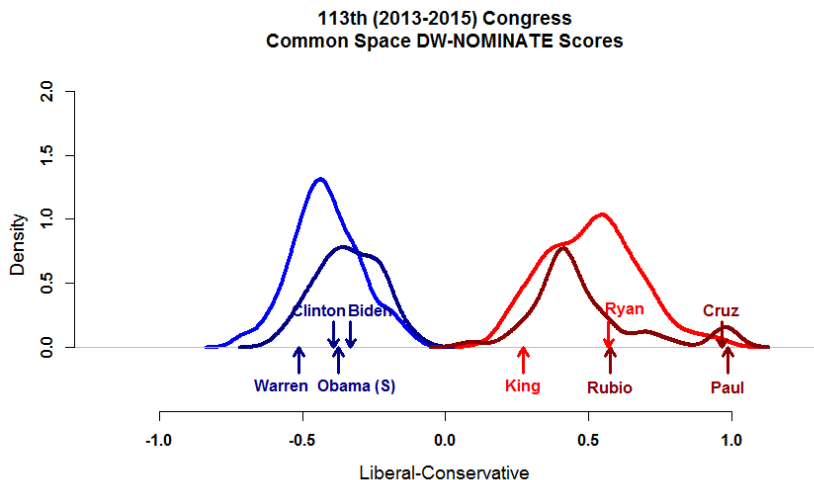


Sorting in the Mass Electorate

POLS 4790: Political Polarization

Weeks 7-8, Fall 2013

What, if Anything, Does Elite Polarization Mean for Voters?



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 - ▶ Exceptions?
- ▶ Makes it clear that there are major ideological differences between the parties.

Levendusky's *The Partisan Sort*: The Theory

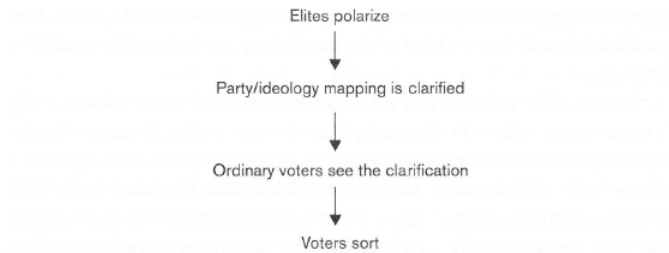


FIGURE 2.1. A graphical depiction of the theory connecting elite polarization to mass sorting

Levendusky's *The Partisan Sort*: Sorting vs. Polarization

TABLE 1.1 The difference between sorting and polarization

Ideology	Time 1	Time 2
Example of Sorting:		
Democrats	50 liberals, 50 conservatives	80 liberals, 20 conservatives
Independents	100 moderates	100 moderates
Republicans	50 liberals, 50 conservatives	20 liberals, 80 conservatives
Overall electorate	100 liberals, 100 moderates, 100 conservatives	100 liberals, 100 moderates, 100 conservatives
Example of Mass Polarization:		
Democrats	50 liberals, 50 conservatives	100 liberals
Independents	100 moderates	50 liberals, 50 conservatives
Republicans	50 liberals, 50 conservatives	100 conservatives
Overall electorate	100 liberals, 100 moderates, 100 conservatives	150 liberals, 150 conservatives

Levendusky's *The Partisan Sort*: Sorting vs. Polarization

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- ▶ Problem: sorting inevitably means (some) polarization.

Levendusky's *The Partisan Sort*: Sorting vs. Polarization

- ▶ Problem: sorting inevitably means (some) polarization.
- ▶ The party means/medians will move away from the center if there are less liberal Democrats/conservative Democrats.

Some Questions

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 - ▶ Which side is liberal? Conservative?

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 - ▶ Party \rightarrow Ideology?
 - ▶ Ideology \rightarrow Party?

An Elite-Driven Model

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- ▶ Elites drive the process: they act (polarize) and voters respond.

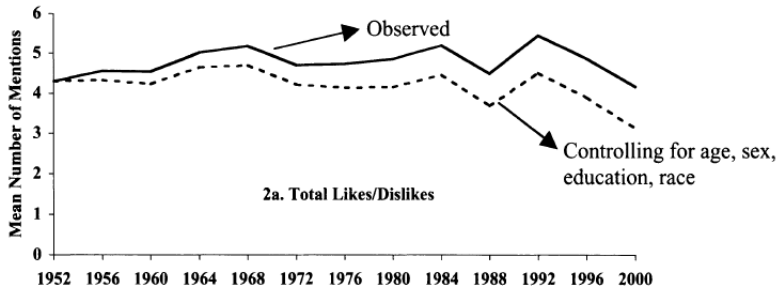
An Elite-Driven Model

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- ▶ This is consistent with past work on attitude change (e.g., Carmines and Stimson's work on race) as well as with the data.

An Elite-Driven Model

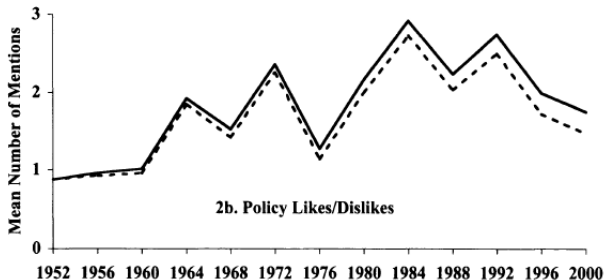
- ▶ Elites drive the process: they act (polarize) and voters respond.
- ▶ This is consistent with past work on attitude change (e.g., Carmines and Stimson's work on race) as well as with the data.
- ▶ A notable exception: social movements/dramatic events (e.g., September 11) can influence elites and mass attitudes essentially simultaneously.

Are Voters Sorting? Recognition of Elite Differences



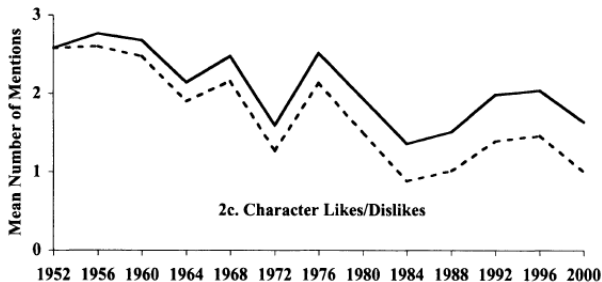
Source: Gilens, Vavreck and Cohen, "The Mass Media and the Public's Assessments of Presidential Candidates, 1952-2000"

Are Voters Sorting? Recognition of Elite Differences



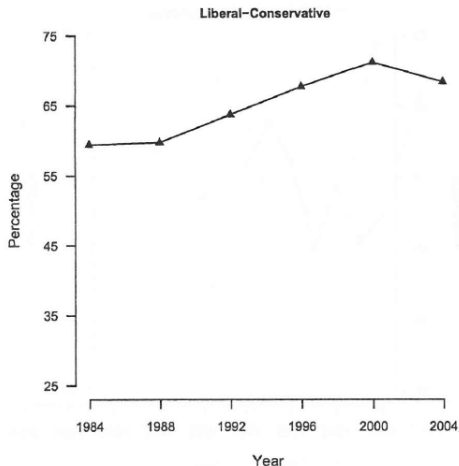
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Source: Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*

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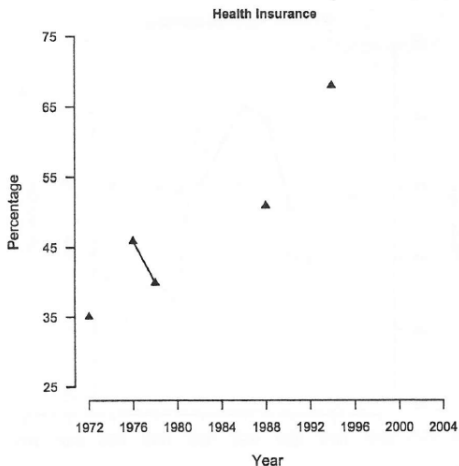
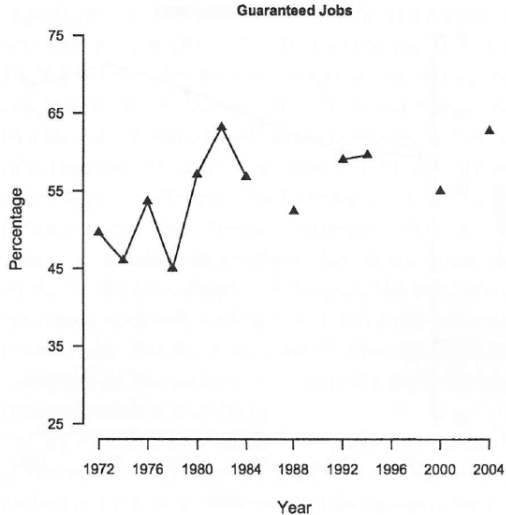


FIGURE 3.1. The percentage of respondents who can correctly place the Democratic Party to the left of the Republican Party on six issue position scales over time.

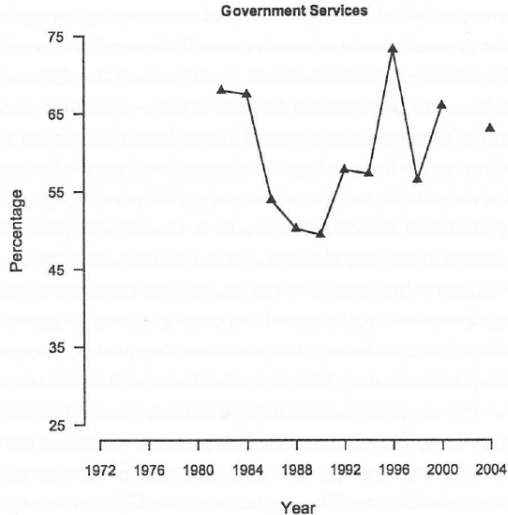
Source: Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*

Are Voters Sorting? Recognition of Elite Differences



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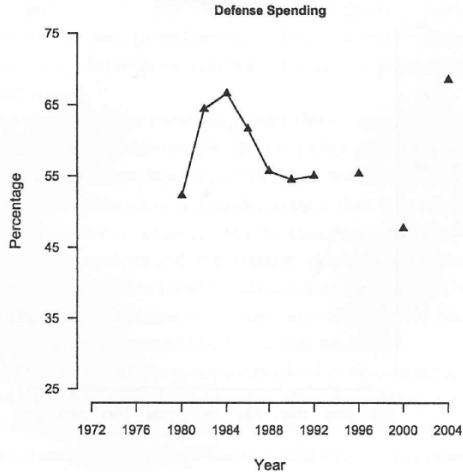


FIGURE 3.I. (continued)

Source: Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*

Are Voters Sorting? Recognition of Elite Differences

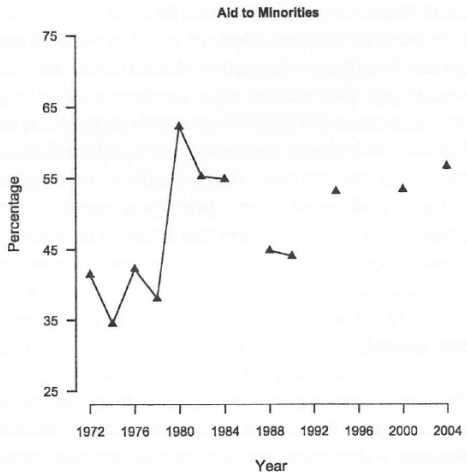


FIGURE 3.1. (continued)

Source: Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*

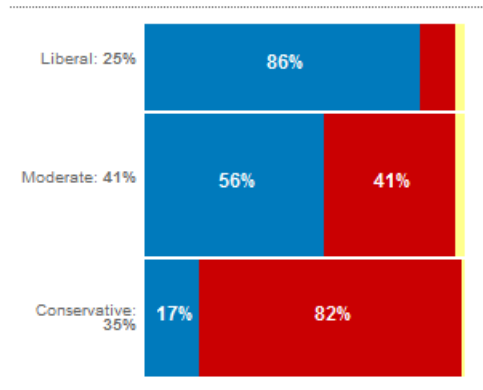
Voter Sorting

- ▶ Does this have any effects? What do voters do with information about the policy differences between the parties?

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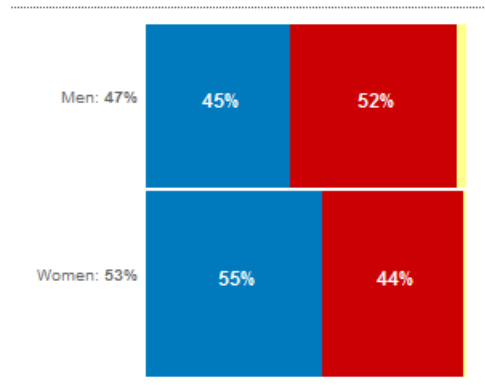
2012 CNN Exit Poll

Vote by Ideology



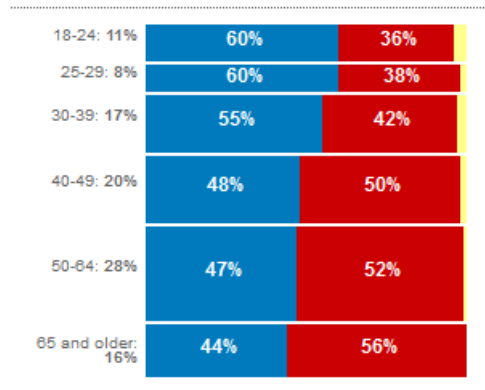
2012 CNN Exit Poll

Vote by Gender



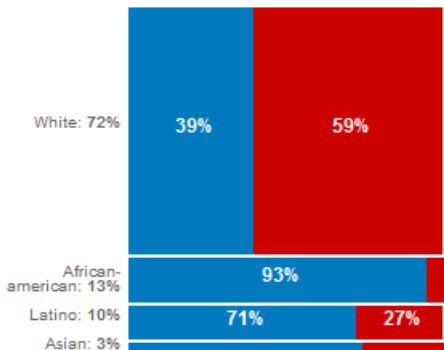
2012 CNN Exit Poll

Vote by Age



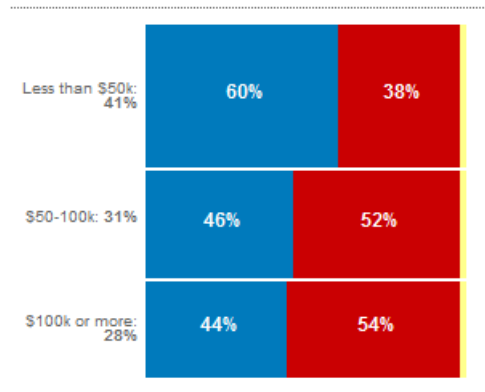
2012 CNN Exit Poll

Vote by Race



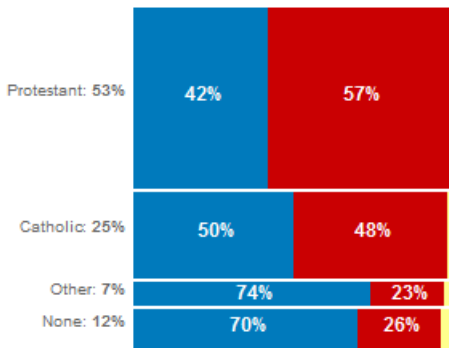
2012 CNN Exit Poll

Vote by Income

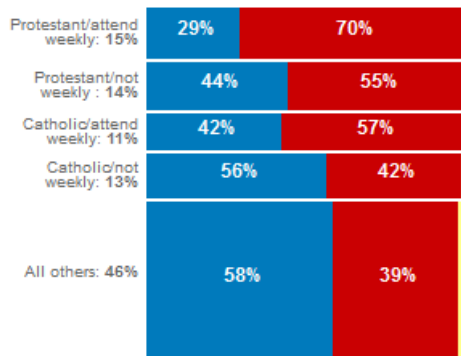


2012 CNN Exit Poll

Vote by Religion

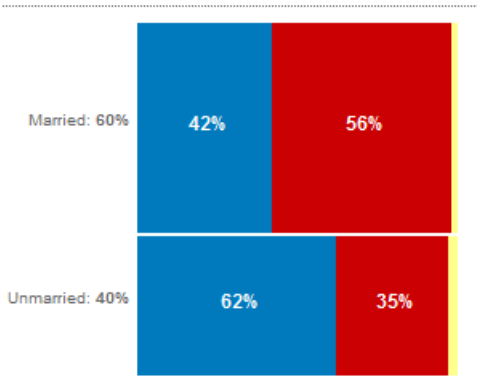


Vote by Religion and Church Attendance

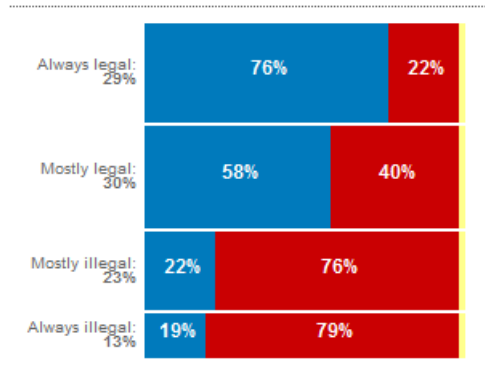


2012 CNN Exit Poll

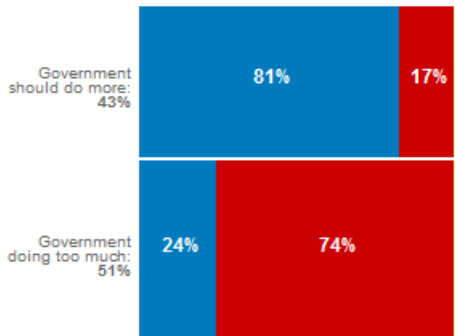
Vote by Marital Status



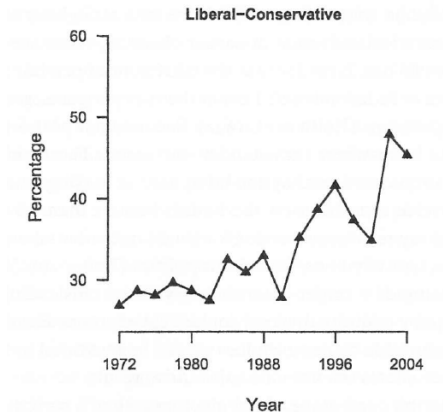
Abortion Should Be...



Opinion of Government



Partisan Sorting



Source: Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*

Partisan Sorting

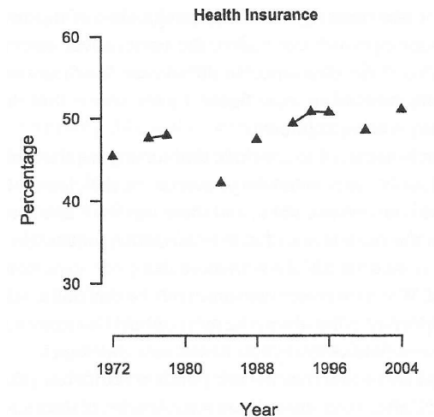


FIGURE 3.2. (continued)

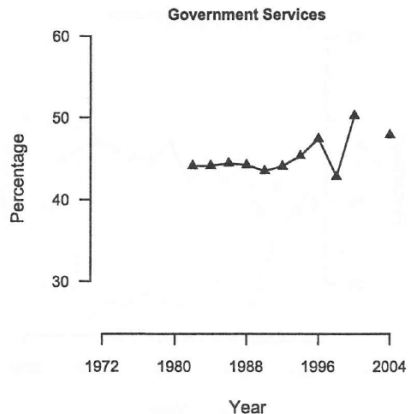
Source: Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*

Partisan Sorting



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Partisan Sorting

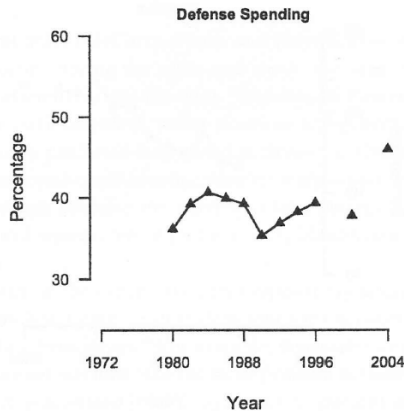


FIGURE 3.2. (continued)

Source: Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*

Partisan Sorting



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Partisan Sorting

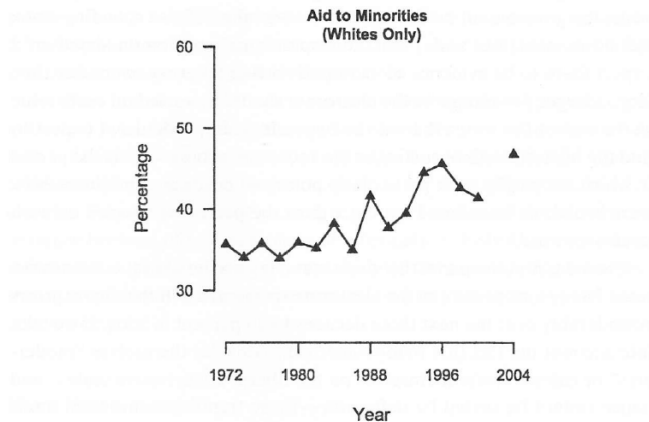


FIGURE 3.2. The percentage of the electorate that is sorted over time, broken down by issue.

Source: Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*

Partisan Sorting: Polarized Cues

A.2. Experimental Stimulus on DREAM Act Issue.

[All:] Since 2001, lawmakers have debated a new immigration law called the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (also called the DREAM Act). The law would allow undocumented immigrants to gain citizenship if they:

- entered the United States before the age of 16,
- maintained good moral character (e.g., no criminal record),
- earned a High School Diploma, and
- completed two years of college OR two years of military service.

Source: Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus (2013)

Partisan Sorting: Polarized Cues

[Strong-Pro Frame:] The main argument for those in favor of the DREAM Act is that it would provide young people with opportunities. They could go on to contribute as doctors, nurses, teachers, soldiers, and police officers.

[Weak-Pro Frame:] The main argument for those in favor of the DREAM Act is that it has been a topic in several public opinion polls. These polls suggest support from many segments of the American population.

[Strong-Con Frame:] The main argument for those opposed to the DREAM Act is that it encourages illegal immigration due to the expectation of benefits for children of immigrants. This could over-burden the system, leaving many vulnerable individuals.

[Weak-Con Frame:] The main argument for those opposed to the DREAM Act is that it is not well-designed—it could be better. It was driven too much by political concerns in an effort to bring up a controversial issue.

Source: Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus (2013)

Partisan Sorting: Polarized Cues

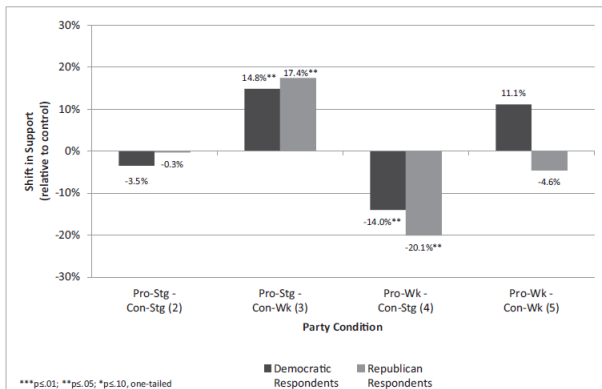
[Non-Polarized Party Cues:] Democrats in Congress tend to favor the DREAM Act and Republicans in Congress tend to oppose the DREAM Act. However, the partisan divide is not stark as the parties are not too far apart. Also, while Democrats tend to be in favor and Republicans opposed, members of each party can be found on both sides of the issue.

[Polarized Party Cues:] Democrats in Congress tend to favor the DREAM Act and Republicans in Congress tend to oppose the DREAM Act. Moreover, the partisan divide is stark as the parties are far apart. Also, not only do Democrats tend to be in favor and Republicans opposed, but most members of each party are on the same side as the rest of their party.

Source: Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus (2013)

Partisan Sorting: Polarized Cues

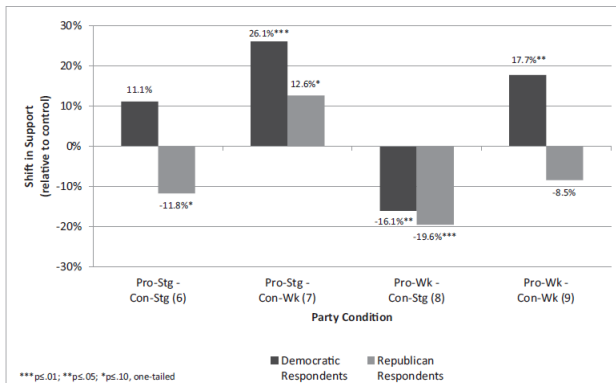
FIGURE 1b. DREAM Act Support, No Party Cues



Source: Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus (2013)

Partisan Sorting: Polarized Cues

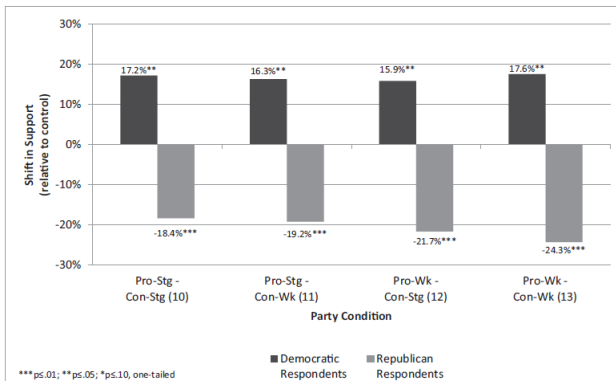
FIGURE 2b. DREAM Act Support, Non-Polarized Party Cues (*Democrats Pro, Republicans Con*)



Source: Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus (2013)

Partisan Sorting: Polarized Cues

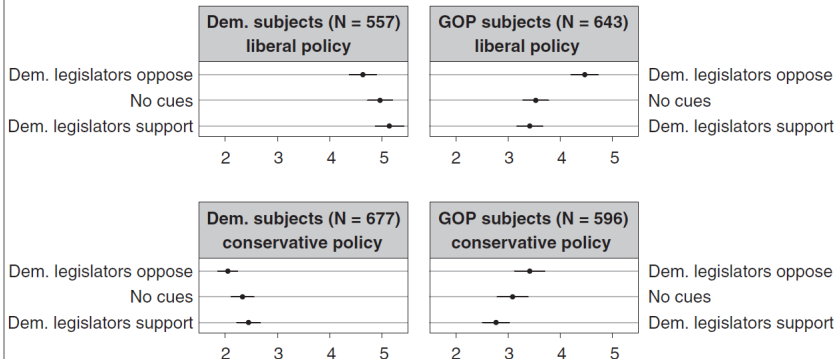
FIGURE 3b. DREAM Act Support, Polarized Party Cues (*Democrats Pro, Republicans Con*)



Source: Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus (2013)

Partisan Sorting

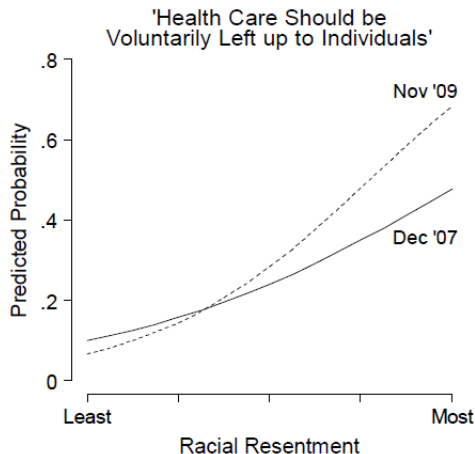
FIGURE 1. Effects of Cues and Policy Direction



Note: All panels plot mean attitude toward the proposed policy changes. Responses range from 1 ("disapprove strongly") to 7 ("approve strongly"). Black lines are 95% confidence intervals. The results show that both party cues and policy affected attitudes. The effect of policy was greater on average and greater for Democratic than for Republican subjects.

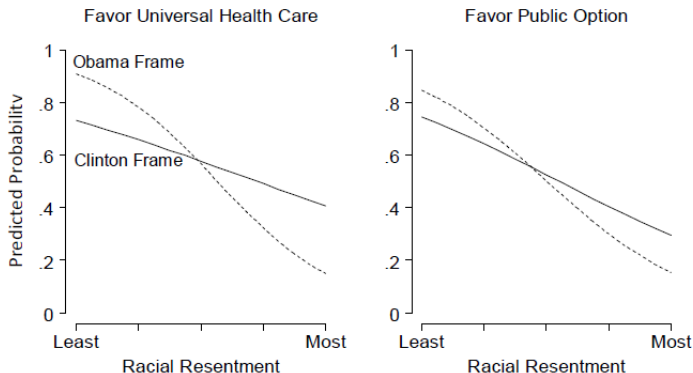
Source: John Bullock

Other Types of Cues and Sorting



Source: Michael Tesler

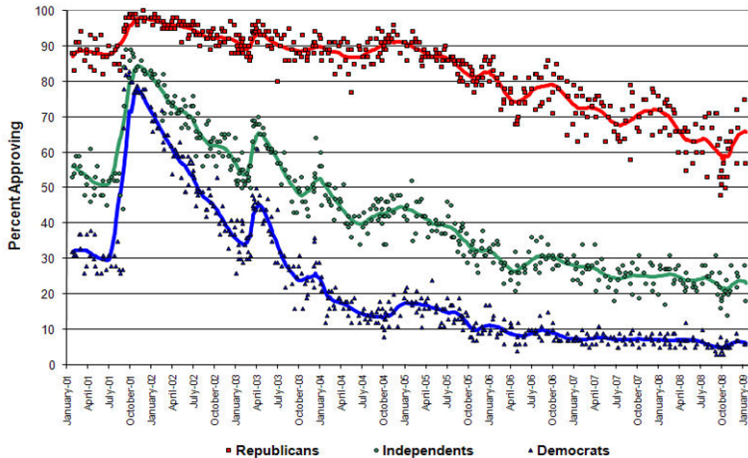
Other Types of Cues and Sorting



Source: Michael Tesler

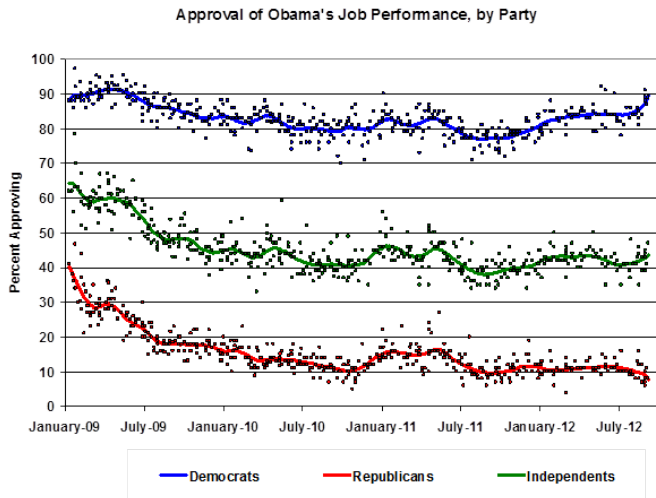
Presidential Approval by Party

Figure 3 Approval of George W. Bush's Job Performance, 2001-2008, By Party Identification (Gary Jacobson)



Sources: 401 CBS News/ *New York Times* and Gallup polls.

Presidential Approval by Party



Other Types of Sorting: Values

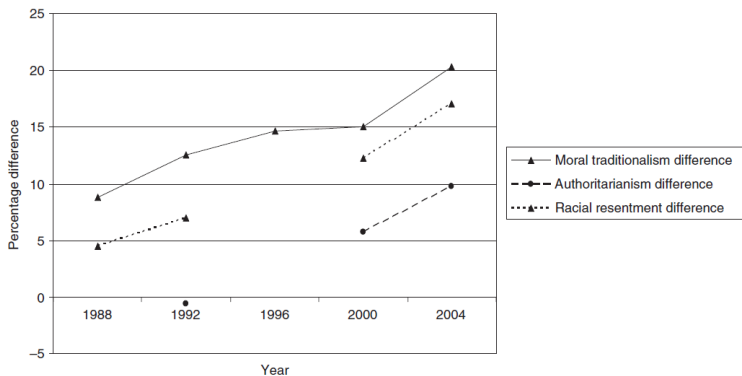


Fig. 4. Changes in difference between mass partisans on values' batteries, 1988–2004

Source: Marc J. Hetherington

Sorting and Polarization

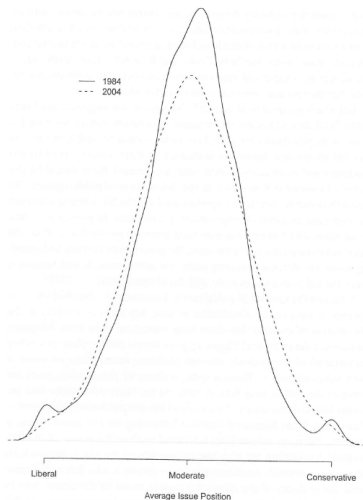


FIGURE 3.7. Kernel density plot of respondents' average position across six policy items common to both the 1984 and 2004 NES.

Source: Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*

Who Sorts?

Who Sorts?

- ▶ Rates of sorting vary little between electoral subgroups:

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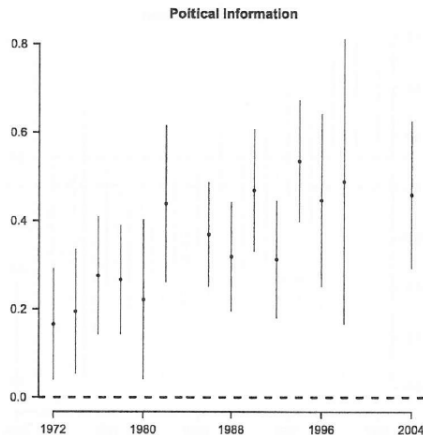
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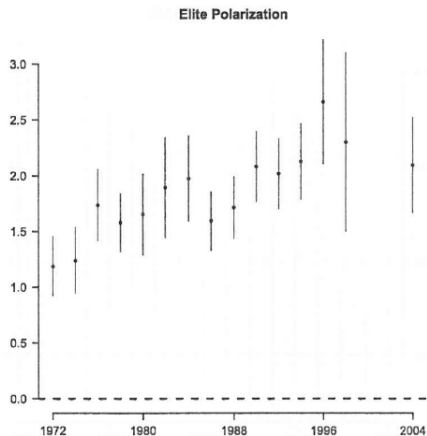
- ▶ Rates of sorting vary little between electoral subgroups:
 - ▶ Region (North/South)
 - ▶ Birth cohort (slightly more here: a “replacement effect.”)
 - ▶ Religious fundamentalism
- ▶ However, those with higher levels of political information and those who recognize ideological differences between the parties *are* more likely to sort.

Who Sorts?



Source: Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*

Who Sorts?



Source: Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*

Sorting: Stem Cell Data

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- ▶ Stem cell research: new issue that emerged on national stage in 2001. Become more partisan over time.

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Sorting: Stem Cell Data

- ▶ Stem cell research: new issue that emerged on national stage in 2001. Become more partisan over time.
- ▶ If the sorting hypothesis (as elites polarize, voters sort) holds, then partisanship should have a weak relationship with stem cell attitudes in 2001, but grow stronger over time (especially after the 2004 election).
- ▶ This is precisely what the data show: in 2001, party identification is not a significant predictor of stem cell attitudes. In 2005, party identification is a strong predictor of stem cell attitudes (Levendusky 2009, p. 101).

Sorting: Experimental Data

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- ▶ Experimental participants were asked for their opinion on a series of issues and were given either no treatment condition, a low polarization condition (the parties in Congress are not far apart), or a high polarization condition (the parties in Congress are far apart).

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Sorting: Experimental Data

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- ▶ Issues:
 - ▶ More environmental impact studies for construction permits.
 - ▶ Privatize air traffic controllers.
 - ▶ Deregulation of the electricity market.
 - ▶ Ban on coastal oil drilling.
 - ▶ Federal/state control of job-training programs.

Sorting: Experimental Data

TABLE 5.2 Experimental evidence for sorting

Variable	Estimate
Intercept	0.15 (0.01)
Control condition	0.007 (0.01)
High polarization condition	0.05 (0.01)
Includes Issue Fixed Effects Includes Subject Random Effects	
<i>N</i>	8815

Note: Logistic regression predicting sorting as a function of treatment assignment, issue-specific fixed effects, and subject-specific random effects. Coefficients that are statistically distinguishable from zero are given in **bold**.

Source: Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*

How Do Voters Sort?

TABLE 6.1 Party-driven versus ideology-driven sorting

Issue	Change Issue Position (%)	Change Party (%)	Change Both (%)
Liberal-conservative self-identification	53	28	19
Guaranteed jobs	61	29	11
Abortion	44	49	6
Government services and spending	71	16	13
Defense spending	71	15	14
Aid to minorities	65	26	9
Government vs. private health insurance	63	26	12

Note: Respondents sort by changing their position on the issue, their partisanship, or both factors. The data come from the 1992–1994 waves of the 1992–1994–1996 panel data.

Source: Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*

The Effects of Sorting

The Effects of Sorting

- ▶ More loyal partisans.

The Effects of Sorting

- ▶ More loyal partisans.
- ▶ More polarized feelings about the parties.

The Effects of Sorting

- ▶ More loyal partisans.
- ▶ More polarized feelings about the parties.
- ▶ Ideological consistency: voters adopt consistently liberal/conservative issue attitudes.