 + \ldots + b_p X_p)}$$

where p is probability that the respondent indicates they intend to vote for a candidate other than Mitt Romney given their demographic characteristics and whether they indicated that they are a Tea Party supporter or not. The analysis (presented in Table 5.1) finds that there is a statistically significant difference in candidate choice between Tea Party Republicans and non-Tea Party Republicans. Tea Party supporters have a predicted probability of 77% of indicating an intention to vote for a candidate other than Mitt Romney for the GOP nomination when all other variable are at their means. Meanwhile, Republicans who stated that they did not support the Tea Party have a predicted probability of 30% of supporting Mitt Romney at the Iowa Caucus. Therefore, differences between Tea Party Republicans and non-Tea Party Republicans move beyond ideological differences. The two groups display differences in candidate preference as well.

Table 5.1: Predicting Tea Party Support of a Non-Establishment Candidate

	Table 5.1	Support of Candidate Other Than Mitt Romney		
Covariate	Estimate	Std. Error	t	p-value
Tea Party Support	0.764	0.295	2.59	0.010
Education	-0.226	0.119	-1.91	0.057
Gender	-0.519	0.290	-1.80	0.073
Age	0.068	0.158	0.44	0.663
Income	-0.092	0.069	-1.33	0.184
Constant	2.198	0.732	3.00	0.003
	N=408			F(5, 403)=3.18(p=0.0093)

The analysis of the *CBS/New York Times* poll of the Republican Iowa electorate reveals an ideologically extreme Republican electorate dominated by Tea Party Republicans. This seems to suggest that electoral pressures may have played a role in the increase of ideological extremism found in the 2012 field. Applying Downsian voting theory for general elections into the single party primary environment, the Republican candidates should have sought to position ideologically themselves congruent to the median Republican voter and given the importance that Iowa plays in each candidate's viability it seems likely that candidates are especially sensitive to the preferences of Iowa voters. The median Iowa Caucus participant that year was a

"strongly conservative" Tea Party Republican. As such, it is not surprising to find that the candidates were reflective of the majority of Iowa voters. There was a significant increase in the ideological extremism of the Republican Iowan electorates between 2008 and 2012. Using a *PEW* survey from 2007 of Iowa Caucus participants I find that the number of Republican caucus participants who describe their own ideology as "strongly conservative" increased sharply between 2007 and 2011. In the 2007 survey, 24% of Republican caucus participants described their own ideology as "very conservative." By 2011, it had increased to 38%. This is consistent with the hypothesis that the dramatic shift in ideological extremism for the 2012 Republican field of candidates could be driven in part by increasing ideological extremism of Republican voters since 2008.

The research presented in this chapter provides support for the theory of political polarization by producing evidence of increasing ideological extremism in presidential nomination campaigns. In doing so, an important premise of the overall theory (the occurrence of non-congressional elite polarization) has withstood empirical scrutiny. Combined with evidence of political polarization at the mass level presented in chapter 3, the findings from this research have demonstrated that political polarization is more pervasive than previously thought. However, it should be acknowledged that demonstrating mass-level polarization and increasing ideological extremism within presidential nomination campaigns falls short of a rigorous test of the entire theory. I present a theoretical argument that changes in American society such as the civil rights and feminists movements set party sorting into motion and produced ideologically homogenous political parties and conditions ripe for ideological extremism amongst voters, activists, and elites. As such, I then argue that political polarization is neither bottom up, nor top down, but rather it is interactive and dynamic. Regardless of where political polarization

originated this research makes two things clear: polarization is not confined to Congress and its

impact extends beyond congressional politics.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The research conducted in this dissertation set out to explore one of the most interesting and complex political phenomena in modern American politics: political polarization. The literature on political polarization was inconclusive regarding the occurrence of polarization within the mass electorate. At the elite level, research on political polarization was largely limited to examinations of Congress. This study sought to expand the scope of political polarization research by answering three important research questions.

1. How and why might political polarization be occurring throughout the American political system and within a range of political actors?

2. Is political polarization occurring at the mass level?

3. Can evidence of political polarization be found among non-congressional elites?

The research thesis is that political polarization is occurring due to significant changes in the legal, social, cultural, institutional, and technological environment that led to the collapse of the New Deal Coalition and the formation of the modern party coalitions through a process known as party sorting. Party sorting occurred system wide and at both the mass and elite levels. As such, political polarization cannot merely be an elite level phenomena limited to Congress. Instead, political polarization should be occurring at both the mass and elite levels. Further, elite polarization cannot be confined merely to members of Congress. Other party elites such as presidential nomination candidates should demonstrate evidence of polarization.

This project seeks to develop a comprehensive theoretical framework that qualitatively describes why political polarization is occurring and tests hypotheses regarding the effects political polarization is having within the broader political system. Combining what has been observed in this research with findings from other polarization research such as McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal's (2005) research on congressional polarization provides a great deal of insight into political polarization. For example, this research connects party sorting to ideological polarization, arguing that the emergence of ideologically homogenous parties promoted ideological polarization by creating conditions like "group think" that are favorable to ideological extremism among political elites and voters alike. To substantiate this claim, I demonstrate evidence of increasing ideological extremism among partisan voters and among presidential nomination candidates. Revealing empirical evidence that polarization is also occurring in non-congressional political elites and among average voters suggests that the causal mechanisms driving political polarization are mechanisms that broadly effect the political system and are not specific to one institution or group of political actors. As such, the analyses provide empirical support for the complex theory of political polarization.

Overview of Research Findings and Results

This research presents a theory of political polarization which links elite-level polarization with mass-level polarization. The central thesis of this research is that social, legal, institutional, media, and technological changes in American society created the modern political party coalitions through a process known as party sorting. Party sorting created ideologically homogenous political parties, which in turn allowed ideological polarization amongst political elites, political activists, and the American electorate to increase through "group think." The theory of political polarization offered in this research is the first to present a theory that attempts

an inclusive explanation for rising levels of ideological extremism and political polarization. It is also the first research to argue that rather than being a distinct phenomenon, party sorting serves as a mechanism for polarization because it creates conditions favorable to increasing ideological extremism such as ideological homogeneity within each party and a decrease in ideological moderates overall.

The theoretical explanation of political polarization offered here requires empirical evidence of ideological polarization within the public, as well as within non-congressional political elites be demonstrated. If there is no evidence of increasing ideological extremism within the mass public, or within non-congressional political elites then the theoretical claims asserted here are not credible. As such this research is centered on providing empirical evidence which substantiates that ideological polarization is occurring throughout the political system and among a range of political actors. In chapters 3 and 4, I propose and empirically test hypotheses regarding the presence of ideological polarization of partisan voters and of presidential nomination candidates. In doing so, I provide empirical support for these two critical elements of the theory of the political polarization. Positive findings of both types of polarization lend credibility to the theory of polarization and provide a solid theoretical foundation for future research focused on empirically testing the causal mechanisms driving political polarization qualitatively examined here such as the role that party sorting plays in promoting ideological extremism.

The analysis of the American electorate conducted in chapter 3 finds strong support for the thesis that ideological polarization is occurring at the mass level. Contrary to previous research, there is significant evidence of increasing ideological extremism among partisan voters. Political polarization between Republican and Democratic voters has increased sharply since

2007. By the 2012 election cycle, the distance between the mean ideology scores of Republican and Democratic voters has more than tripled since the 1980s, increasing from a mean distance of 0.19 in 1987 to a mean distance of 0.62 in 2012. Partisan voters are quite polarized.

There are important ideological differences between voters and non-voters. For Republicans, non-voters are substantially less ideologically extreme than voters. Non-voting Republicans resemble voting Independents in their ideological temperament. Meanwhile, non-voting Democrats are less distinct than their voting counterparts. Non-voting Democrats tend to be stronger ideologues than non-voting Republicans.

The analysis of the American electorate also reveals that ideological polarization in the mass electorate is asymmetrical. Republican voters demonstrate larger increases in ideological extremism than their Democratic counterparts. In the early part of the time period analyzed, overall Democratic voters were more ideologically liberal than Republican voters were ideologically conservative. However, after 1994, Republicans begin to increase their ideological extremism and move away from the center. Although ideological extremism is increasing for both groups, the effect size is larger for Republican voters.

This research also finds that pure independent voters actually *are* ideologically moderate, although they can be responsive to short term changes in the ideological extremism of Republican and Democratic voters. This is an interesting finding because it suggests that pure independents truly are as non-partisan as they claim to be. Recall, to be classified as an independent for this research the respondent had to insist that they did not lean to either the Republican or Democratic parties. The indirect ideology scores used for this analysis confirms this. Self-proclaimed Independents are centered squarely around 0 and exhibit moderate policy preferences.

By producing empirical evidence of ideological polarization at the mass level, this research has advanced our understanding of mass political behavior and hopefully allows the debate in the mass polarization literature to shift from whether the mass public is polarizing to *why and how* the mass public is polarizing. This, in turn, could shed light on what can be done to reduce political polarization. In particular, future research should further examine the possibility that party sorting is a causal mechanism of political polarization by theoretically disentangling the elements of party sorting and empirically testing hypotheses regarding the influence of ideological homogeneity on the left/right ideological spectrum. This research argue that once unidimensional ideological space emerges, the outward bounds of that space can increase. The DW-NOMINATE scores for the 113th House of Representatives seems to suggest that this is the case. For the first time, the range of the ideology scale produced through DW-NOMINATE for the 113th session of the House shifts from +1 to +1.5. In every previous session of Congress, the range of the scale centers between -1 to +1. The shift occurs because 81 House Republicans receive NOMINATE scores of 0.8 or higher with several members receiving scores above 1.The increases among the Republican caucus is so severe, it has dragged the center of gravity to the ideological right. The most liberal House member (McDermott D-WA) receives a 1st dimension NOMINATE score of -0.668. In comparison, the most conservative House member (Sensenbrenner R-WI) has a score of +1.26. This seems to suggest that once party sorting hits a critical mass and ideological overlap (conservative Democrats & liberal Republicans) disappears, movement to the extremes increases both increasing the distance between the most conservative Democrat and the most liberal Republican, but also by pushing out the outward bounds of the ideological scale. In follow up research, I plan on investigating this possibility.

The research design of this dissertation focused on testing the hypothesis that ideological extremism is increasing across time. Now that that has been established, future research should focus on disentangling the casual mechanisms driving mass polarization. The findings from this analysis is that something unusual occurred after 2007. Until that time the ideological distance between partisan voters is fairly constant in the PEW data. However, starting with the 2009 data, ideological extremism among both party's voters increases sharply. Future research should analyze other survey data from that time period to establish whether this shift can be demonstrated beyond the PEW data and if so, what might explain this sudden change. One possible answer that deserves exploration is that once congressional polarization hit critical mass, it caused polarization in the mass public to increase. The sharp increase in ideological polarization established by this research is ripe for additional scholarship.

The examination of the ideological composition of presidential nomination candidates presented in chapter 4 uncovers evidence of increasing ideological extremism in presidential nomination campaigns since the 2000 cycle and produces additional evidence of asymmetrical polarization. By developing a measure of the ideology of nomination candidates that is comparable across election cycles and includes candidates from all backgrounds, the research has made a significant contribution to the nominations literature by filling in an important research gap. Before this project, data on the issue positions taken by candidates competing in presidential nomination campaigns was extremely limited. The database created for this research brings these data together into one file and will be expanded to include earlier cycles as well new cycles such as 2016. For the first time, researchers will be able to find out what issue positions were taken by nomination candidates and can use these data to develop and test other theories regarding presidential nomination candidates and campaigns.

By extending ideal point estimation techniques to model the ideology of presidential nomination candidates this research allows for the first direct examination of the ideology of presidential nomination candidates. In doing so, it sheds light into an important area of political behavior that has been left largely unexamined by political scientists. It is hoped that other researchers can use the candidate ideology scores created in this research to explore other aspects of presidential nomination campaigns such as the effects that ideological crowding have on candidate behaviors.

The analysis of the presidential candidate ideology reveals some important insights. First, it shows differences in the ideological composition of the Democratic and Republican candidates and fields. For Democrats, the 2004 and 2008 cycles produced candidate fields that were ideologically homogenous, particularly among top tier candidates. It also reveals that the Democratic fields of 2004 and 2008 were ideologically extreme. Aside from the 2012 Republican field, the Democratic candidates tended to be stronger ideologues than the Republican candidates.

That being said, the 2012 Republican field shifts sharply to the ideological right. Not only did the mean ideology score for that cycle increase sharply, but several viable candidates had ideology scores higher than candidates in previous cycles, and more extreme than the viable Democratic candidates in the 2008 cycle. However, it is important to note that the mean ideology score for the 2012 Republican field is still comparable to the mean ideology scores of the Democratic fields in 2004 and 2008. Republicans may have shifted further ideologically because they had more room to shift, whereas the Democratic fields were already substantially ideologically extreme. Although the Republican field shifted sharply to the right, the eventual nominee was still the 2nd most ideologically moderate candidate in the race. In both 2008 and

2012, Republicans chose relative moderates as their nominees. However, it should be noted that the 2012 nominee Mitt Romney was to the right of the 2008 nominee John McCain.

The analysis of candidate ideology scores produce evidence that supports the hypothesis that ideological extremism is increasing in presidential nomination campaigns. The inclusion of the data from the 2016 nomination cycle will provide additional information regarding changes in the ideological composition of the nomination fields. Fortunately, 2016 offers open nomination contests for both parties. Although the Democratic contest has a clear frontrunner in Hilary Clinton, the Republican primary will be highly competitive and may involve more than 20 candidates. This analysis will be updated to include the 2016 cycle. The theory presented here predicts the analysis will find continued shifts to the ideological extremes by candidates in both parties and perhaps the nomination of a more ideologically extreme candidate than in 2000, 2008, and 2012 on the Republican side.

The Electoral Connection

Chapter 6 demonstrates that the shift to the right by the Republican field in 2012 may have been at least in part driven by the shift the ideological shift of Republican voters. The analysis of Republicans participating in the 2012 Iowa Caucus reveals significant differences in ideological extremism between Tea Party and non-Tea Party Republicans. Further, it reveals that the majority of Iowan Republicans considered themselves to be Tea Party Republicans. These respondents identified themselves as "strongly conservative" and had very conservative policy preferences. It is important to reiterate that the analysis of Republicans in Iowa only included respondents that indicated a strong intention to participate in the 2012 Iowa Caucus. As such, when comparing Tea Party Republicans to non-Tea Party Republicans the analysis is already taking into account the level of political interest and involvement. Respondents that were less

than certain they would caucus are entirely excluded from the analysis. This puts the ideological differences between the two groups into an important context because the differences in ideological extremism exists between two groups of highly engaged Republican voters. Despite near record turnout at for the 2012 Iowa Caucus, only 19% of the state's registered Republican voters participated.[17] Thus, the 459 respondents included in the analysis in chapter 6 represent some of the most active and politically engaged Republican voters in Iowa. The relative ideological moderation of Republicans that indicated they did not support the Tea Party suggests that the difference in ideological extremism found in this analysis is the product of something other than political interest and activity.

Further, the two groups of Republicans differed in their candidate preferences, with Tea Party Republicans significantly less likely to support Mitt Romney. Given that Tea Party Republicans made up a solid majority of Iowa Caucus participants, it is possible that the shift to the right that the rest of the 2012 field takes reflects the desire to court Tea Party Republicans. The retail politics that are key to campaigning in Iowa may also serve to amplify the influence of strong ideologues. As candidates traverse Iowa, they make multiple campaign appearances in which voters have considerable direct access to the candidates. This may encourage the candidates to be more ideologically extreme as they interact with and court Iowa voters.

Although the findings from the analysis of the 2012 Iowa Republican electorate provides important insights into the electoral connection between voters and candidates, future research should comprehensively explore whether there is an electoral connection between mass-level and elite-level polarization. Disentangling an electoral explanation for rising ideological extremism

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[17] Jen Manuel Krogstad. "Caucus turnout robust, nearing all-time record." *Des Moines Register.* January 4, 2012. Accessible at: http://caucuses.desmoinesregister.com/2012/01/04/caucus-turnout-robust-nearing-all-time-record/

in presidential nomination candidates could offer important insights into the role that electoral politics is playing in further encouraging political polarization. A strength of the methodology used here for creating measures of candidate ideology is that it could be extended to other candidates in other types of races. As such, studies of ideology for other types of elections could use this methodology to test hypotheses regarding candidate ideology. At the mass level, the quality and availability of survey data has vastly improved over the past decade and should provide solid data to test an electoral connection hypothesis. This research could make a significant contribution to the political behavior literature, as well as to studies on political representation.

Future Research

Additional scholarship is needed to investigate the role that changes in the campaign media environment might be playing in promoting political polarization. The media environment has changed significantly since the 1990s when much of the research examining media effects in presidential nomination campaigns was conducted. CNN launched in 1980 and was the first 24 hour news network. Although CNN existed throughout the 1980s and 1990s, it wasn't until the emergence of Fox News and MSNBC in 1996 that the modern model of political coverage began to take shape. Much of the scholarship conducted in the late 1990s focused on how candidates attracted media coverage from the three network's evening newscasts and from large circulation newspapers. Candidates were competing for media attention in a resource-scarce environment. After the turn of century the cable news networks began to focus more attention on electoral politics, particularly for coverage of presidential primaries and presidential general elections. Media outlets expanded coverage by adding more editorial news programming which itself gave more airtime to political pundits, political analysts and to politicians and candidates. This created

a information-rich campaign environment. The effects that changes in the media environment have on candidate behavior and candidate strategy should be reinvestigated to take into account this rich environment and the possible effects that the partisan news model is having on political polarization.

The effects that changes in technology have on ideological extremism and political polarization should also be examined. The internet gave rise to the proliferation of partisan news outlets, political blogs, and social media. Scholarship should more closely the effects that the modern media and technological environment have on candidates and elected officials. Although some research has been conducted to study the effects of modern media on voters finding that partisan news creates a partisan "echo chamber" (Sunstein 2007) and polarizes viewers (Levendusky 2009) there has not been any research on the effects that the modern media environment has on candidate behavior such as ideological positioning or exploring a possible connection between partisan and social media and increasing ideological extremism in political elites. This research argues that the modern media environment may promote ideological extremism in presidential candidates because it tends to cover candidates when they go on the attack, heightens the importance of issue positions in same-party primaries, and provides ideologically extreme candidates with more opportunities to exert ideological pressure on top tier candidates. Future research should attempt to empirically test these claims.

The dramatic changes in the campaign finance environment also provide a rich area of research on the effects of money on political ideology. It is argued that the emergence of SuperPACs combined with the sharp increase in the number of ideologically motivated interest groups have nationalized the electoral environment and have encouraged presidential candidates to stake out more extreme issue positons as they vie for the deep pockets of big money donors

and interest groups such as the NRA. Although candidates from both political parties are receiving large amounts of monetary support from big donors to SuperPACS that support their candidacy, there is an imbalance between the parties. Big money donors, particularly industry groups like the Koch Foundation tend to favor Republican candidates. Could this be a contributing factor to asymmetrical polarization? Are Republican candidates being pushed further toward the ideological extremes because of disproportionate influence in Republican electoral politics of ideologically motivated donors with deep pockets and extreme policy preferences?

Given the unprecedented size of the 2016 Republican field it is possible that the emergence of SuperPACs and the increase in the number of and the reach of ideologically motivated interest groups encourages candidate entry, particularly of ideologically extreme candidates. Pre-SuperPAC era, ideologically extreme candidates often failed to attract enough financial resources to establish viability or to compete successfully. As cited earlier in this research, this is no longer the case. Financial acumen used to require a fairly broad base of support because campaign activities were financed purely through the candidate's campaign. Because of strict contribution limits, candidates needed to have many supporters donate to their campaigns to amass a war chest large enough to compete. This is particularly true in primaries because the party committees are typically not involved. However, in the post-*Citizens* and McCutcheon campaign finance environment, a candidate does not necessarily need to attract a lot of donors to give directly to their campaigns to amass a sizable war chest. Instead, a candidate might be able to outsource traditionally expensive campaign activities such as television advertising and on the ground operations to SuperPACs, without coordinating with them of course. As such, a large donation by a single individual like the donation received by the

SuperPAC supporting Newt Gingrich in 2012 can have powerful influence on a candidate's ability to compete. This could make it more likely for candidates to enter the race, and once in, could make candidates adopt extreme issue positons favored by their big donor benefactors (without coordinating with them, of course). This could cause more ideologically extreme candidate fields to emerge. At the writing of this dissertation, the 2016 presidential primary field is only beginning to take shape. Once the cycle is concluded, analysis of the influence of the new campaign finance environment and its possible causal connections to ideological extremism in candidates should be explored.

Political polarization deserves scholarly attention because it advances our understanding of an important political phenomena. The polarized era has produced political gridlock and rising partisan acrimony. Understanding what is driving political polarization and studying the effects of political polarization is important because it holds so many important implications for American democracy. By providing a comprehensive theoretical explanation for how and why political polarization is occurring and by empirically demonstrating evidence of mass-level and non-congressional elite-level polarization, this research redefines political polarization as a broad, system-wide phenomena which is having measurable effects on political actors and political institutions. As such, the research presented in this dissertation makes an important contribution to the political science literature.

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APPENDIX TABLE OF CONTENTS

Now I am going to read you a series of statements that will help us understand how you feel about a number of things. For each statement, please tell me if you completely agree with it, mostly agree with it, mostly DISagree with it or completely disagree with it. The first one is... **[READ ITEMS, IN ORDER. DO NOT ROTATE**

Government regulation of business usually does more harm than good *{1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2012}*

When something is run by the government, it is usually inefficient and wasteful *{1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2012}*

The Federal Government controls too much of our daily lives *{1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1997, 1990, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2012}*

Our society should do what is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed *{1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2012}*

We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country *{1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1997, 1990, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2012}*

It is the responsibility of the government to take care of people who can't take care of themselves *{1987, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2012}*

We should make every possible effort to improve the position of blacks and other minorities, even if it means giving them preferential treatment *{1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2012}*

School boards ought to have the right to fire teachers who are known homosexuals *{1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2012}*

Appendix B: Polarization: Individual Questions
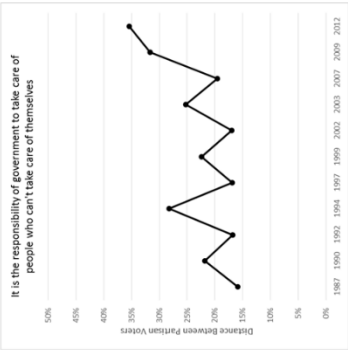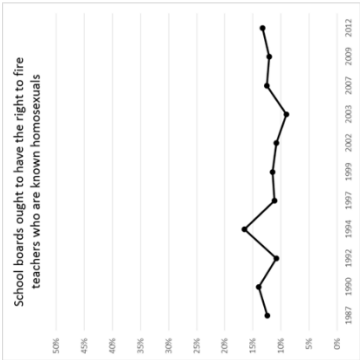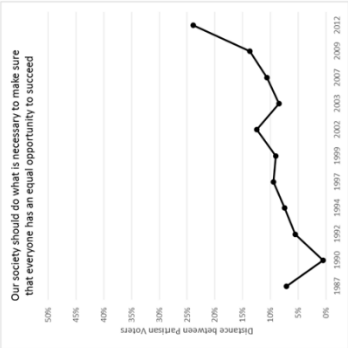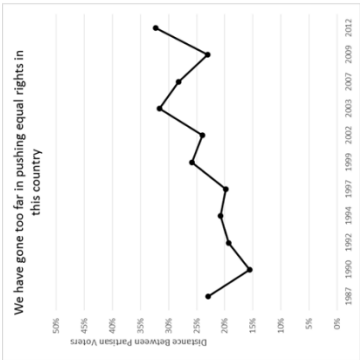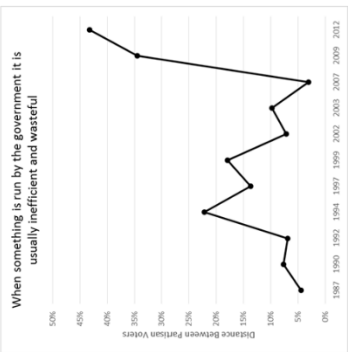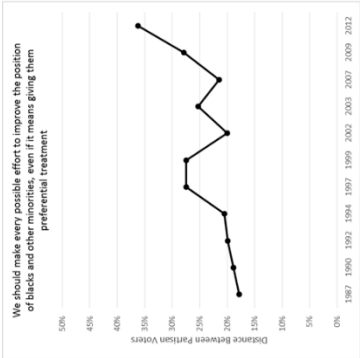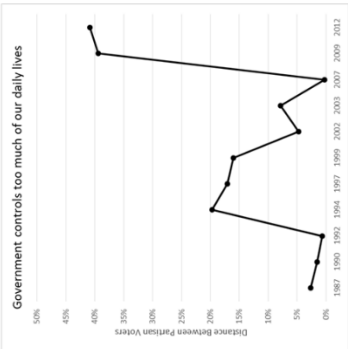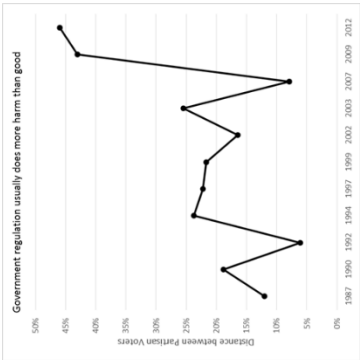
Appendix C: Demographic Data of Respondents

Party Breakdown of Respondents Included in the Analysis	
Democratic Voters (includes Ind. Leaners)	8175
Democratic Non-Voters (includes Ind. Leaners)	2482
Republican Voters (includes Ind. Leaners)	7345
Republican Non-Voters (includes Ind. Leaners)	1784
Total	19786

Appendix D: Racial Demographic of Democratic Respondents

Racial Breakdown of Democratic Voters				
	White	Black	Other	N
1987	70.98	27.63	1.14	1585
1988	79.96	17.81	2.13	1078
1990	74.31	21.92	3.77	981
1992	72.52	22.57	4.76	0.18
1994	79.94	14.37	4.49	334
1997	71.03	21.91	5.04	397
1999	72.76	18.27	7.74	323
2002	72.67	19.07	5.87	750
2003	54.14	37.35	7.57	423
2007	76.11	16.04	6.83	293
2009	74	15.01	10.36	473
2012	69.3	18.71	11.75	417

% does not include DK/Refused

Democratic Non-Voters				
	White	Black	Other	N
1987	71.02	26.11	2.55	314
1988	82.9	14.78	2.03	345
1990	63.64	30	6.36	330
1992	67.51	23.35	9.14	394
1994	62.5	22.73	13.64	88
1997	72.6	15.07	8.9	146
1999	68.32	20.79	9.9	101
2002	67.31	20	10	260
2003	52.07	36.69	10.06	169
2007	65.79	18.42	14.47	76
2009	61.65	20.3	17.29	133
2012	64.29	13.49	22.22	126

% does not include DK/Refused

Appendix E: Racial Demographic of Republican Respondents

Racial Breakdown of Republican Voters					Racial Breakdown of Republican Non-Voters			
	White	Black	Other	N		White	Black	Other	N
1987	94.94	3.64	1.07	1126	1987	91.51	8.02	0	212
1988	96.51	2.82	0.45	888	1988	91.98	2.95	4.64	237
1990	95.51	2.19	2.3	869	1990	86.19	7.11	6.69	239
1992	94.59	1.97	3.35	1165	1992	85.85	5.23	8.92	325
1994	94.54	1.91	3.01	366	1994	88.24	3.92	6.86	102
1997	92.38	1.47	4.99	341	1997	84.38	4.17	10.42	96
1999	91.2	2.11	5.28	284	1999	88	2.67	8	75
2002	92.39	1.07	5.47	841	2002	84.76	6.19	7.62	210
2003	90.15	4.31	4.31	325	2003	77.78	11.11	9.88	81
2007	94.85	0.74	4.04	272	2007	84.21	7.02	8.77	57
2009	91.45	0.92	6.47	433	2009	83.33	7.58	9.09	66
2012	92.41	0.92	5.29	435	2012	73.81	11.9	13.1	84
% does not include DK/Refused					% does not include DK/Refused				

Appendix F: Demographics of Respondents in 2011 CBS/*NY Times* Poll

Demographics	Republican Tea Party Supporters N=276	Republican Non-Tea Party Supporters N=160	Full Sample N=459
Gender			
Male	59%	47%	53%
Female	41%	53%	47%
Age			
18-29	11%	29%	18%
30-49	37%	32%	35%
50-64	34%	26%	31%
65+	17%	12%	16%
Education			

College degree and/or advanced degree	52%	55%	53%
Race			
white	97%	97%	97%
black	1%	2%	2%
asian	0%	0%	0%
other	0%	0%	0%
refused	5%	0%	1%
Income			
Under 15K	4%	9%	6%
15-30K	8%	7%	8%
30-50K	15%	20%	18%
50-75K	32%	15%	25%
Over 75K	33%	45%	38%
Refused	7%	3%	6%

Religious Attendance			
every week	53%	35%	46%
almost every week	15%	15%	15%
once or twice a month	11%	22%	15%
a few times a year	15%	22%	18%
never	5%	6%	6%
refused	0%		0%
Other			
Born Again Christian	43%	21%	34%
Homeschooling children	17%	9%	13%

Appendix G: Ideology Score

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
govreg	22840	.1327583	.4819247	-1	1
govcontrol	29399	.198171	.529824	-1	1
govwaste	29184	.271615	.5185086	-1	1
equalopp	31986	-.4975239	.5231811	-1	1
toofar	29228	-.0710517	.6236311	-1	1
gayrights	27732	-.0526612	.7314649	-1	1
affirmact	29182	.2444778	.5939903	-1	1
helppoor	25270	-.1587732	.547975	-1	1
Ideologyscore	22374	-.0071783	.3496604	-1	1
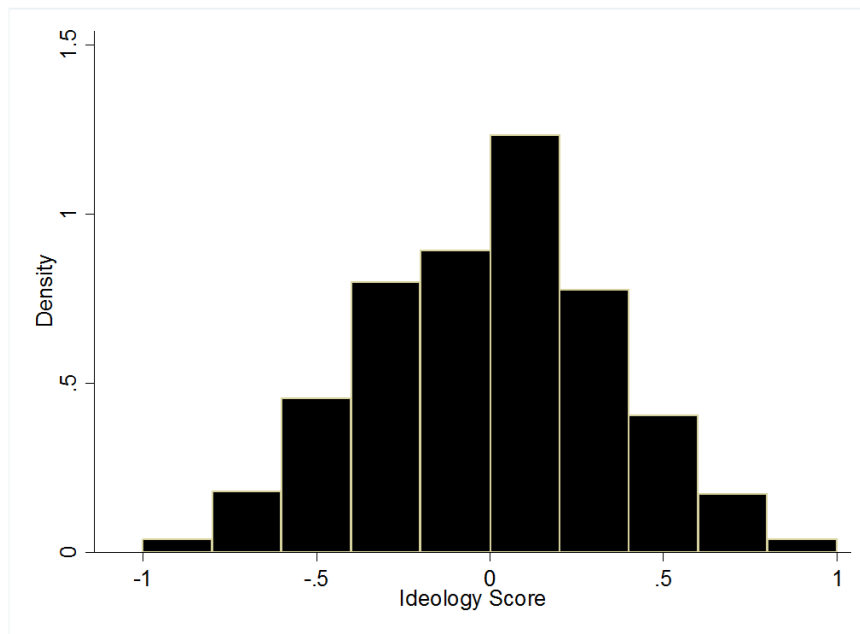
Appendix H: List of Issues

Issues

Coding 1=candidate holds that position   0=candidate does not hold that position   9=missing data

- supports general right to abortion
- support constitutional ban amen
- no federal funding
- supports litmus tests
- require ultrasounds
- supports parental notification
- supports child interstate abortion act
- oppose OC contraceptive mandate
- oppose abortion w exemptions
- opposes abortion no exceptions
- repeal roe v wade
- supports partial birth ban
- ban embryonic stem cell research
- Defund Planned Parenthood
- questions evolution
- Abstinence Only
- supports tax incentives for renewables
- support oil subsidies
- supports ANWR drilling
- bar EPA from regulating carbon
- Increase Fuel Standards
- supported Bush 2003 Energy Policy
- new reg to cut carbon emissions
- support cap and trade bill
- sign kyoto now
- Support Keystone
- Eliminate the EPA
- cc science still out
- CC is a hoax
- climate change urgent prob

- supp const. amend ban gay marriage
- allow states to define marriage
- supports gay marriage
- ban gays in military
- support civil unions
- supports DOMA
- supports repeal of DADT
- support ENDA
- support federal ban gay adoption
- support adding gays to hate crimes
- supports legal status/citizenship
- supports state level DREAM act
- supports federal Dream Act
- make Engl. Official lang
- Build full border Fence
- Supports Secure Fence Act of 2006
- Amend 14th's Birthright provision
- supports sanctuary cities
- increase skilled workers visas
- liscences for illegals
- in-state tuition for illegals
- Supports Everify
- signed norquist pledge
- eliminate charitable deductions
- support balanced budget amend
- deficit reduced only by spending cuts
- end medicare
- Medicare to vouchers (full)
- Means test Entitlements
- privitize social security
- social sec unconstit.

- Repeal All Bush tax cuts
- Repeal some Bush tax Cuts
- supports national sales tax
- Repeal estate tax
- supports flat tax
- increase tuition deduction
- Expand Childcare Deduction
- repeal 16th amend/abolish irs
- Increase Child Tax Credit
- Expand EIC
- eliminate federal taxes on under 50K
- eliminate marriage penalty
- use surplus to cut income tax rates
- increase minimum wage
- eliminate min. wage
- oppose debt ceiling deal (2011)
- oppose auto bailout
- supports stimulus bill
- Repeal Dodd Frank
- supported TARP
- return to gold standard
- support spending caps
- federal program for education
- support race to the top
- increase college aid
- full universal pre-k/full day K
- free comm. College for service
- switch to single payer HC
- Supports Individual or Employer HI Mandate

- Add tax deductions/credits to offset cost of insurance
- Ban pre-existing conditions exclusions
- provide indiv. Subsidies
- support bush veto-schip
- Full Repeal of OC
- school prayer/intelligent design
- education to states
- universal pre-K
- privitize all schools
- universal free college
- abolish dept of edu
- Supports No Child Left behind
- supports school vouchers
- charter schools
- Support Nafta
- signed new american century statement
- repeal favored nations-china
- block China into WTO
- US should pull out of WTO
- supports Cuba embargo
- supports SDI
- require a liscence for ownership
- supports state control of guns
- increase background checks
- raise gun age to 21
- ban large clips
- support assault weapons ban
- supports child trigger lock law
- support gun free schools
- supports new gun control measures

- ban all guns
- Opposed 2006 VRA Renewal
- support affirmative action
- support quotas
- support voter id laws
- supports Citizens United decision
- support death penalty
- supports addressing racial disparties
- supports campaign finance restriction
- no right to die
- Supported Iraq Invasion
- leave iraq immed.
- supports withdraw timeline
- Iraq was right choice
- Support Iraq Surge
- Support 07 Iraq Funding Bill
- supported reducing wiretap restriction
- supported Patriot Act
- supports Homeland security Act of 2002
- supports waterboarding
- Supports Drone Strikes
- Support Palenstinian State
- close Guantonomo
- Boycott Beijing Olympics over Darfur
- Institute Darfur No Fly Zone