Driven by Division?
An Exploration of Political Polarization and Voter Turnout
in American Presidential Elections

By

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Table of Contents

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Abstract: *This thesis investigates political polarization and voter turnout in American presidential elections. Scholars widely agree that political polarization—defined as the separation of partisans' ideological views—has increased since the 1960s on an elite level. Similarly, "affective polarization," or the tendency of partisan-identifiers to hold negative views of an opposing party and positive views of their own party, has intensified in recent years. Political scientists have spent considerable time examining and discussing these trends. This thesis contributes to that literature by examining how both perceived partisan polarization and affective polarization impact voter turnout. This thesis uses American National Election Studies (ANES) survey data to statistically evaluate the relationship between political polarization and voter turnout in the presidential elections of 2016, 2008, 2000, and 1992. This study also investigates what factors may mediate the relationship between polarization and turnout. Analyses uncover a consistent positive relationship between perceived partisan polarization and individual voting decisions; as an individual perceives greater partisan polarization, their likelihood of turning out to vote increases. Similarly, I find a positive association between affective polarization and voter turnout. Finally, the results are consistent with my expectations that perceived electoral stakes and increased campaign interest mediate the relationship between polarization and turnout.*

1. Introduction

Voting is widely considered Americans' most fundamental civic duty. Indisputably, voting is imperative to robust democracy. By casting an electoral vote, every eligible citizen in our nation has the opportunity to choose their representation. With this power, people can influence policy outcomes by selecting politicians that support their interests. Further, citizens can indirectly hold governing officials accountable with their electoral choices. Voting is a powerful act. However, voter turnout rates in American elections have remained below 62% of the voting-eligible population for the past 50 years (McDonald 2016). In relation to other developed countries worldwide, the United States is trailing behind in voter turnout (Desilver 2018). In the 2016 presidential election, approximately 40% of Americans chose not to vote (McDonald 2016). Our nation prides itself on the Constitutional values of democracy, justice, and representation—so why is nearly half the eligible population not casting a ballot?

The current political climate in the United States is plagued by partisan, ideological, and social divisions. In modern America, it seems intuitive that partisan conflict is a component of government. In recent years, our nation's leaders have undergone a notable shift. Indeed, since the 1970s, the ideological gap between political elites has widened (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008). In other words, democratic officeholders, candidates, and activists have been moving farther left on an ideological scale, while their Republican counterparts have been moving further right (Abramowitz 2010). Polarization—among both elites and the general American population—has become an increasingly prominent topic in political science research. The notion of an increasing trend in polarization has sparked debate among scholars regarding the nature, causes, and consequences of this phenomenon. But there is widespread consensus that elite political polarization has been rising in America since the 1960s (Abramowitz 2010; Mason

2018; Dimock, Kiley, Keeter and Doherty 2014; Barber and McCarty 2015; Pildes 2011). Our nation's leaders are diverging; partisans in Congress now often fall on entirely opposite sides of the ideological spectrum (Dimock, Kiley, Keeter and Doherty 2014). Consequently, this shift is causing growing animosity, partisan prejudice, and feelings of anger among Americans (Miller and Conover 2015; Mason 2018; Dimock, Kiley, Keeter and Doherty 2014; Iyengar and Westwood 2014). Therefore, it is vital to examine the implications of political polarization in American society. *Could rising political polarization be contributing to changes in voter turnout?*

In this thesis, I evaluate how political polarization impacts voter turnout in presidential elections in the United States. In doing so, I seek to determine whether the increasing elite trend in political polarization is increasing citizens' participation in elections. In answering this question, I explore what essentially drives Americans to be politically active in modern society—Is it a sense of political efficacy? Animosity towards opposing partisans? Increased interest in political affairs? Perceptions of higher stakes in electoral outcomes? Under the Trump administration, the divide between Democrats and Republicans is wider than ever before—and fundamental values and policy priorities continue to push partisans to opposite ends of the ideological scale (Doherty, Kiley, and Johnson 2017). Investigating how voter turnout is influenced by this divergence is vital to conceiving a broader image of political culture, American voting behavior, and traditional democratic values in the modern era.

The following figures show descriptive trends in voter turnout and elite political polarization. These figures provide actual turnout rates and ideological polarization data from 1968 to 2016. Ideological polarization is measured using DW-NOMINATE scores, which draw

on legislators' roll-call voting records to generate an issue-based ideological index.[1] This data

serves as a backdrop to my investigation—showing over-time trends of the two core concepts at

the heart of this thesis.

Figure 1: *Voting-Eligible Population Election Turnout Rates: Midterms and Presidential, 1968 to 2016*
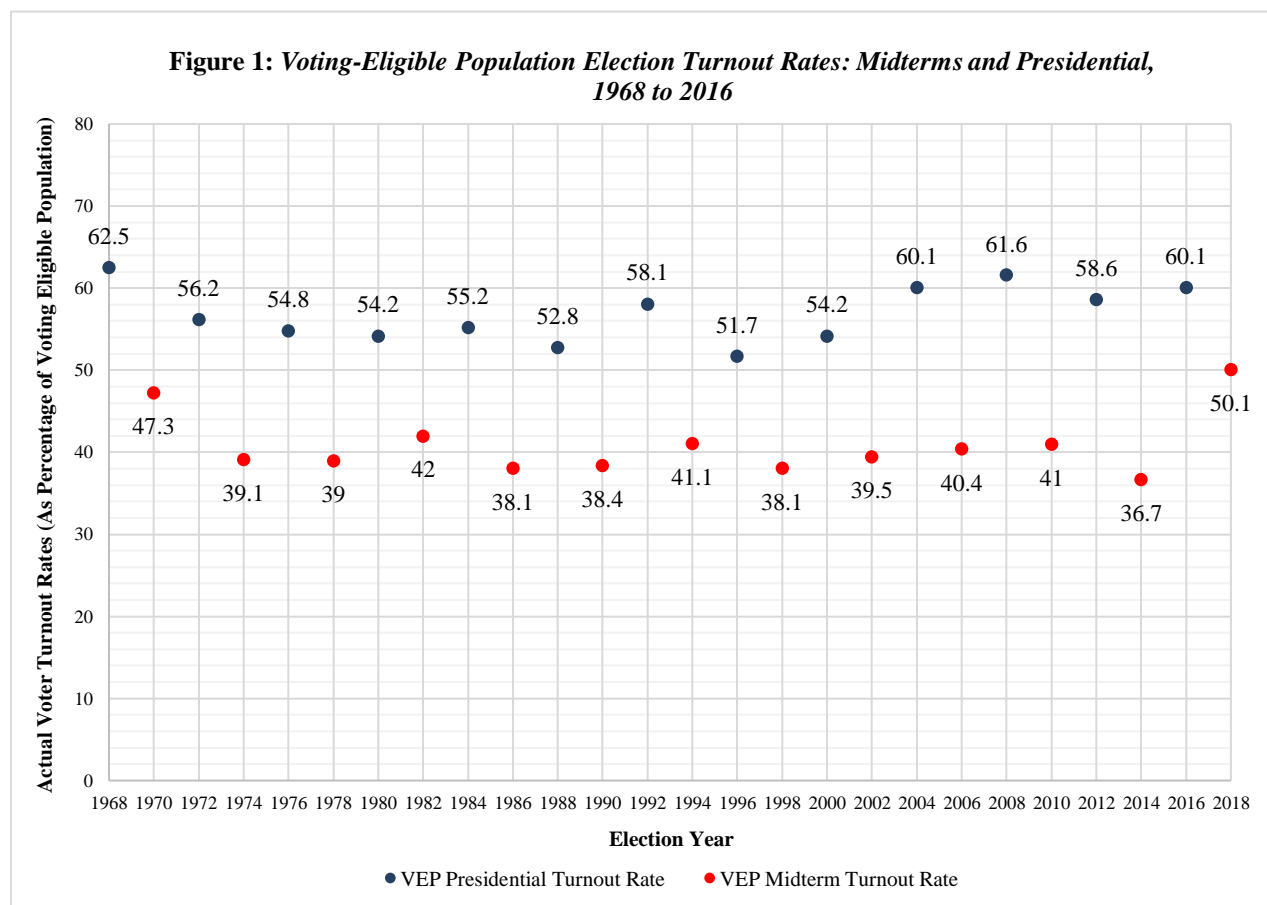
Voter Turnout data from the *United States Election Project*. Turnout rates are measured as the actual reported percentage of the voting-eligible population that turned out to vote in each presidential election.

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[1] The DW-NOMINATE scaling procedure, developed by Poole and Rosenthal in the 1980's, utilizes legislative roll-call voting to estimate the ideology of political actors in Congress. DW-NOMINATE scores place legislators on a liberal-conservative ideological map, creating a tool with which researchers can study the ideological positions of individual legislators as well as the partisan coalitions in Congress as a whole. Political scientists have used this data to document and study polarization trends on the elite-level over the past two decades (Rogowski 2014; Hare, Poole, and Rosenthal 2014; Hetherington 2001). While this scaling technique is frequently used in this manner, some scholars question the validity of DW-NOMINATE procedures in evaluating political polarization (Lee 2015). Critics of this method inquire into whether patterns in roll-call voting can accurately gauge "substantive policy positions" (Lee 2015, 285). Further, using DW-NOMINATE scoring to interpret polarization does not allow scholars to distinguish between partisan and ideological conflict (Lee 2015). In this chapter, I use DW-NOMINATE scaling as a tool to provide context and foster a baseline understanding of Congressional trends.

As Figure 1 shows, actual voter turnout rates, based on the voting-eligible population, have varied in general presidential elections from 1968 to 2016. However, national turnout rates have not exceeded 62% since 1968. This graph shows a small decline in voter turnout in the early 1970s and a general rise in turnout in the 2000s. Based on this data from the *United States Election Project*, voter turnout in presidential elections from 1968 to 2016 averages around 57% of the voting-eligible population (McDonald 2016). Therefore, our democratic nation is not achieving high voter turnout; nearly half of Americans are not participating in elections. This fact begs the question: *why* are people choosing not to vote?
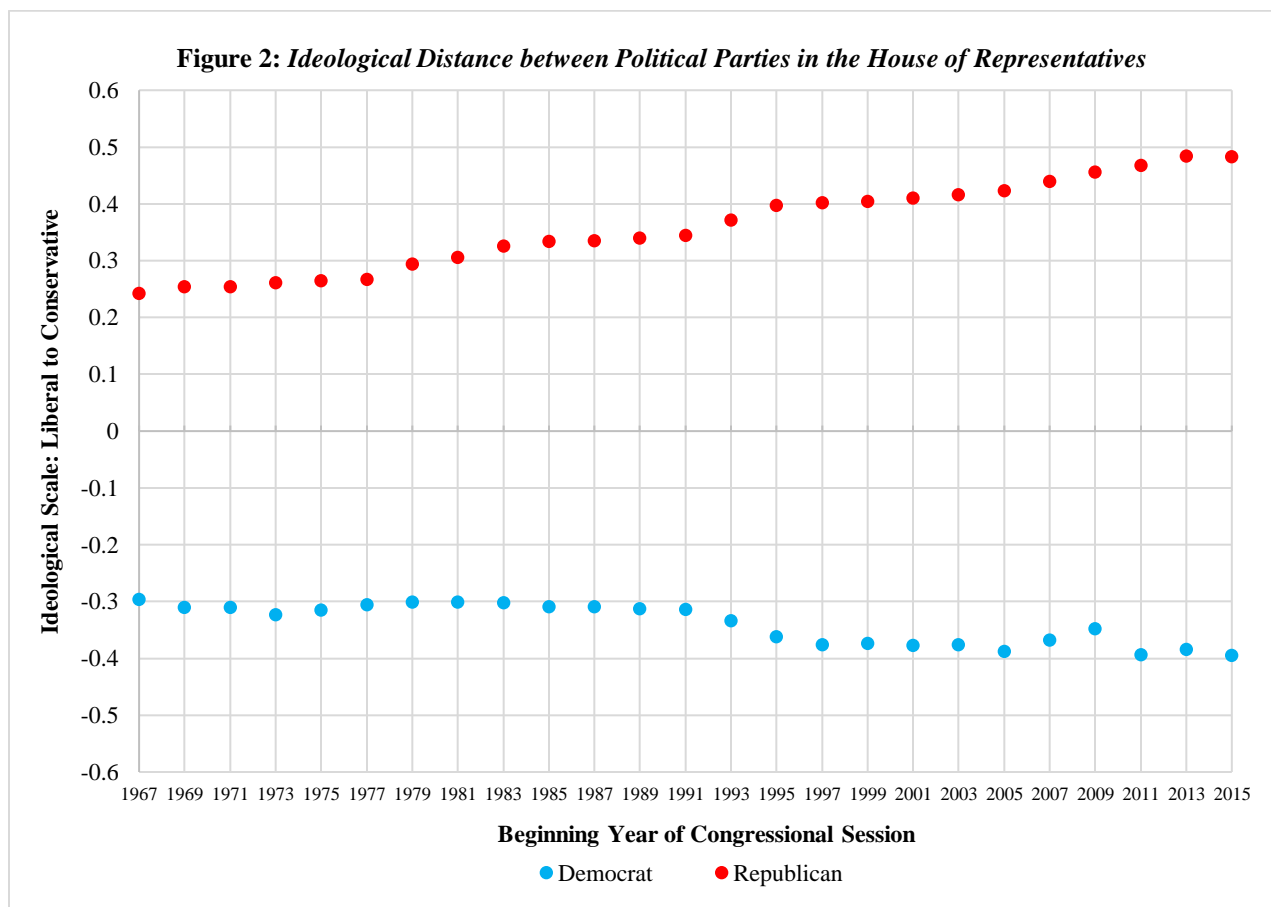
Figure 2: *Ideological Distance between Political Parties in the House of Representatives*

Ideological Scale Scores based on DW-Nominate Mean measurements from Dimension 1 retrieved from *Voteview*. Ideological Scale ranges from -1 as "Most Liberal" to +1 as "Most Conservative."

As Figure 2 shows, members of the United States House of Representatives have become increasingly ideologically polarized since 1967. Democratic representatives are becoming more

"liberal," while Republican representatives are becoming more "conservative." This increasing

divide suggests a higher level of political polarization in the House of Representatives in 2015

than in 1967.
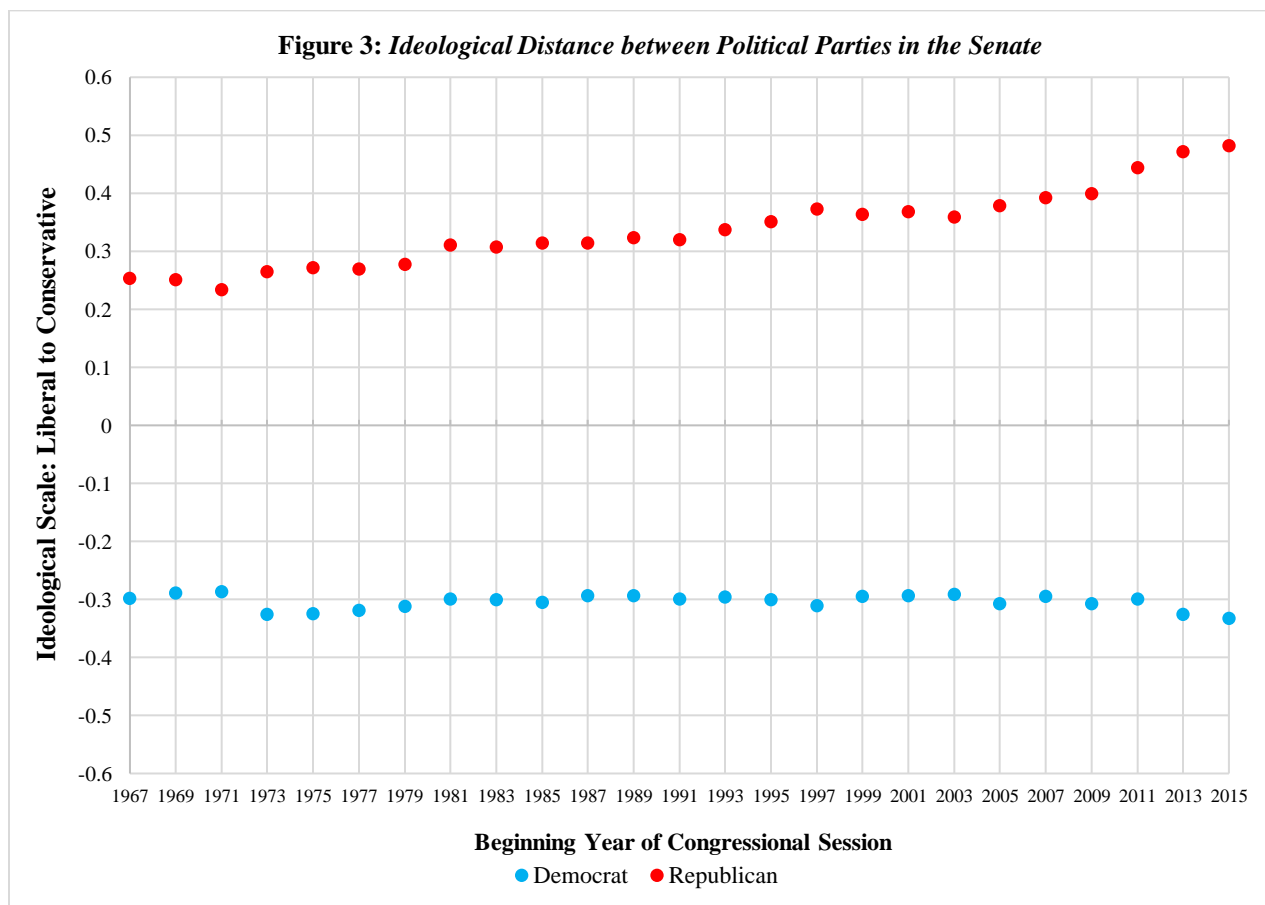
Figure 3: *Ideological Distance between Political Parties in the Senate*

Ideological Scale Scores based on DW-Nominate Mean measurements from Dimension 1 retrieved from *Voteview*. Ideological Scale ranges from -1 as "Most Liberal" to +1 as "Most Conservative."

As Figure 3 displays, there has also been a trend of increasing partisan-ideological

separation in the Senate since 1967. The pattern in the Senate is less symmetrical than the pattern

in the House. Republican senators are becoming considerably more "conservative"—based on

the DW-NOMINATE Dimension 1 mean scores—while Democratic senators have changed very

little or at most become slightly more "liberal." Nonetheless, this graph confirms that party

polarization has been rising in both chambers of Congress over the past fifty years.

Figure 4: *Ideological Distance Polarization Scores in the House and Senate 1967 to 2015*
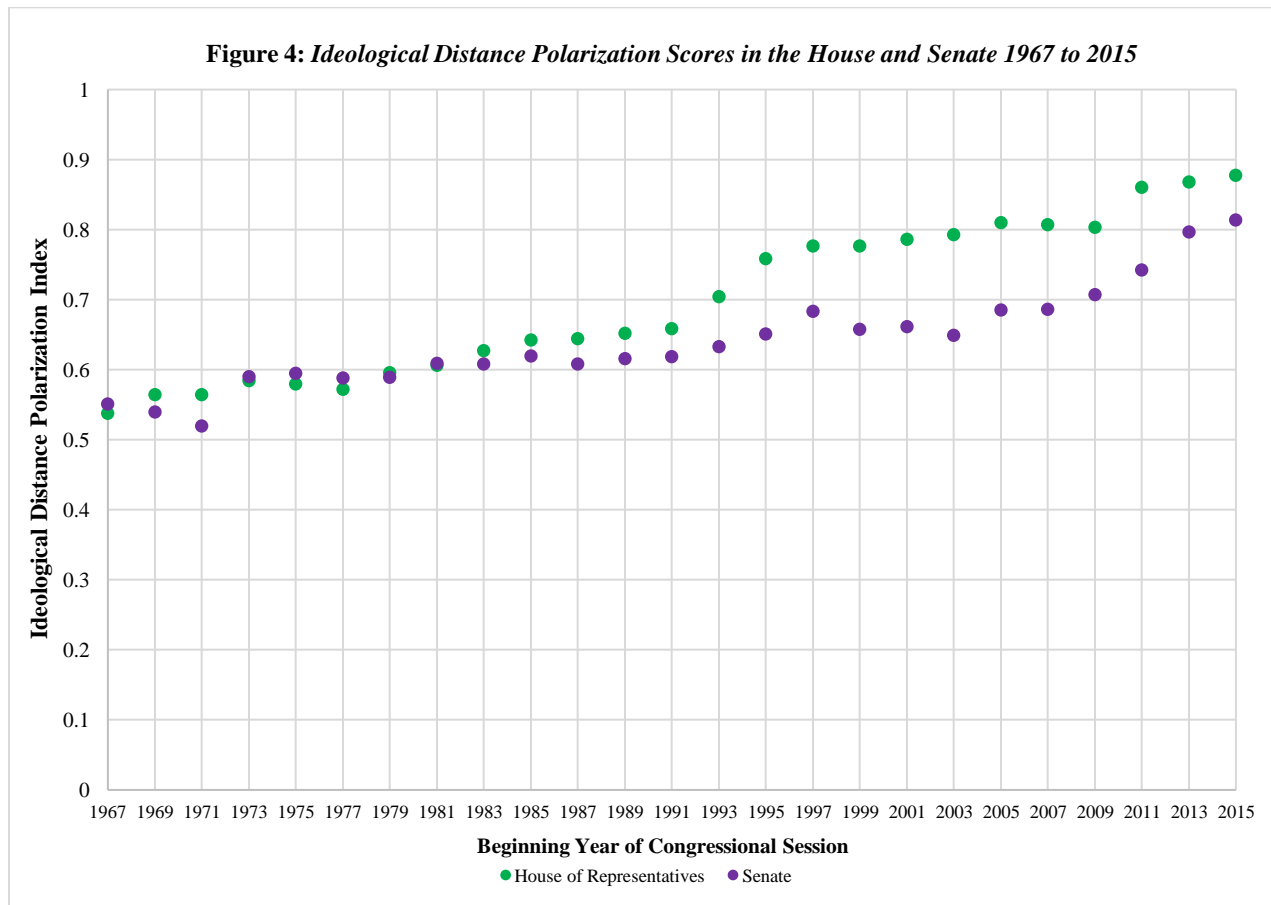
Ideological Distance Polarization Index based on DW-Nominate Mean measurements from Dimension 1 retrieved from *Voteview*. Index values are calculated by finding distance between Democratic and Republican member ideologies (on a scale of "Liberal" to "Conservative"). In this graph, an index score of 1 would indicate "Most Ideological Polarization" and an index score of 0 would indicate "No Ideological Polarization."

Figure 4 summarizes how the size of the gap between partisan officials has changed over time. The distance between Republican and Democratic politicians has grown considerably wider over this period, especially accelerating in the 1990s and perhaps again in the current decade. Although the ideological distance increases in both chambers, the House of Representatives shows more ideological divergence than the Senate. The gap between the parties grew by more than 50% over the entire period and appears to be approaching maximal levels based on DW-NOMINATE scaling.

These figures suggest that partisan polarization in Congress has been gradually increasing over time since the 1960s. Voter turnout, however, remained low for decades until a relative upward shift in the 2000s. While this increase in voter turnout evidently coincides with increasing elite-level partisan polarization, I cannot conclude from these figures that changes in turnout are related to rising polarization. During the early 2000s, many societal and electoral factors were shifting—as the war on terrorism ensued, campaign tactics evolved, and a new generation of people entered the electorate. Therefore, I cannot attribute a relative rise in voter turnout to simultaneous increases in elite polarization. The figures displayed in this introduction are purely descriptive and contextual. Thus, further investigation into the relationship between political polarization and voter turnout is the aim of this thesis.

In this thesis, I analyze polarization and voter turnout in U.S. presidential elections. I utilize survey data from the American National Election Studies (ANES) Time Series Surveys to examine the relationship between Americans' perceptions *and* feelings of political polarization and their decision to turn out to vote. My investigation focuses heavily on the most recent presidential election (2016), while also taking a look at past elections to see if the relationship between polarization and turnout has changed over time. Finally, I consider the role of mediating factors that may explain why polarization influences turnout.

In the next section, I review scholarship on these topics—paying close attention to models of voter turnout, trends in political polarization in America, and previous studies on the relationship between my key variables. Then I present my hypotheses, theory, and methodology in the "Research Design" section. Following that, I test my hypotheses using survey data. I conclude by describing potential limitations of this study, my recommendations for further research, and the implications of my findings.

2. Literature Review

In this chapter of my thesis, I review literature on both of my key variables: voter turnout and political polarization. First, I discuss different models of turnout and describe factors that political scientists have identified as contributing to voting behaviors. Then, I review literature on political polarization in America. In doing so, I consider previous findings on the potential causes of increased elite polarization and whether this shift has transferred to polarization in the electorate. Additionally, I explain "affective polarization." In the final subsection of this chapter, I evaluate literature that explores the relationship between voter turnout and political party polarization, which is the primary goal of this thesis.

2.1. Voter Turnout in American Elections: Models, Variables, and Perspectives

Voting is the most common act of political participation in our nation's democracy; it is widely considered American citizens' most essential duty (Aldrich 1993). Due to the nature of voting as a vital component of democracy, voter turnout has been studied extensively by political scholars for generations. Over the years, researchers have created a number of theoretical models of turnout to explain the contributing factors, patterns, and trends of citizen participation in American elections.

The "rational choice" approach to voter turnout is centered on "how the (expected) utility associated with outcomes generates or induces preferences for the particular actions at hand" (Aldrich 1993). The principle of rational choice assumes that people's preferences determine their behaviors (Aldrich 1993). Therefore, in relation to voting, turning out is simply a means by which citizens obtain a desired result. This model tells us that rational citizens will consider the

costs and benefits of possible outcomes and whether their vote will likely influence that outcome when deciding whether or not to turn out (Aldrich 1993).

One well-known example is the "calculus of voting model," which suggests that people estimate the probabilities of different outcomes to determine the utility of their actions (Downs 1957; Riker and Ordeshook 1968; Aldrich 1993). Under this model, people recognize that voting is a "collective action;" an individual vote is just one of many (Aldrich 1993). Thus, perceptions of an election's competitiveness affect whether or not an individual turns out to vote—as the "probability of casting the deciding vote should be higher the closer the election is" (Aldrich 1993, 252). Therefore, high electoral competitiveness can influence an individual's perception of the benefits of voting in an election (or their "expected utility" from turning out). In addition, political efficacy can adjust an individual's estimate of the utility of their actions. Political efficacy is defined as, "one's belief that their actions can influence politics and that they have the competency to participate effectively in politics" (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Therefore, those with high political efficacy are more likely to believe that their vote will make a difference in politics.

Another prominent model of voter turnout focuses on political mobilization. Mobilization can be defined as "the process by which candidates, parties, activists, and groups induce other people to participate" (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 25). Previous literature suggests that people often perceive voting to be a "low-cost, low-benefit action" (Aldrich 1993). In modern America, voting is not usually an overly time-consuming or difficult process for the average citizen (Niemi 1976). Therefore, voting can be perceived as a "low-cost" action. However, many people still find the benefits of voting to be low; many Americans do not think there will be much difference in their lives based on who wins an election, nor that they will be decisive in altering the

outcome (Aldrich 1993, 261). In light of this, small changes to the costs or benefits of voting using mobilization efforts—such as canvassing or get-out-the-vote campaigns—can make a considerable difference in overall turnout. Prior research suggests that people are much more likely to vote when they are mobilized by others; "political participation arises from the interaction of citizens and political mobilizers" (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). In fact, average citizens are thought to rarely participate spontaneously in politics without the efforts of groups, parties, and activists persuading them to take part (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993).

Another model for understanding voter turnout focuses on resources. At the core of this approach is the assumption that resources are distributed differently among populations based on socioeconomic status (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Thus, those with higher socioeconomic status have access to resources that powerfully predict their involvement in politics; for example, prior research asserts that wealthy people are more likely to vote than poor people (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Additionally, educated people are more likely to turn out to vote than less-educated people (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Those with higher income and/or greater education have access to more quality information about candidates and issues, suggesting an increased likelihood of turnout (Feddersen and Pesendorfer 1999). Similarly, civic skills are imperative to participation in politics—and these skills are developed from organizational, institutional, and communicative capacities that not all Americans have equal access to (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). In sum, political scholars find that access to resources such as time, money, education, and civic skills increase the likelihood of an individual turning out to vote in American elections (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

An additional vital factor in determining voter turnout is political engagement. Inherently, Americans who are more "psychologically involved" in politics are more likely to cast a vote (Campbell et al. 1960). That is, if someone generally pays attention to government, is concerned with election outcomes, or possesses a lot of political knowledge, their likelihood of voter turnout increases (Campbell et al. 1960; Abramowitz and Stone 2008). Accordingly, many non-voters choose not to cast a ballot simply because they are "uninterested, uninformed, or uninvolved" (Miller and Shanks 1996, 39) The more information one has, the more likely they are to engage with politics. Thus, exposure to political information from news media sources increases voter turnout and general participation in politics (Prior 2007).

Finally, scholars have also continually found partisanship to be a vital factor in the study of turnout. Identification with political parties is believed to contribute positively to Americans' voter turnout; many people choose to vote in order to "express allegiance to a favored candidate or party" (Aldrich 1993, 251). Political scientists have found that partisanship plays a prominent—and increasingly important—role in shaping voting behavior in American elections (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Bartels 2000; Hetherington 2001). The so-called "Michigan Model," originally proposed by four researchers at the University of Michigan in the 1950s, explains voting activity in terms of individual attachment to political parties (Campbell et al. 1960). This model suggests that party affiliation influences a variety of political attitudes and is the single most important factor in understanding voters' choices (Campbell et al. 1960). Overall, partisanship is central to studies of voting behavior, as political parties are becoming increasingly important and salient to the mass public (Hetherington 2001).

2.2. Political Polarization: Causes and Consequences

Now, I turn to discussing the presence of political polarization in the United States. In doing so, I briefly examine how and why ideological polarization has evolved among political elites. In addition, I explore the scholarly debate surrounding the presence and nature of political polarization in the general American population. Finally, I consider literature on "affective polarization" and the role of *feelings* towards parties in the modern political climate.

In the early days of American politics, the term "liberal" was not clearly associated with Democrats and "conservative" was not clearly associated with Republicans. Our two-party political system was not always split into distinct, opposing ideological groups. Thus, past generations of Americans may not have felt a strong inclination to choose between "red and blue" or "left and right." The parties have recruited broad coalitions and competed vigorously against one another throughout the country's history, but this robust competition has not always been organized along wide ideological divisions. In early 20th century America, bipartisanship was practical and congressional compromise was more common than it appears to be in today's polarized elite political climate (Fleisher and Bond 2004). In modern politics, ideological moderates in party leadership are rare and voting along strict party lines is normalized in both chambers of Congress (Fleisher and Bond 2004). Political parties are more "internally unified" and "sharply differentiated" than at anytime over the last 100 years (Pildes 2011, 273). So *what happened? What drove American politics to become ideologically divided? And has polarization of the elite transferred into polarization in the mass American public?*

The potential causes of rising political polarization in America can be divided into two main groups: external and internal explanations (Barber and McCarty 2015). The first set of explanations points to changes in the "external environment of Congress" as causing increased

polarization. Scholars suggest that some external causes of increased political polarization are partisan gerrymandering, changes in voting laws, and economic inequality (Pildes 2011; Barber and McCarty 2015, 23-33). These causes suggest that shifts in the social, economic, and electoral environment of politics have changed "incentives for elected officials to pursue moderation or bipartisanship" (Barber and McCarty 2015, 23). Subsequently, parties have readjusted and became more ideologically unified (Pildes 2011). These causes set into motion a realignment of ideological-partisanship as politicians have tried to appeal to different population groups and constituencies (Pildes 2011; Fiorina, Pope, and Abrams 2014).

Further, shifts in polarization can be attributed to the increasing involvement of ideologically-motivated partisans in the political system. This increase is due to factors such as the introduction of primary-based nomination systems, the rise of interest group politics, increasing particularized media messages, and essentially unregulated campaign spending (Pildes 2011; Fiorina, Pope, and Abrams 2014; Prior 2007). In sum, social, economic, and electoral factors outside of government may have shifted the way people can influence politics and how elites appeal to citizens. These external changes are thought to have contributed to increased elite polarization (Barber and McCarty 2015; Pildes 2011; Fiorina, Pope, and Abrams 2014).

Scholars also point to "internal explanations" of increased political polarization in American leadership (Barber and McCarty 2015). This group of causes focuses on "how the formal and informal institutions of Congress have evolved in ways that exacerbate partisan conflict" (Barber and McCarty 2015, 23). Some internal forces that have been identified as impacting polarization are changes in rules and procedures, majority-party agenda control, increased pressure from powerful partisan congressional leaders, and decreased bipartisan norms (Barber and McCarty 2015, 33-35).

Studies on the effect of elite polarization on the ideological divergence of the mass public are mixed in their results. The debate regarding the nature of political polarization in the general public is seen in the findings of Abramowitz (2007, 2010), Abramowitz and Saunders (2005, 2008), Abramowitz and Stone (2006), Jacobson (2012) *versus* those of Fiorina and Abrams (2008), Fiorina and Levendusky (2006), Levendusky (2009), Fiorina, Pope, and Abrams (2004).

One side of this scholarly debate contends that the public is becoming increasingly polarized. To highlight this perspective, the work of Alan Abramowitz (2010, 37) suggests that Americans have become more "consistent" and separated in their policy preferences over the past several decades. This shift is especially prominent among citizens who are engaged, attentive, and informed politically (Abramowitz 2010). Additionally, societal changes and shifts in educational norms are thought to be contributing to increased polarization in the electorate. As education levels in America continue to rise, polarization in the general public increases as well, because voters who understand key political concepts and differences between ideological groups are more likely to be strongly ideological and partisan (Abramowitz 2010). Overall, many scholars believe that polarization is not just trending upwards among elites; ideological conflict in the mass public has also greatly increased (Abramowitz 2010, 60). This body of work suggests that high ideological polarization in Congress may be a reflection of deep division in the general electorate (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008).

In contrast to these assertions, many scholars believe that ordinary Americans are not becoming increasingly polarized and are far less ideological than political elites (Fiorina, Pope, and Abrams 2004). Fiorina—a distinguished political scholar in this field of study—believes that most Americans are moderates, holding a mixture of conservative and liberal opinions. Further, Fiorina claims that polarized America is a "myth," as generalized ideas about polarization do not

differentiate members of the general public and the "engaged public" (Fiorina 2004). In other words, this body of research suggests that there is only a small "political class" of officials, leaders, activists, and commentators that are deeply divided ideologically (Fiorina 2004; Layman and Carsey 2002). These scholars assert that there is a "limited" response to the growth of elite polarization in the general population; only partisan identifiers with a high level of political awareness are impacted by elite-level polarization (Layman and Carsey 2002). They also suggest that the modern media environment—which focuses on drama and conflict—perpetuates an image of America that appears to be deeply polarized when, in reality, the general population remains mostly centrist (Fiorina, Pope, Abrams 2004).

Overall, political scholars agree that political polarization is occurring in Congress, but there is much debate on whether or not polarization is occurring in the general public. Some political scholars believe that ordinary American voters are mostly moderate and non-ideological (Fiorina, Pope, and Abrams 2004; Fiorina and Levendusky 2006), while others contend that the public is deeply ideologically polarized (Abramowitz 2010; Abramowitz and Saunders 2008).

The preceding investigations into political polarization focus primarily on a divergence in policy preferences and ideological position-taking. However, Shanto Iyengar and other scholars assert that there is another important perspective from which to see polarization. Affective polarization is "the tendency of people identifying as Republicans or Democrats to view opposing partisans negatively and co-partisans positively" (Iyengar and Westwood 2014, 691). When conceptualized as encompassing feelings, emotions, and identities, (affective) polarization has evidently increased in the American electorate (Iyengar and Westwood 2014). Their studies provide evidence that "among Americans who say that they identify with a political party, negative views of the out party and its supporters have risen sharply since the 1980s" (Iyengar

and Westwood 2014, 691). Both Republicans and Democrats increasingly dislike, even "loathe," their opponents in recent decades (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012, 1). Negative partisanship has increased in the electorate (i.e., emphasizing the party one opposes more than the party one favors), and an individual holding favorable views of both parties is becoming less common (Abramowitz and Webster 2018).

Scholars find this phenomenon to be initially rooted in humans' desire for group affiliation (Iyengar, Sood, Lelkes 2012). Thus, the simple act of identifying with a party can lead to negative opinions of the opposing party (Iyengar, Sood, Lelkes 2012; Iyengar, et al. 2018). In other words, affective polarization operates under the assumption that humans' often tend to view members of an "outgroup" negatively and those of an "ingroup" positively (Iyengar and Westwood 2014, 691). This tendency has strengthened among Americans in recent years as biased media messages and negative campaign tactics have intensified group divisions (Iyengar and Westwood 2014). Accordingly, many scholars suggest that the rise of partisan news sources has contributed to diverging feelings towards political parties (Iyengar and Westwood 2014; Iyengar, Sood, Lelkes 2012; Iyengar and Ansolabehere 1995).

This conceptualization of polarization is distinct from studies of polarization based purely on ideological views. Evaluating *affective polarization* is vital to understanding citizens' feelings towards parties and the role of emotions in determining political behavior. While affective and ideological-partisan polarization are inherently related, they are not mutually exclusive nor conditional on one another; "in some settings, affective polarization can increase while ideological divisions shrink" (Iyengar, et al. 2018).

2.3. The Effect of Political Polarization on Voter Turnout: A Polarized Debate

I now turn to prior scholarship that considers the relationship between the key variables in my research study: political polarization and voter turnout. *What have political scholars previously found when examining how political polarization impacts voter turnout in America? What ideas generally come up in the existing literature exploring my main variables of interest?*

Political polarization has long been recognized as a vital factor in understanding voting behavior (Dalton 2008). Although partisan polarization is identified as an important component of American politics, there is no definitive consensus on its impact on voter turnout. Scholarship on the influence of political polarization on turnout produces mixed results. Many scholars claim that increased polarization leads to higher turnout, while other scholars find the opposite. The primary arguments for a positive relationship—that increased political polarization leads to increased voter turnout—are that polarization increases voter incentives due to an energized electorate, hatred towards the opposition, and changes in perceived electoral stakes (Dodson 2010; Hetherington 2008; Abramowitz and Stone 2006; Abramowitz and Saunders 2008). Contrastingly, arguments for the opposite conclusion—that increased political polarization leads to decreased voter turnout—propose that polarization can result in citizens feeling "turned off" by politics, disillusioned, or alienated by moderate beliefs (Fiorina 2004; Rogowski 2014; Prior 2007).

One group of scholars suggests that political polarization leads to increased voter turnout. They contend that rising polarization in the U.S. "raises the stakes" of voter involvement and the divergence of ideological views propels citizens to the polls (Dodson 2010, 444; Hetherington 2008). Under this argument, elite partisan polarization is thought to act as a signal to citizens' that parties are separating on issues (Dodson 2010, 445). Thus, stronger issue positions and

polarized views render people more likely to vote in pursuit of their desired outcomes. In a recent study, polarization was found to stimulate mass political participation for both moderate and ideological citizens (Hetherington 2008). That is, some scholarly findings indicate that moderates have *not* been driven away from the polls (or disillusioned) by political polarization on an elite level (Hetherington 2008, 6). Further, an investigation of the 2004 presidential reelection of George W. Bush saw a positive relationship between polarization and turnout; "the greater the difference between citizens' evaluations of the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates, the more likely they were to vote" (Abramowitz and Stone 2006).

Where affective polarization is concerned, scholars have found that increased *feelings* of hatred or animosity towards one party can motivate voters (Iyenger and Krupenkin 2018; Miller and Conover 2015). Multiple studies have found that rising partisan hostility has contributed to increased turnout (Iyengar and Krupenkin 2018; Miller and Conover 2015). Indeed, it has even been claimed that "loathing" motivates voters more than loyalty in our modern political climate (Edsall 2018).

In contrast, another group of scholars concludes that political polarization negatively influences voter turnout (Fiorina, Pope, and Abrams 2004; Powell 1986; Rogowski 2014). Some previous studies have found that increasing partisan polarization is driving centrist voters away from electoral participation (Fiorina, Pope, and Abrams 2004). This view asserts that political polarization alienates moderates, makes people feel "turned off" by politics, and decreases Americans' interest in voting (Rogowski 2014; Fiorina and Levendusky 2006). Rogowski (2014) claims that centrist Americans choose not to vote because neither candidate appeals to them in polarized elections. Similarly, Fiorina (2006) says that Americans seek the center while the parties and candidates "hang out on the extremes." The following quote highlights the idea with

which Rogowski (2014) and other political scholars conclude, namely that candidate divergence and ideological conflict have a negative effect on voter turnout in American elections:

> As ideological conflict increases and candidates are located farther and farther away in ideological space, citizens located around the center of the space might decide that neither candidate appeals enough to them to turnout to vote. Turnout is likely to decrease, then, as more citizens are alienated by the choices offered to them (Rogowski 2014, 480).

In summary, there is no definitive conclusion regarding how political polarization impacts voter turnout in elections in the United States. Some political scholars believe the relationship between the two variables is negative (voter turnout decreases as political polarization increases), while others find it to be positive (voter turnout increases as political polarization increases). This thesis intends to explore the relationship further. In particular, I contribute to current scholarship by 1) simultaneously evaluating and comparing the impact of partisan perceptions *and* feelings as measures of polarization, and 2) closely examining two mediating variables that may explain how and why polarization affects turnout. These contributions bring us a step closer to fully understanding the impact of political polarization on American voting behavior.

3. Research Design

In this section of my thesis, I begin by summarizing my hypotheses. I then discuss my theoretical explanation for why political polarization and voter turnout are positively related. Next, I describe the data and statistical methods that will be used to test the hypotheses. I also discuss some limitations of my study and justify my operational and analytical choices.

3.1. Primary Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: **Individuals perceiving high levels of party polarization are more likely to turn out to vote than those who perceive lower levels of party polarization.**

I hypothesize that there is positive relationship between individuals' perceptions that the two parties are ideologically polarized and their decision to cast a vote. Those who see Democrats and Republicans as ideologically far apart should turn out at higher rates than those who see the two parties as close together. Scholars argue that party polarization has been rising across recent elections, but individual citizens are apt to differ in the extent to which they recognize this gap in the positions of parties. Therefore, at the micro level, I hypothesize that voting decisions depend on the degree of party polarization perceived by individuals.

Hypothesis 2: **Individuals whose feelings toward the political parties are highly polarized—that is, who hold highly positive feelings towards their own party and highly negative feelings towards the opposition party—are more likely to turn out to vote than those whose feelings about the parties are not highly polarized.**

My second hypothesis is that I will find a positive relationship between affective polarization and voter turnout. As discussed earlier, "affective polarization" refers to the difference in feelings towards the two major parties. As individuals grow to like their own party and dislike the opposing party more intensely, their propensity to turn out on Election Day

should also increase. This hypothesis is distinguished from the first because what matters for the voting decision is not the gap one sees in party positions but instead the gap in how one feels about the parties.

3.2. Theoretical Mechanisms

I believe that party polarization drives higher voter turnout due to two primary incentivizing factors. First, I think that polarization leads to a perception of "higher stakes" in outcomes, inciting an energized electorate. Second, I believe that polarization creates an electoral atmosphere that attracts increased interest. When the political climate is highly controversial—with parties or candidates clashing and holding starkly conflicting views—more attention and electoral pressure drive the public to engage in elections. In short, I believe that the increasing polarization of political parties incentivizes Americans to take action. My argument is broadly consistent with the work of Dodson (2010), Hetherington (2008), and Abramowitz and Stone (2006) described previously. These scholars argue that polarization has stimulated participation in elections because of increased energy and incentive to engage in "high stakes" races (Dodson 2010; Hetherington 2008; Abramowitz and Stone 2006).

The first element of my argument is based upon individual perceptions of *electoral stakes*. In a polarized political atmosphere, I contend that citizens will perceive their electoral decisions to have "higher stakes" relative to a more unified, moderate political climate. If elites are (or appear to be) ideologically polarized, Americans assume that the consequences of abstaining from voting—and thus risking the loss of their preferred party—will be higher in policy terms. I contend that as perceptions of partisan polarization increase, Americans are more

likely to assume there are high benefits of casting a vote, as they may fear severe consequences if an ideologically extreme candidate on the other side is elected.

I believe that this mechanism holds true in relation to affective polarization measures. If partisans hold strong feelings or views of opposing political parties—high affective polarization—perceived electoral stakes will also rise. Increasing affective polarization suggests partisan-identifiers feelings towards political parties are diverging. Thus, as an individual feels increasingly negative emotion towards an opposing party, they are more likely to dislike (or even fear) an electoral outcome in which an opposing partisan candidate is elected. This suggests that perceptions of stakes in elections rise as affective polarization rises. Thus, I contend that if an individual feels more dislike towards one party, they will perceive higher stakes in an election— as negative views of the opposition lead to perceived higher consequences of a certain electoral outcome. Similarly, affective polarization implies people are increasingly holding positive views of their own parties; partisan-identifiers "like" members of their own "in group" (Iyengar and Westwood 2014). Rising positive feelings towards a political party may similarly increase the stakes of elections for voters—as they care more about their desired candidate winning and want to express allegiance to their co-partisans.

Secondly, I identify *interest in the campaign* as a mediating factor that explains the relationship between polarization and turnout. The core of my theory is somewhat intuitive; those who are more interested in political campaigns are more likely to be involved. This assertion is supported by the works of Verba, Schlozman, & Brady (1995), Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes (1960), and Abramowitz (2010). Additionally, I believe that polarized political election atmospheres trigger more media attention and, thus, individual-level interest rises. In *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America,* Fiorina (2004) writes, "conflict, of course, is

high in news value… Disagreement, division, polarization, battles, and war make good copy. Agreement, consensus, moderate compromise, and peace do not." Further, Iyengar and Westwood (2014) suggest political media is becoming increasingly negative and partisan. With the rising availability of news sources with strong biases and conflict-oriented headlines, people are more likely to be exposed to the polarizing ideologies of political elites and adopt negative feelings towards an opposing party (Prior 2007). My theory behind this underlying mechanism is rooted in three primary ideas: 1) the media is portraying an increasingly polarized, partisan, and conflict-oriented view of politics, 2) increased media attention to polarization is increasing individuals' exposure to and interest in campaigns, 3) more interest in a campaign results in a higher likelihood of voter turnout.

In sum, my theory suggests that perceptions *and* feelings of political polarization motivate voters because of increased impetus to get involved in the election stemming from 1) heightened perceptions of electoral stakes and 2) heightened interest in the campaign. These are mechanisms by which either form of polarization might affect turnout. These expectations can be stated more formally as my third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: **Polarized partisan perceptions and feelings will increase voter turnout by (a) causing individuals to view the election as more important or consequential (i.e., the "stakes" are seen as higher), and/or (b) triggering greater interest in paying attention to the current election campaign.**

3.3. Methods

To test the preceding hypotheses, I use survey data from the American National Election Studies (ANES). The ANES conducts lengthy pre-election and post-election interviews with a representative sample of Americans in every presidential election. These constitute the longest-running time series of survey data on political behavior in the world and are widely considered an authoritative source on the opinions and voting decisions of the American electorate. The thesis draws on data from the 1992, 2000, 2008, and 2016 time series studies. My analyses focus heavily on the most recent and arguably most polarized 2016 presidential election, but extend back to 1992 to examine whether relationships have changed over the period of growing polarization.

Testing the hypotheses requires measuring four sets of concepts in these individual-level survey data: voter turnout, perceived and affective polarization, the hypothesized mediators, and standard control variables. I measure my key dependent variable, voter turnout, using data from the post-election interview indicating whether each respondent reported voting in the presidential general election. Using reported voter turnout is a limitation of my study. Surveys tend to produce higher voter turnout rates than is observed in the elections themselves (McDonald 2007). This over-reporting of turnout is due to social desirability effects and non-response bias, because non-voters are less likely to complete political surveys (McDonald 2016). In the 2016 ANES dataset, 67.6% of survey respondents reported turning out to vote. In 2008, 69% of respondents reported turning out to vote. In 2000, 65.4% and in 1992, 68.4%. This over-report bias limits the observed variation in voting behavior (by not taking account of many non-voters) and thus makes it harder to detect and explain differences between voters and non-voters.

To measure perceptions of partisan polarization, I generated a variable using pre-election survey questions that ask how ideologically extreme a respondent considers each political party (Democratic and Republican) to be on a 7-point scale (from "extremely liberal" to "extremely conservative"). To calculate perceived polarization, I use the survey respondents' difference in ideological extremity scores for the two major political parties. I use Iyengar's (2014) definition of affective polarization to operationalize this variable. As stated, affective polarization is the separation between feelings towards political parties or the tendency of partisan identifiers to view "opposing partisans negatively and co-partisans positively" (Iyengar and Westwood 2014, 691). To measure affective polarization, I calculated the difference between survey respondents' "feeling thermometer" score (on a scale of 0 to 100) for the Democratic party and their "feeling thermometer" score for the Republican party. In this measurement, a score of "0" indicates cold or negative feelings and a score of 100 indicates warm or positive feelings.

The variable of "perceptions of electoral stakes"—one of my hypothesized mediating variables—is measured using survey respondents' reported level of caring about the outcome of the election. This question seems to measure the concept fairly well because it suggests a concern about the outcome. That is, perceiving an election to be very consequential or important ("high stakes") is substantively equivalent to caring about the result. The variable of "interest in campaign" is measured using survey respondents reported level of interest in the presidential election campaign of that year.

I perform analytical tests to observe the relationship between political polarization and turnout. In doing so, I use a standard model of voter turnout which I formulated based on existing literature and data availability in the ANES. This model included several measures of demographic variables which I control for: gender, age, age², income, race, education, church

attendance, home ownership, and employment status. My model also accounts for several relevant political concepts: internal efficacy, external efficacy, political knowledge, habitual attention to government, strength of partisanship, trust in government, perceived electoral competitiveness, and party mobilization.

Primarily, these control factors are measured using directly correlating questions from the ANES Time Series Studies. The variable of internal efficacy was measured using a survey question asking whether respondents found politics to be "too complicated" to understand. The variable of external political efficacy was calculated by combining survey respondents' belief in whether they have a say in what the government does *and* their perceptions of whether public officials care about what people think. Perceived electoral competitiveness was evaluated using survey respondents' perception of whether the election would be close or one candidate would win "by quite a bit." Additionally, the variable of political knowledge was calculated by aggregating questions evaluating survey respondents' ability to correctly recall the names of politicians in office. Party mobilization was measured by a question asking whether a party contacted the survey respondent about the campaign or election. For more information on the measurement of all the factors used in my analysis, see Appendix A.

I conduct all statistical analysis using STATA. In my analysis, I test the relationship between political polarization and voter turnout in the presidential elections of 2016, 2008, 2000 and 1992—focusing especially on 2016 election data. Next, I evaluate the impact of affective polarization on voter turnout in the same sample of elections. Further, I analyze the relationships to my theorized mediating variables on the impact of polarization on turnout using both the perceived partisan polarization and affective polarization measures.

In selecting election years for my sample, I intended to use points in time throughout the evolution of political polarization. By comparing the effect of polarization on voter turnout in multiple election years, I evaluate whether there are changes in the strength of the relationship over time. The different election years see disparities in demographic, societal, and attitudinal factors—which I control for in my full covariate model to measure voter turnout. Further, I selected election years with question consistency in the ANES Time Series Studies. Using identical (or highly similar) measurements from all years in my sample is vital to arriving at accurate results. To justify my selection, I now explain how each election year presents a distinct point in regards to the progression of political polarization in America.

In 1992, political polarization was less prominent than in recent years. Bill Clinton was running on one side of the ticket as a proclaimed "New Democrat." The notion of being a "New Democrat" was rooted in moderate, centrist views of liberalism and active government (Hale 1995). Marketing himself as a "different kind of Democrat" throughout his campaign, Clinton attempted to appeal to white, middle-class voters by adopting more conservative positions on issues of economics and law-and-order (Hale 1995). Clinton's opponent, George H. W. Bush, also ran with a relatively moderate platform and publicly called for a "kinder, gentler" republican party. George H.W. Bush pushed for partisan compromise throughout his campaign, etching a legacy as a moderate president. Overall, the election of 1992 was set upon a backdrop of relatively centrist political views from both major candidates and partisan leadership that was not yet deeply divided ideologically (Hare, Poole, Rosenthal 2014).

In 2000, the political atmosphere surrounding the Bush-Gore election was a bit more polarized. As Republicans gained control of Congress in 1994, partisanship strengthened. *Contract With America*, a document released by Republicans prior to the 1994 elections, served

as a tool to nationalize the platform of the Republican party (Kennedy 2018). The "contract"

focused in on values such as reducing the size of government, social security reform, decreasing

regulation, and lowering taxes—leading Americans to recognize strongly right ideas as the

central priorities of leading Republicans (Kennedy 2018). However, the debate surrounding the

close presidential election between Bush and Gore was focused on competence and experience,

rather than the extremity of candidates' issue positions. In addition, the political media

atmosphere of the 2000 election perpetuated a "polarization narrative" following the public

distress regarding the Monica Lewinsky scandal of 1998 (Fiorina and Abrams 2008). Therefore,

the political climate in 2000 was marked by more political polarization than in years past—but

was still incomparable to the polarized atmosphere of 2016. The aftermath of the 2000 election

prompted a considerable boost in political polarization (Jacobson 2007).

In 2008, the candidacy of Barack Obama occurred in a significantly polarized American

political climate. By 2008, the Republican and Democratic parties had both shifted to become

more ideologically homogeneous (Hare, Poole, and Rosenthal 2014). Under the Obama

administration, Democratic and Republican ideological positions continued to diverge among

party leaders. Republicans in Congress stood starkly opposed to nearly all of Obama's leading

policy priorities. Even Obama's approval ratings indicated polarized sentiment; a survey by the

Pew Research Center found that "Obama's average job rating over the course of his presidency

was more politically polarized than any president dating to Dwight Eisenhower" (Gao & Smith

2016). While 2008 saw considerable partisan-ideological division, the Obama election was still

not as polarized as the political climate surrounding the 2016 election of Donald Trump.

The presidential election of November 2016 has been referred to as the most polarizing

election in American history. In the Trump era, Republican and Democratic politicians are

further apart ideologically than at any point in recent history (Mason 2018). In 2016, the political

atmosphere was one of anger, resentment, and conflict; the media focused in on issues of

animosity, Donald Trump blasted offensive social media posts about liberal political leaders and

commentators, and partisans were pitted against each other in an unprecedented way. The

presidential election of November 2016 seemed to ignite deep emotion in voters; many

Americans reported feelings of hostility or anger towards the opposing party and/or candidate

(Doherty, Kiley, and Jameson 2016). Thus, the year of 2016 presents a highly polarized political

climate among both elites and the broader American population. The 2016 presidential election

presents a high point of political polarization in my selected sample. Overall, the elections used

are intended to highlight varying points throughout the evolution of partisan and affective

polarization in American politics.

4. Analysis

This section presents the findings of my study. I first focus on the 2016 presidential election—which represents a relative high point (so far) in the current polarized political environment. I test the effect of both perceived partisan polarization and affective polarization on self-reported voter turnout. Next, I examine trends over time in the effect of polarization on turnout from the presidential elections in 1992, 2000, 2008, and 2016. Finally, I evaluate the role of the theorized mediating variables. Throughout these analyses, I estimate relationships using ordinary-least-squares (OLS) regression and recode all variables to range from 0 to 1, for ease of interpretation and comparability of coefficient effect sizes (Achen 1982).[2]

Table 1 presents three models for examining voter turnout in 2016. The first model (column 1) displays the bivariate relationship between perceived polarization and turnout with no additional variables held constant. The second model (column 2) presents the regression results when demographic variables (gender, age, age^2, income level, education, church attendance, employment status) are held constant. The full model (column 3) presents the regression results when additional political variables are held constant (internal efficacy, external efficacy, political knowledge, attention to government, strength of partisanship, trust in government, perceived electoral competitiveness, party mobilization). Thus, the third column of Table 1 presents my final estimate of the relationship between polarization and voter turnout, once the role of other related factors has been considered. I follow a similar set-up for all of the analyses in this thesis.

The value of the regression coefficient in the full model can be interpreted as the change in the probability of voting that results from a one-unit shift in an individual's perceptions of

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[2] I re-ran all regressions for voter turnout models using maximum likelihood estimation of a logit model, which is considered more appropriate for a binary (0, 1) dependent variable. The results are highly comparable to what I observed in the OLS regressions. The biggest departure of note is that the estimated effect of perceived polarization on turnout in the 2000 presidential election is less clearly significant with logistic regression than when using OLS.

party polarization, when additional variables are held constant. Given the rescaling of all variables from 0 to 1, a one-unit shift is the same as going from the minimum to the maximum level of the variable. Thus, Table 1 shows that a change from minimal perceived polarization (i.e., no difference between the parties) to maximal polarization (i.e., parties at complete opposite ends of the ideological spectrum) increases an individual's probability of turning out to vote by 0.115. In other words, we observe a positive relationship between perceived party polarization and voter turnout in the 2016 presidential election, consistent with Hypothesis 1. If we compare the magnitude of the effect—an 11.5 percentage-point increase in expected turnout—to classic resource-based predictors of voting, we see the impact is considerable—comparable to the effect of a full scale shift in income and to two-thirds the effect of a scale shift in education.

Table 1. Perceived Party Polarization and Voter Turnout in 2016 Presidential Election

	(1) Voter Turnout (Bivariate Model)	(2) Voter Turnout (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Voter Turnout (Full Covariates)
Perceived Party Polarization	0.312*** (0.024)	0.216*** (0.024)	0.115*** (0.025)
Gender (Female)		0.031* (0.013)	0.039** (0.013)
Age		0.358*** (0.097)	0.259** (0.095)
Age²		-0.095 (0.089)	-0.097 (0.087)
Income Level		0.136*** (0.026)	0.110*** (0.026)
Race (Non-white)		-0.024 (0.015)	-0.023 (0.015)
Education		0.252*** (0.032)	0.173*** (0.032)
Church Attendance		0.050*** (0.013)	0.036** (0.013)
Home Ownership		0.053*** (0.016)	0.0411** (0.015)
Employment Status		-0.003 (0.030)	-0.005 (0.029)
Internal Efficacy			-0.020 (0.026)
External Efficacy			-0.041 (0.026)
Political Knowledge			0.090*** (0.022)
Attention to Government			0.171*** (0.027)
Strength of Partisanship			0.201*** (0.019)
Trust in Government			-0.080** (0.030)
Electoral Competitiveness			-0.010 (0.014)
Party Mobilization			0.048*** (0.014)
Constant	0.618*** (0.015)	0.232*** (0.055)	0.182** (0.062)
N	3585	3425	3363
adj. R^2	0.045	0.150	0.205

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression with standard errors in parentheses. Binary indicator for mean-replaced income is not shown for brevity. Source: ANES 2016 Time Series Study. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 2 presents the relationship between affective polarization and voter turnout in the 2016 presidential election. The results suggest there is also a positive relationship between affective polarization and voting, which again remains even when additional variables are held constant. The likelihood of an individual turning out to vote increases as the gap in their feelings towards political parties widens, consistent with Hypothesis 2. The coefficient in the full model indicates that individual likelihood of voter turnout increases 0.066 units given a one-unit shift in affective polarization. Table 2 shows that a change from minimal affective polarization (i.e., no difference in feelings towards political parties) to maximal affective polarization (i.e., extreme difference in feelings towards political parties) increases an individual's probability of turning out to vote by 0.066. In comparison to resource-based models for predicting turnout, the magnitude of the impact of affective polarization (6.6 percentage point increase in expected turnout) is half that of income (12.5 percentage point increase in expected turnout) and one third that of education (18.9 percentage point increase in expected turnout). The strength of the positive relationship between affective polarization and voter turnout is slightly lower than that of perceived party polarization and voter turnout. But, overall, both perceived partisan polarization *and* affective polarization have a significant positive relationship to voter turnout in the 2016 presidential election.

Table 2. Affective Polarization and Voter Turnout in 2016 Presidential Election

	(1) Voter Turnout (Bivariate Model)	(2) Voter Turnout (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Voter Turnout (Full Covariates)
Perceived Party Polarization	0.279*** (0.023)	0.228*** (0.022)	0.066* (0.026)
Gender (Female)		0.022 (0.013)	0.037** (0.013)
Age		0.341*** (0.096)	0.258** (0.094)
Age²		-0.010 (0.088)	-0.102 (0.087)
Income Level		0.157*** (0.026)	0.125*** (0.026)
Race (Non-white)		-0.037* (0.015)	-0.028 (0.015)
Education		0.283*** (0.031)	0.189*** (0.032)
Church Attendance		0.056*** (0.013)	0.043** (0.013)
Home Ownership		0.059*** (0.016)	0.042** (0.015)
Employment Status		-0.004 (0.029)	-0.003 (0.028)
Internal Efficacy			-0.019 (0.026)
External Efficacy			-0.044 (0.026)
Political Knowledge			0.101*** (0.022)
Attention to Government			0.177*** (0.027)
Strength of Partisanship			0.191*** (0.022)
Trust in Government			-0.081** (0.030)
Electoral Competitiveness			-0.009 (0.014)
Party Mobilization			0.045** (0.014)
Constant	0.680*** (0.011)	0.219*** (0.054)	0.187** (0.061)
N	3594	3435	3368
adj. R^2	0.040	0.160	0.205

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression with standard errors in parentheses. Binary indicator for mean-replaced income is not shown for brevity. Source: ANES 2016 Time Series Study. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3. Perceived Party Polarization and Voter Turnout in Four Presidential Elections

	(1) Voter Turnout (Bivariate Model)	(2) Voter Turnout (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Voter Turnout (Full Covariates)
Perceived Party Polarization 1992	0.284*** (0.035)	0.209*** (0.035)	0.147*** (0.036)
Perceived Party Polarization 2000	0.233*** (0.045)	0.157*** (0.043)	0.091* (0.043)
Perceived Party Polarization 2008	0.310*** (0.032)	0.212*** (0.032)	0.113*** (0.032)
Perceived Party Polarization 2016	0.312*** (0.024)	0.216*** (0.024)	0.115*** (0.025)

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression with standard errors in parentheses. Source: ANES 1992, 2000, 2008, 2016 Time Series Studies. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
Notes: The full covariate model of voter turnout for 2008 does not include a control variable for "Political Knowledge" due to ANES restricted data accessibility.
See Appendix B.1, B.2, and B.3 for full models of voter turnout for 2008, 2000, 1992.

I now turn to exploring the relationship between partisan polarization and voter turnout over time. Table 3 presents a summary of the estimated effect of perceived party polarization on voting decisions in the presidential elections of 1992, 2000, 2008, and 2016. These results are derived from the same three models (bivariate, demographic, and full) that were used in the analysis of 2016 data. For simplicity, only the estimates for polarization are shown; the full results of each model are provided in Appendix B. The results from all four election years are supportive of the first hypothesis. There is a fairly consistent positive relationship between perceptions of partisan polarization and individual turnout decisions across contemporary American presidential elections. This suggests that the nature of the relationship has not been changing at the individual level, even as the overall level of polarization has risen in the political environment.

*Table 4. Affective Polarization and Voter Turnout in Four Presidential Elections*

	(1) Voter Turnout (Bivariate Model)	(2) Voter Turnout (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Voter Turnout (Full Covariates)
Affective Polarization 1992	0.197*** (0.036)	0.171*** (0.035)	0.067 (0.039)
Affective Polarization 2000	0.211*** (0.040)	0.193*** (0.038)	0.059 (0.044)
Affective Polarization 2008	0.293*** (0.030)	0.261*** (0.030)	0.103** (0.033)
Affective Polarization 2016	0.279*** (0.023)	0.228*** (0.022)	0.066* (0.026)

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression with standard errors in parentheses. Source: ANES 1992, 2000, 2008, 2016 Time Series Studies. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
Notes: The full covariate model of voter turnout for 2008 does not include a control variable for "Political Knowledge" due to ANES restricted data accessibility.
See Appendix B.4, B.5, B.6 for full models of voter turnout for 2008, 2000, 1992.

Table 4 repeats this over-time analysis for the relationship between affective polarization and voter turnout. These findings—somewhat similar to those of perceived partisan polarization—show a fairly consistent positive relationship between affective polarization and voting decisions across elections. The results from Table 4 support the second hypothesis; there is a recurring positive relationship between affective and voter turnout in American presidential elections. In 1992 and 2000, the relationships between affective polarization and turnout are not statistically significant. Thus, the relationship in earlier elections (included in my sample) is not as clear as that of the 2008 or 2016 presidential elections. In comparing the polarization measures, the impact of affect polarization on voter turnout shows a bit more variance over time than the impact of perceived partisan polarization on voter turnout.

Figure 5: *Mean Perceived Party Polarization in Presidential Election Years (1992, 2000, 2008, 2016)*
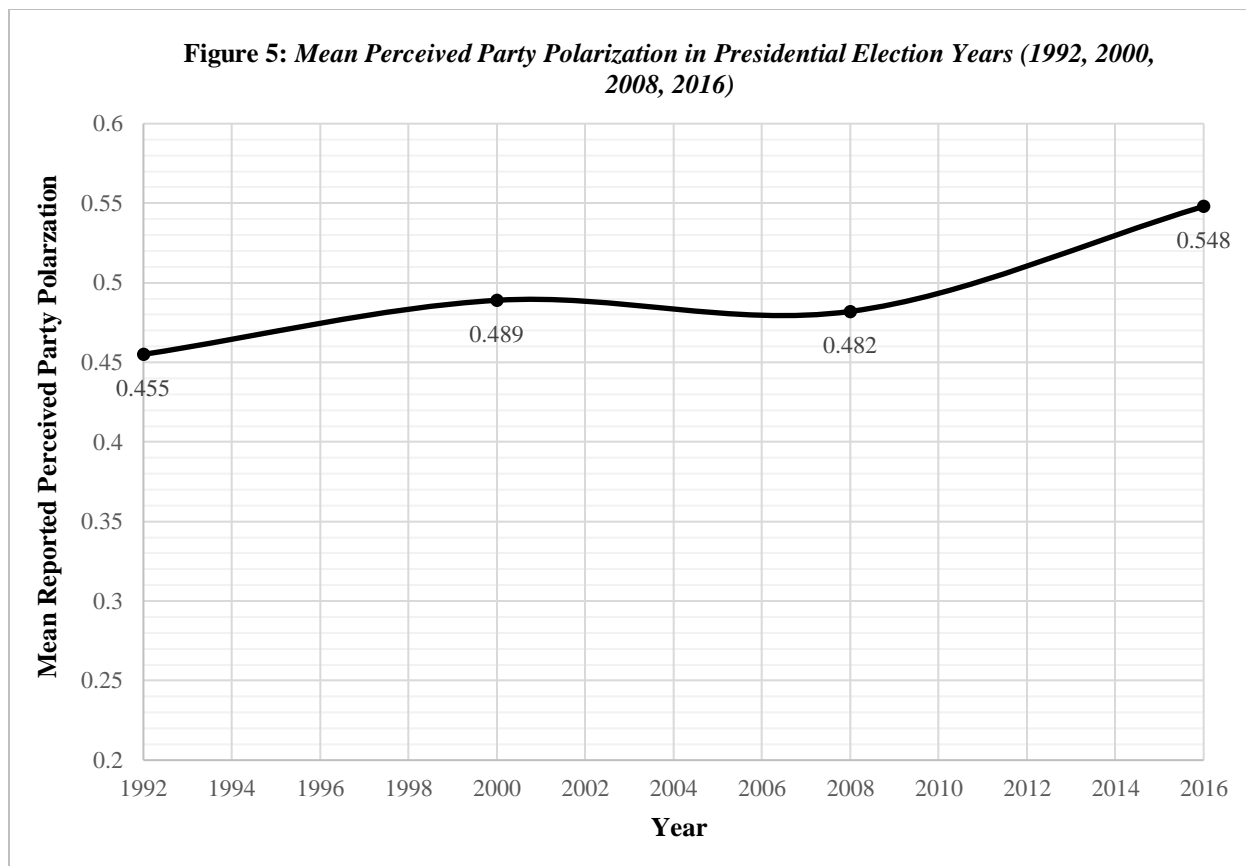
Source: ANES Time Series Studies 1992, 2000, 2008, 2016.

If the individual-level effects of polarized perceptions and feelings have held relatively steady, what about the overall level of such perceptions and feelings in the American public? Figure 5 presents the mean level of perceived party polarization among ANES survey respondents in the presidential election years of 1992, 2000, 2008, and 2016. Overall, perceptions of party polarization increase over time from 1992 to 2016. Political scholars agree that since the 1960s, partisan polarization has increased on an elite level (Abramowitz 2007; Abramowitz and Stone 2006; Pildes 2011; Hetherington 2008; Jacobson 2012). The trend shown in Figure 5 suggests that Americans are also observing this rise in political partisan polarization; people are increasingly reporting the parties as ideologically distant. Further, the upward trend in

perceptions of partisan polarization generally parallels the rising polarization of elites discussed

earlier in the thesis and indicated by DW-NOMINATE scores.

Figure 6: *Mean Affective Polarization in Presidential Election Years (1992, 2000, 2008, 2016)*
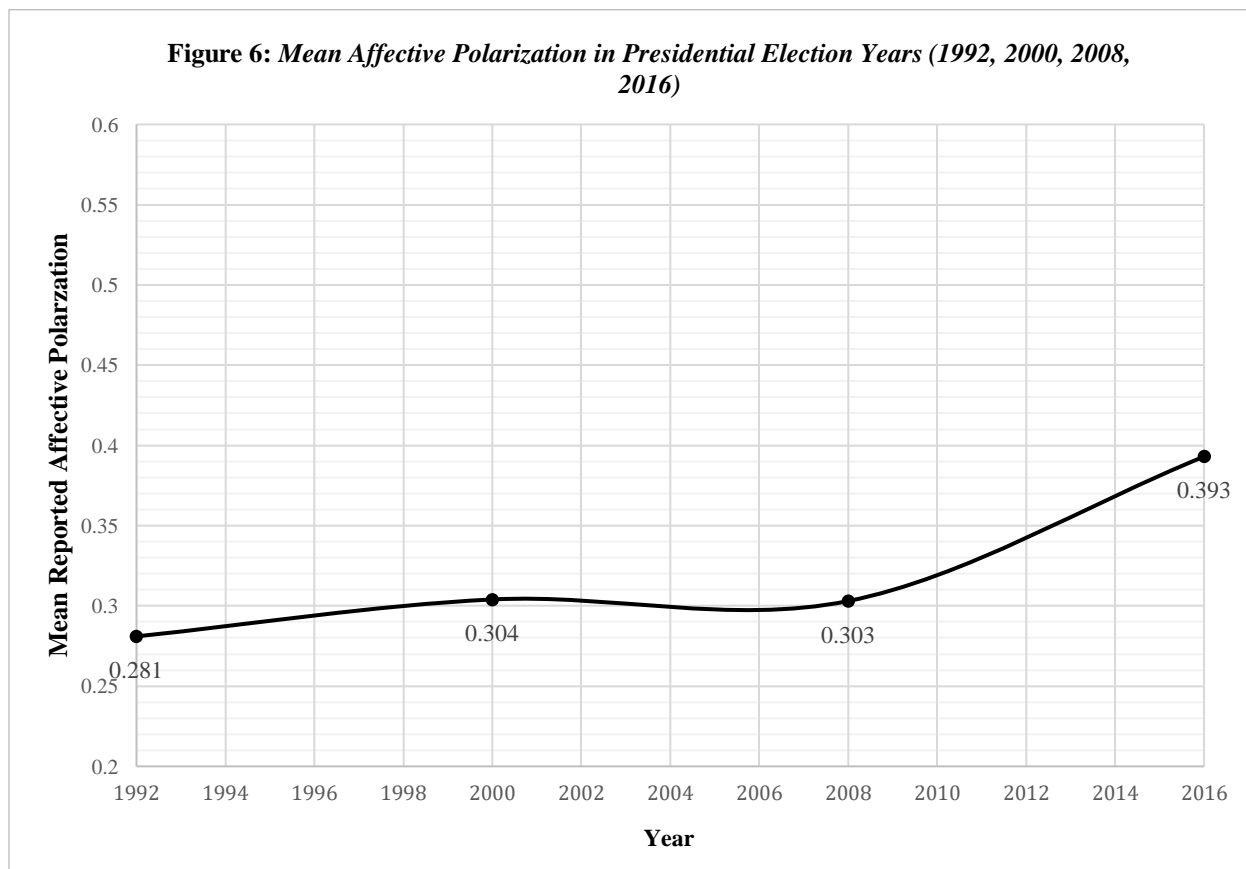
Source: ANES Time Series Studies 1992, 2000, 2008, 2016.

Figure 6 shows the mean affective polarization scores for the presidential election years

of 1992, 2000, 2008, and 2016. We again observe an increasing trend in affective polarization

over this period. Americans are increasingly diverging in their feelings towards political parties,

consistent with the previous patterns over the past half-century observed by Iyengar and other

political scientists (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Iyengar & Westwood 2014; Miller and

Conover 2015). As with perceptions of polarization, Americans appear to be reacting over this

period to the polarization of political elites in a way that has become reflected in their feelings toward the two major parties.

The final set of analyses concern the theorized mediating variables. For these, I focus the analyses on the 2016 presidential election, as the basic relationship between turnout and both types of polarization did not change dramatically over time. My theory identifies two potential mediating factors in the relationship between partisan polarization and turnout: perceptions of electoral stakes and interest in the campaign. These are the key mechanisms by which I argued polarization might affect voter turnout in American presidential elections. In analyzing these factors, it is important to note the correlation between them. Interest in the campaign and perceived electoral stakes (which, as noted earlier, I measure using self-reports that individuals "care about the electoral outcome") are positively associated, as one might expect, with a correlation coefficient of 0.49 in 2016. Thus, these variables often move together; as one's care about the outcome of the election rises, one reports greater interest in the current campaign (and vice versa).

In my analysis of how these factors come together to connect political polarization and turnout, I proceed in three steps: 1) analyze the relationship between both types of partisan polarization and the theorized mediators, 2) analyze the relationship between the theorized mediators and voter turnout, 3) analyze how including the mediators in the full model of turnout alters the estimated effect of polarized perceptions and feelings.[3]

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[3] In this thesis, I adopt the classical approach to testing for mediation that scholars have followed for many decades. In recent years, political scientists have been vigorously debating improved ways of establishing causal mediation with greater confidence and precision. This has generated a range of recommendations from computing estimates with bootstrapping methods to conducting multi-stage experiments that manipulate independent and mediating variables independently. Pursuit of these additional methods is beyond the scope of the present thesis and represent some potential avenues for extending this work.

Table 5. The Impact of Perceived Party Polarization on Caring about the Electoral Outcome and Interest in the Campaign (2016 Presidential Election)

	Care about Electoral Outcome (Full Covariates)	Interest in Campaign (Full Covariates)
Perceived Party Polarization	0.109^{***} (0.016)	0.058^{***} (0.017)

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression with standard errors in parentheses. Source: ANES 2016 Time Series Study. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
See Appendix B.7 and B.8 for full models of voter turnout.

Table 5 shows the regression coefficients for the relationship of *perceived partisan polarization* with caring about the electoral outcome and interest in the campaign. As expected, perceived party polarization has a positive relationship to both of the hypothesized mediators, even when additional variables are held constant. The first column shows that as an individual's perception of party polarization increases, they care more about the electoral outcome (i.e., they perceive higher electoral stakes). The second column shows that as individual's perception of party polarization increases, their interest in the campaign also increases. The magnitude of the relationship between polarization perceptions and care about the electoral outcome is slightly greater than that of polarization perceptions and interest in the campaign. A shift from minimal perceived polarization (no difference between party ideologies) to maximal perceived polarization (party ideologies on complete opposite sides of an ideological scale) coincides with a 10.9% increase in the respondents' level of care about an electoral outcome. The same shift from minimal to maximal perceived polarization suggests a 5.8% increase in the likelihood that a survey respondent reports interest in the campaign.

Table 6. The Impact of Affective Polarization on Caring about the Electoral Outcome and Interest in the Campaign (2016 Presidential Election)

	Care about Electoral Outcome (Full Covariates)	Interest in Campaign (Full Covariates)
Affective Polarization	0.227*** (0.016)	0.090*** (0.018)

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression with standard errors in parentheses. Source: ANES 2016 Time Series Study. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
See Appendix B.9 and B.10 for full models of voter turnout.

We can repeat those same analyses using affective polarization. Table 6 presents the regression coefficients for the relationship of *affective polarization* with caring about the electoral outcome and interest in the campaign. Again, as expected, affective polarization has a positive relationship to both of my hypothesized mediating variables when additional variables are held constant. Thus, as an individual's level of affective polarization increases, they care more about the electoral outcome (i.e., they see the "stakes" as higher). A shift from no affective polarization to maximal affective polarization suggests a 22.7% increase in the likelihood of an individual perceiving high stakes in the election. Similarly, as an individual's level of affective polarization increases, their interest in the campaign increases. The regression test for these variables produces a coefficient of 0.90—showing that a complete shift from minimal to maximal affective polarization leads to a 9% increase in the likelihood of reported campaign interest. The magnitude of the effect of affective polarization on care about an electoral outcome is higher than that of affective polarization on campaign interest. Thus, viewed together, Tables 5 and 6 show that the first steps in all of the hypothesized mediating relationships are supported by the data; Americans with polarized perceptions and feelings get more deeply invested in the current election.

Table 7. The Impact of Caring about the Electoral Outcome and Interest in the Campaign on Voter Turnout (2016 Presidential Election)

	(1) Voter Turnout (Bivariate Model)	(2) Voter Turnout (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Voter Turnout (Full Covariates)
Care about Electoral Outcome	0.589^{***} (0.023)	0.467^{***} (0.024)	0.356^{***} (0.026)
Interest in Campaign	0.374^{***} (0.019)	0.275^{***} (0.020)	0.185^{***} (0.024)

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression with standard errors in parentheses. Source: ANES 2016 Time Series Study. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
See Appendix B.11 and B.12 for full models of voter turnout.

The second step in this mediation analysis is to examine whether and how the proposed mediators are related to voter turnout. Table 7 shows that the mediating variables, as expected, are positively related to voter turnout in the November 2016 presidential election. Thus, if an individual cares deeply about the outcome of an election—perceiving high electoral stakes—they are more likely to turn out to vote. Likewise, if an individual reports stronger interest in the campaign or election, they are more likely to turn out to vote. These provide further support for my contention that perceptions of the electoral stakes and interest in the campaign may underlie the connection between political polarization and voter turnout.

Table 8. Electoral Concern and Campaign Interest as Mediators of the Impact of Perceived and Affective Polarization on Voter Turnout (2016 Presidential Election)

	(1) Voter Turnout (Bivariate Model)	(2) Voter Turnout (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Voter Turnout (Full Covariates)	(4) Voter Turnout (Full Covariates with Mediators)
Perceived Party Polarization	0.234*** (0.025)	0.142*** (0.025)	0.096*** (0.025)	0.067** (0.025)
Affective Polarization	0.207*** (0.024)	0.189*** (0.023)	0.048 (0.027)	-0.027 (0.027)
Care about Electoral Outcome				0.321*** (0.029)
Interest in Campaign				0.090*** (0.025)

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression with standard errors in parentheses. Source: ANES 2016 Time Series Study. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

See Appendix B.13 and B.14 for full models of voter turnout.

P-value for Voter Turnout and Affective Polarization (Model 3, Row 2) = 0.073

P-value for Voter Turnout and Affective Polarization (Model 4, Row 2) = 0.304

The final step in this analysis is to observe how the estimated effects change, if at all, when the mediators are included in the full model with the independent variables. Table 8 summarizes those results. They suggest that my hypothesized mediating variables—perceived electoral stakes and interest in the campaign—account for at least a portion of the impact of political polarization on voter turnout. With all four variables in the model, the relationships between the mediators and turnout remain strong, the effect of affective polarization slides closer to zero, and the effect of polarization perceptions drops by nearly a third. This pattern, combined with the preceding tables, is consistent with both parts of Hypothesis 3. Sobel tests of these patterns provide solid support for the proposition of the hypothesized indirect pathways (Baron and Kenny 1986; Preacher and Hayes 2008):

perceptions → caring: z = 5.80 (p < .0001)

perceptions → interest: z = 2.47 (p = .0003)

affect → caring: z = 8.73 (p < .0001)

affect → interest: z = 2.22 (p = .0034)

The mediating variables appear to account for nearly all of the remaining variation in the relationship between affective polarization and turnout that was not already explained by the control variables. However, some variation in the relationship between perceived partisan polarization and voter turnout is left unexplained by these mediators. In other words, we observe only partial mediation. Thus, caring about the electoral outcome and interest in the election campaign do not *completely* explain why perceptions of partisan polarization affect voter turnout. This could indicate additional mediators play a role or that the electoral stakes and interest in the campaign are measured with too much error to capture their full mediating role. Although the data presented here cannot decisively establish the causal pathways, the pattern of relationships among the polarization measures, caring about the election, interest in the campaign, and voter turnout are consistent with the mediation model posited in the third hypothesis.

5. Conclusion

This thesis has delved into the relationship between political polarization and voter turnout in American presidential elections. Primarily, my findings show a consistently positive relationship between perceptions of partisan polarization and individual-level voter turnout across the presidential elections of 1992, 2000, 2008, and 2016. This suggests that when individuals' perceive political parties to be more polarized, they are more likely to turn out to vote. Additionally, my results show a consistently positive relationship between affective polarization and voter turnout across these elections. This finding suggests that diverging feelings towards opposing parties also increase citizens' likelihood of voting.. Overall, the analysis supports the first and second hypotheses.

This study also evaluated two theorized mediating variables which connect political polarization and voter turnout: perceptions of the electoral stakes and interest in the campaign. My results suggest that both of these mediators account for some of the variation in the relationship between political polarization and voter turnout. This finding holds true for my two distinct measures of polarization—perceptions of partisan polarization and affective polarization. However, while the mediating effect of these variables seems to *completely* explain the impact of affective polarization on turnout, they only *partially* explain the impact of perceived partisan polarization on turnout.

This thesis contributes to an existing body of literature which conveys that political polarization increases turnout (Dodson 2010; Hetherington 2008; Abramowitz and Stone 2006). My study contributes to this debate by testing mediating variables and using two distinct measures of political polarization (perceptions of partisan polarization *and* affective polarization) in my analysis. Further, my evaluation of mediating variables focuses specifically on the

presidential election of 2016, which is often referred to as the most polarized election in modern history.

Although several clear patterns emerged, the present study has limitations like any other. First, the thesis examines data from four presidential elections. By using a sample of four elections, I analyze periodic intervals within the evolution of contemporary political polarization. However, the use of a small sample of elections limits the generalizability of my results, as I cannot conclude that the same positive relationship applies to all national elections in the U.S. Although there was not dramatic variance in results over election years since 1992, my findings cannot be generalized with any confidence to time periods preceding 1992. In addition, my mediating variables are only tested using data from the 2016 presidential election. Thus, my conclusions rest on the assumption that, if the overall relationship between the two forms of polarization and voter turnout did not change over this period, the mediating forces that drove those relationships have also held steady. It is possible that voting decisions in other elections may have been affected by perceived electoral stakes or campaign interest in different ways, or that entirely different factors may have mediated this relationship at other times.

Further, my use of individual-level survey data to measure political party polarization may present limitations. This thesis utilizes survey respondents' perceptions of party polarization and reported affective polarization as the primary independent variables throughout the study. Also, my study uses reported voter turnout from survey data as the key dependent variable. However, polarization is a national collective phenomenon which changes over periods of years. Further, voter turnout is an objectively observable item. The simplification of my key variables to individual-level perceptions and feelings may present a limitation of my work. However, national data where turnout observations and polarization vary is difficult to obtain and assess.

My approach to measuring polarization and voter turnout is viable and imperative to the nature my study. This thesis examines how polarization impacts human emotion, adjusts citizens' motivations, and psychologically affects voters. Therefore, my measures—which examine how Americans are *experiencing* and *perceiving* polarization—are reasonable for this study (rather than alternatively looking at the objective phenomenon on a national level).

Additional limitations are inherent in my use of survey data as the basis of this study. My exclusive use of ANES survey data presents a potential limitation—as survey respondents may not always answer questions honestly regarding their views, feelings, and behaviors. First, this study uses *self-reported* voter turnout as a key variable in my analysis. As noted by many political scholars, individuals often over-report when it comes to voter turnout, as many Americans perceive voting to be a socially desirable act. Further, as noted by the ANES, participants who are willing to complete political surveys are often intrinsically more interested in political affairs and more likely to turnout relative to the general population. As McDonald (2007, 588) refers to it, "over-report bias" suggests that a "greater percentage of respondents report voting than actual election statistics indicate." Thus, the use of survey-based self-reported voter turnout data could present less variation than actual voter turnout rates for the presidential elections in my sample—as there are an unrealistically low amount of "nonvoter" responses used in my analysis. This skew could cause my results to show slightly stronger positive effects or more consistent trends than are truly representative of the general population. Therefore, my use of self-reported voter turnout and political survey data to examine the variables of interest in this study presents possible limitations. However, as previously mentioned, my measurements are a product of my intention to evaluate psychological effects and motivations.

This thesis presents a basis for further examinations of the relationship between political polarization and turnout. First, as mentioned, reported voter turnout data may restrict my causal claims. Thus, to eliminate the over-report bias of voter turnout in surveys, future studies may utilize the ANES 2016 validated vote data to more accurately measure turnout. With validated voter turnout rates (i.e., checked against government voting records), studies may produce more conclusive results on the relationship between polarization and voting behavior.

My analysis of mediating variables also presents an opportunity for further examination. My mediation analysis shows discrepancies in the results for affective polarization and perceived partisan polarization. While the mediators appear to account for some variation in both measures, there is unexplained variation in the relationship between perceived polarization and voter turnout that is not present in the affective polarization regression test. This finding prompts inquiry into the cause of this disparity. My study does not explore at any depth whether or how perceptions of partisan polarization and affective polarization are themselves related. *Is affective polarization causing the unexplained variation? Could diverging feelings towards political parties be leading people to perceive more partisan-ideological polarization?* Future research could seek an answer to this question, as well as examine other factors that could have resulted in this variation. Therefore, I recommend further assessment into the unexplained variation that I found in the link between perceptions of partisan polarization and voter turnout when mediators were introduced.

The measurements of my theorized mediating variables present a limitation that creates an opportunity for further investigation. To measure an individual's perceived stakes in the 2016 election, I use survey data inquiring about how much a respondent *cared* about the outcome of the election. While this question sufficiently represents my variable of interest for the purpose of

this research, future studies could use additional factors to create a more specific measure of people's views on the *stakes* of an election. Future studies may also consider examining the role of political media in relation to campaign interest, polarization, and turnout. While my study evaluates campaign interest as a mediator, future research could look at how exposure to partisan-leaning media or individual preference for biased news sources impacts the variable of political interest. With such an investigation, researchers could illuminate how the rise of partisan political news and social media platforms have contributed to changes in polarization and turnout. Further studies may also consider exploring variables that *moderate* the relationship between polarization and turnout. For example, researchers could examine if those with high levels of political efficacy or political knowledge are more influenced by the effects of political polarization on their likelihood of voter turnout.

The implications of my findings suggest that American democracy in the modern era has not been uniformly diminished by partisan division. This statement is based on the assumption that most Americans view healthy democracy as system in which most people participate in elections to select their representation. As political parties have re-aligned since the 1960s, Americans have been motivated to vote by diverging feelings and ideals. Political polarization is inspiring more interest in political campaigns, strengthening Americans' concern about electoral outcomes, and driving people to the polls. Indeed, national turnout rates remain low (less than 65% of the voting-eligible population) in general elections, but ideological division in our two-party system are not necessarily to blame. Partisan polarization is contributing to other facets of democracy in negative ways (namely limiting institutional functions by decreasing partisan compromise in Congress and exacerbating hostility among citizens). But in terms of citizens' political activity, polarization is *not* causing a decline in voter turnout. It is likely that partisan

beliefs will continue to shift over periods of years in the United States as social, demographic, and electoral factors change. Thus, studies of political polarization will remain vital to understanding citizen participation and the evolution of our nation's democracy.

6. Appendices

6.1. Appendix A: Question Wording

Perceptions of Party Polarization

Preface: We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative.

V161130, V083071a, V001382, V923518 - Where would you place the Democratic Party on this scale?
1. Extremely Liberal
2. Liberal
3. Slightly Liberal
4. Moderate, middle of the road
5. Slightly Conservative
6. Conservative
7. Extremely Conservative

V161131, V083071b, V001383, V923517 - Where would you place the Republican Party on this scale?
1. Extremely Liberal
2. Liberal
3. Slightly Liberal
4. Moderate, middle of the road
5. Slightly Conservative
6. Conservative
7. Extremely Conservative

Voter Turnout

[2016] V162031x - Pre-Post Summary: R Voter Turnout

Pre: This question is not about the primary elections and caucuses that were held a few months ago. Instead, we'd like to ask you about the election for President to be held on November 8, in which Donald Trump is running against Hillary Clinton. Have you already voted in that election, or have you not voted?
- Have Voted
- Have Not Voted

Post: [If R did not indicate in the Pre that R already voted] In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. Which of the following statements best describes you?
- I did not vote (in the election this November)
- I thought about voting this time, but didn't
- I usually vote, but didn't this time
- I am sure I voted

[2008] V085036x - Summary: R Voter Turnout (Old and New)

Old: In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. Which of the following statements best describes you?
- I did not vote in the election this November
- I thought about voting this time - but didn't
- I usually vote, but didn't this time
- I am sure I voted

New: Which one of the following best describes what you did in the elections that were held November 4th?
- Definitely did not vote in the election
- Definitely voted in person at a polling place on election day
- Definitely voted in person at a polling place before election day
- Definitely voted by mailing a ballot to elections officials before the election
- Definitely voted in some other way
- Not completely sure whether you voted or not

[2000] V001241 - In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. Which of the following statements best describes you?
- I did not vote
- I thought about voting this time - but didn't
- I usually vote, but didn't this time
- I am sure I voted

[1992] V925601 - In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. How about you--did you vote in the elections this November?
- Yes, Did Vote

● No, Did Not Vote

Affective Polarization

Preface: I'd like to get your feelings toward some of our political leaders and other people who are in the news these days. I'll read the name of a person and I'd like you to rate that person using something we call the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the person. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward the person and that you don't care too much for that person. You would rate the person at the 50 degree mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the person. If we come to a person whose name you don't recognize, you don't need to rate that person. Just tell me and we'll move on to the next one.

V161095, V083044a, V000369, V923317 - Looking at (Page), how would you rate the Democratic Party? 0 to 100 "Feeling Thermometer"
● 100 degrees: most favorable and warm
● 50 degrees: no feeling
● 0 degree: least favorable and cold

V161096, V083044b, V000370, V923318 - Looking at (Page), how would you rate the Republican Party? 0 to 100 "Feeling Thermometer"
● 100 degrees: most favorable and warm
● 50 degrees: no feeling
● 0 degree: least favorable and cold

Gender

[2016] V161342 - What is your gender?
● Male
● Female
● Other

[2008] V081101 - Household Listing (Screener): Respondent Gender (Administrative or derived variable)
● Male
● Female

[2000, 1992] V001029, V900547 - Interviewer Observation: Respondent's Sex is…
● Male
● Female

Age

[2016, 2008, 2000, 1992] V161267x, V081104, V000908, V900552 - Pre-Election Summary: Respondent Age Group (Administrative or derived variable)

Income Level

[2016, 2008] V161361x, V083248x - Pre-Election Summary: Household/Family Income (Administrative or derived variable)

[2000] V000994 - Please look at the booklet and tell me the letter of the income group that includes the income of all members of your family living here in 1999 before taxes. This figure should include salaries, wages, pensions, dividends, interest, and all other income. Please tell me the letter of the income group that includes the income you had in 1999 before taxes. This figure should include salaries, wages, pensions, dividends, interest, and all other income.

A. None or less than $4,999
B. $5,000-$9,999
C. $10,000-$14,999
D. $15,000-$24,999
E. $25,000-$34,999
F. $35,000-$49,999
G. $50,000-$64,999
H. $65,000-$74,999
I. $75,000-$84,999
J. $85,000-$94,999
K. $95,000-$104,999
L. $105,000-$114,999
M. $115,000-$124,999
N. $125,000-$134,999
O. $135,000-$144,999
P. $145,000-$154,999
Q. $155,000-$164,999
R. $165,000-$174,999
S. $175,000-$184,999
T. $185,000-$194,999
U. $195,000-$199,999
V. $200,000 and over

[1992] V924104 - Please look at this page and tell me the letter of the income group that includes the income of all members of your family living here in 1991 before taxes. This figure should include salaries, wages, pensions, dividends, interest, and all other income. (IF UNCERTAIN: What would be your best guess?)

    A. None or less than $2,999
    B. $3,000-$4,999
    C. $5,000-$6,999
    D. $7,000-$8,999
    E. $9,000-$9,999
    F. $10,000-$10,999
    G. $11,000-$11,999
    H. $12,000-$12,999
    I. $13,000-$13,999
    J. $14,000-$14,999
    K. $15,000-$16,999
    L. $17,000-$19,999
    M. $20,000-$21,999
    N. $22,000-$24,999
    O. $25,000-$29,999
    P. $30,000-$34,999
    Q. $35,000-$39,999
    R. $40,000-$44,999
    S. $45,000-$49,999
    T. $50,000-$59,999
    U. $60,000-$74,999
    V. $75,000-$89,999
    W. $90,000-$104,999
    X. $105,000 AND OVER

Race

[2016] V161361x - I am going to read you a list of five race categories. Please choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be.

- White
- Black
- Asian, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander
- Native American or Alaska Native
- Hispanic
- Other

[2008] V081102 - Household Screener: Respondent Race (Administrative or derived variable)
- White
- Black/African-American
- White and Black
- Other race
- White and another race
- Black and another race
- White, black, and another race

[2000] V001030 - Interviewer Observation: R's Race is:
- White
- Black

[1992] V900549 - Respondent's Race is:
- White
- Black
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian or Pacific Islander

Education

[2016] V161270 - What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?
- Less than 1st grade
- 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th grade
- 5th or 6th grade
- 7th or 8th grade
- 9th grade
- 10th grade
- 11th grade
- 12th grade no diploma
- High school graduate
- Some college but no degree
- Associate degree - occupational/vocational program
- Associate degree - academic program
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Professional school degree
- Doctorate
- Other (Specify)

[2008, 2000, 1992] V083218x, V000913, V923908 - Summary: Educational Attainment
- 0-8 grades
- 9-12 grades (no high school diploma or equivalency)
- 12 grades (high school diploma or equivalency)
- 13+ grades (no degree)
- Junior or community college
- BA level degree or 17+ grades with no advanced degree
- Advanced degree

Church Attendance

V161244, V083186, V000877, V900524 - Lots of things come up that keep people from attending religious services even if they want to. Thinking about your life these days, do you ever attend religious services, apart from occasional weddings, baptisms or funerals?
- Yes
- No

Home Ownership

[2016] V161334 - Do you pay rent for your home, make monthly mortgage payments for your home, own your home outright with no payments due, or have some other living arrangement?
- Pay rent
- Pay mortgage
- Own home with no payments due
- Some other arrangement

[2008, 2000, 1992] V083281, V001022, V924135 - (Do you/Does your family) own your home, pay rent, or what?
- Own Home
- Pay Rent
- Other (Specify)

Employment Status

V161276x, V083222a, V000920, V900566 - Summary: R Occupation Status
- Working now (if also retired, disabled, or student, working 20 or more hours/week)
- Temporarily laid off
- Unemployed
- Retired

- Permanently Disabled
- Homemaker
- Student

Internal Efficacy

[2016] V162217 - How often do politics and government seem so complicated that you can't really understand what's going on? (Response Order Randomly Reversed, Splice)
- Always
- Most of the time
- About half the time
- Some of the time
- Never

[2008] V083079a - Summary of Version C and Version D
Version C: I'd like to read you a few statements about public life. I'll read them one at a time. Please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with each of them. 'Sometimes, politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.'
- Agree Strongly
- Agree Somewhat
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree Strongly

Version D: How often do politics and government seem so complicated that you can't really understand what's going on?
- All of the time
- Most of the time
- About half of the time
- Some of the time
- Never

[2000, 1992] V001529, 900510 - Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.
- Agree Strongly
- Agree Somewhat
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree Strongly

External Efficacy (Combination Variable of "Say in Government" and "Belief that Public Officials Care")

[2016, 2008 Version C, 2000, 1992] V162216, V083079c, V001528, V926102 - Say in Government: People like me don't have any say about what the government does.
- Agree Strongly
- Agree Somewhat
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree Strongly

[2008] V083079d - Say in Government: Summary of Version C and D
Version D: How much can people like you affect what the government does?
- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- Not at all

[2016, 2008 Version C, 2000, 1992] V162215, V083079c, V001527, V926103 - Belief that Public Officials Care: Public officials don't care much what people like me think.
- Agree Strongly
- Agree Somewhat
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree Strongly

[2008] V083079c - Belief that Public Officials Care: Summary of Version C and D

Version D: How much do public officials care what people like you think?
- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- Not at all

Political Knowledge

[2016] V162072 - Joe Biden. What job or political office does he now hold?
- Correctly identifies Biden as Vice President

- Identification is Incomplete or Wrong

[2016] V162073a - Paul Ryan. What job or political office does he now hold?
- Correctly identifies Paul Ryan as Speaker of the House
- Identification is Incomplete or Wrong

[2016] V162076a - John Roberts. What job or political office does he now hold?
- Correctly identifies Roberts as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court
- Identification is Incomplete or Wrong

[2000, 1992] V001456, V92519 - William Rehnquist. What job or political office does he now hold?
- Correctly identifies Rehnquist as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court
- Identification is Incomplete or Wrong

[2000] V001450 - Janet Reno. What job or political office does she now hold?
- Correctly identifies Reno as Attorney General of the United States
- Identification is Incomplete or Wrong

[1992] V925916 - Dan Quayle. What job or political office does he now hold?
- Correctly identifies Quayle as Vice President
- Identification is Incomplete or Wrong

[1992] V925197 - Tom Foley. What job or political office does he now hold?
- Correctly identifies Ryan as Speaker of the House of Representatives
- Identification is Incomplete or Wrong

Attention to Government

[2016] V161003 - How often do you pay attention to what's going on in government and politics?
- Always
- Most of the time
- About half of the time
- Some of the time
- Never

[2008] V085072 - How closely do you pay attention to information about what's going on in government and politics?
- Extremely closely

- Very closely
- Moderately closely
- Slightly closely
- Not closely at all

[2000, 1992] V001367, V925721 - Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, or hardly at all?

- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- Only now and then
- Hardly at all

Strength of Partisanship

V161156, V083098a, V000520/V000521, V923632 - Would you call yourself a strong [Democrat / Republican] or a not very strong [Democrat / Republican]?

- Strong
- Not very strong

Trust in Government

[2016, 2008 Version 1, 2000, 1992] V161215, V085147a, V001534, V926120 - How often can you trust the federal government in Washington to do what is right?

- Always
- Most of the time
- About half of the time
- Some of the time
- Never

[2008] V085147b - Summary of Version 1 and 2
Version 2: How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to make decisions in a fair way?

- Always
- Most of the time
- About half of the time
- Some of the time
- Never

Electoral Competitiveness

V161147, V083074, V000486/V000487, V923103 - Do you think the Presidential race will be close or will [one candidate] win by quite a bit ?
- Will be close
- Win by quite a bit

Party Mobilization

V162007, V085025, V001219, V925801 - As you know, the political parties try to talk to as many people as they can to get them to vote for their candidate. Did anyone from one of the political parties call you up or come around and talk to you about the campaign this year?
- Yes
- No

Interest in Campaign

V161004, V083001a, V001201, V925102 - Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you? Would you say that you have been…
- Very much interested
- Somewhat interested
- Not much interested

Electoral Stakes

[2016] V161145 - How much do you care who wins the presidential election this fall?
- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- Not at all

[2008, 2000, 1992] V083072, V000302, V923106 - Generally speaking, would you say that you personally care a good deal who wins the presidential election this fall, or that you don't care very much who wins?
- Care a good deal
- Don't care very much

6.2. Appendix B. Supplemental Analyses

B.1. Perceived Party Polarization and Voter Turnout in the 2008 Presidential Election

	(1) Voter Turnout (Bivariate Model)	(2) Voter Turnout (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Voter Turnout (Full Covariates)
Party Polarization	0.310*** (0.0317)	0.212*** (0.0315)	0.113*** (0.0320)
Gender (Female)		0.0701*** (0.018)	0.0780*** (0.017)
Age		0.303** (0.115)	0.184 (0.113)
Age²		-0.0543 (0.131)	-0.0518 (0.128)
Income Level		0.130** (0.0434)	0.114** (0.0426)
Income Dummy		0.0361 (0.0358)	0.0300 (0.0354)
Race (Non-white)		0.0675*** (0.0193)	0.0376* (0.0191)
Education		0.331*** (0.0388)	0.231*** (0.0392)
Church Attendance		0.0868*** (0.0192)	0.0560** (0.0188)
Home Ownership		0.0624** (0.0207)	0.0484* (0.0203)
Employment Status		0.00450 (0.0392)	-0.0155 (0.0382)
Internal Efficacy			0.0750* (0.0301)
External Efficacy			-0.00680 (0.0307)
Attention to Government			0.221*** (0.0386)
Strength of Partisanship			0.212*** (0.0282)
Trust in Government			-0.0451 (0.0431)
Electoral Competitiveness			-0.0498* (0.0204)
Party Mobilization			0.0845*** (0.0184)
_cons	0.629*** (0.0180)	0.138** (0.0511)	0.0637 (0.0552)
N	1908	1869	1822
adj. R^2	0.047	0.159	0.220

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses. Binary indicator for mean-replaced income is shown. Source: ANES 2008 Time Series Studies. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
The full covariate model of voter turnout for 2008 does not include a control variable for "Political Knowledge" due to ANES restricted data accessibility.

B.2. Perceived Party Polarization and Voter Turnout in the 2000 Presidential Election

	(1) Voter Turnout (Bivariate Model)	(2) Voter Turnout (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Voter Turnout (Full Covariates)
Party Polarization	0.233*** (0.0451)	0.157*** (0.0431)	0.0907* (0.0434)
Gender (Female)		-0.00640 (0.0210)	0.0325 (0.0213)
Age		0.610*** (0.145)	0.296* (0.144)
Age²		-0.393* (0.158)	-0.195 (0.155)
Income Level		0.0531 (0.0685)	0.00296 (0.0668)
Income Dummy		0.00339 (0.0489)	-0.0129 (0.0476)
Race (Non-white)		-0.000489 (0.0276)	-0.00362 (0.0275)
Education		0.366*** (0.0427)	0.234*** (0.0449)
Church Attendance		0.0911*** (0.0227)	0.0832*** (0.0225)
Home Ownership		0.116*** (0.0248)	0.0929*** (0.0244)
Employment Status		-0.0136 (0.0473)	-0.0404 (0.0461)
Internal Efficacy			0.0499 (0.0329)
External Efficacy			0.0726* (0.0349)
Political Knowledge			0.00623 (0.0414)
Attention to Government			0.203*** (0.0377)
Strength of Partisanship			0.116*** (0.0323)
Trust in Government			-0.0608 (0.0529)
Electoral Competitiveness			-0.118*** (0.0322)
Party Mobilization			0.108*** (0.0216)
_cons	0.684*** (0.0246)	0.192** (0.0732)	0.177* (0.0795)
N	1343	1305	1258
adj. R^2	0.019	0.167	0.228

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses. Binary indicator for mean-replaced income is shown. Source: ANES 2000 Time Series Studies. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

B.3. Perceived Party Polarization and Voter Turnout in the 1992 Presidential Election

	(1) Voter Turnout (Bivariate Model)	(2) Voter Turnout (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Voter Turnout (Full Covariates)
Party Polarization	0.284*** (0.0345)	0.209*** (0.0351)	0.147*** (0.0359)
Gender (Female)		-0.00741 (0.0189)	0.00983 (0.0193)
Age		0.527** (0.170)	0.433* (0.168)
Age²		-0.257 (0.194)	-0.234 (0.191)
Income Level		0.165*** (0.0431)	0.131** (0.0430)
Income Dummy		0.0900* (0.0422)	0.0669 (0.0432)
Race (Non-white)		-0.0444 (0.0267)	-0.0360 (0.0270)
Education		0.297*** (0.0375)	0.224*** (0.0395)
Church Attendance		0.110*** (0.0272)	0.0925*** (0.0270)
Church Dummy		-0.114*** (0.0336)	-0.0894** (0.0333)
Home Ownership		0.0571** (0.0213)	0.0409 (0.0211)
Employment Status		0.000824 (0.0353)	-0.0385 (0.0352)
Internal Efficacy			0.0132 (0.0310)
External Efficacy			-0.0978** (0.0338)
Political Knowledge			0.0344 (0.0498)
Attention to Government			0.185*** (0.0341)
Strength of Partisanship			0.0321*** (0.00966)
Trust in Government			-0.000685 (0.0504)
Electoral Competitiveness			-0.0229 (0.0241)
Party Mobilization			0.0755*** (0.0221)
_cons	0.674*** (0.0182)	0.238*** (0.0641)	0.198* (0.0827)
N	1818	1637	1584
adj. R^2	0.036	0.157	0.190

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses. Binary indicators for mean-replaced income and church attendance are shown. Source: ANES 1992 Time Series Studies. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

B.4. Affective Polarization and Voter Turnout in the 2008 Presidential Election

	(1) Voter Turnout (Bivariate Model)	(2) Voter Turnout (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Voter Turnout (Full Covariates)
Affective Polarization	0.293*** (0.0299)	0.261*** (0.0289)	0.103** (0.0332)
Gender (Female)		0.0558** (0.0176)	0.0698*** (0.0175)
Age		0.158 (0.111)	0.0697 (0.109)
Age²		0.0715 (0.125)	0.0365 (0.123)
Income Level		0.145*** (0.0427)	0.125** (0.0419)
Income Dummy		0.0477 (0.0346)	0.0268 (0.0348)
Race (Non-white)		0.0410* (0.0191)	0.0257 (0.0188)
Education		0.365*** (0.0373)	0.245*** (0.0380)
Church Attendance		0.0767*** (0.0189)	0.0527** (0.0185)
Home Ownership		0.0795*** (0.0203)	0.0619** (0.0199)
Employment Status		0.0434 (0.0386)	0.0118 (0.0377)
Internal Efficacy			0.0674* (0.0295)
External Efficacy			0.00522 (0.0302)
Attention to Government			0.232*** (0.0375)
Strength of Partisanship			0.209*** (0.0308)
Trust in Government			-0.0560 (0.0425)
Electoral Competitiveness			-0.0495* (0.0200)
Party Mobilization			0.0977*** (0.0181)
_cons	0.665*** (0.0142)	0.134** (0.0500)	0.0828 (0.0541)
N	2036	1993	1929
adj. R^2	0.044	0.162	0.223

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses. Binary indicator for mean-replaced income is shown. Source: ANES 2008 Time Series Studies. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
The full covariate model of voter turnout for 2008 does not include a control variable for "Political Knowledge" due to ANES restricted data accessibility.

B.5. Affective Polarization and Voter Turnout in the 2000 Presidential Election

	(1) Voter Turnout (Bivariate Model)	(2) Voter Turnout (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Voter Turnout (Full Covariates)
Affective Polarization	0.211*** (0.0402)	0.193*** (0.0378)	0.0593 (0.0436)
Gender (Female)		-0.0191 (0.0205)	0.0198 (0.0209)
Age		0.457** (0.139)	0.194 (0.138)
Age²		-0.237 (0.152)	-0.0903 (0.149)
Income Level		0.120 (0.0685)	0.0465 (0.0666)
Income Dummy		0.0323 (0.0492)	0.00770 (0.0479)
Race (Non-white)		0.00348 (0.0265)	-0.00159 (0.0263)
Education		0.409*** (0.0413)	0.236*** (0.0439)
Church Attendance		0.0948*** (0.0220)	0.0818*** (0.0218)
Home Ownership		0.126*** (0.0238)	0.101*** (0.0235)
Employment Status		0.0168 (0.0457)	-0.0152 (0.0446)
Internal Efficacy			0.0469 (0.0325)
External Efficacy			0.0941** (0.0338)
Political Knowledge			-0.0115 (0.0412)
Attention to Government			0.203*** (0.0365)
Strength of Partisanship			0.130*** (0.0349)
Trust in Government			-0.0311 (0.0514)
Electoral Competitiveness			-0.123*** (0.0303)
Party Mobilization			0.107*** (0.0213)
_cons	0.711*** (0.0164)	0.135 (0.0711)	0.158* (0.0770)
N	1495	1452	1394
adj. R^2	0.018	0.182	0.236

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses. Binary indicator for mean-replaced income is shown. Source: ANES 2000 Time Series Studies. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

B.6. Affective Polarization and Voter Turnout in the 1992 Presidential Election

	(1) Voter Turnout (Bivariate Model)	(2) Voter Turnout (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Voter Turnout (Full Covariates)
Affective Polarization	0.197*** (0.0360)	0.171*** (0.0349)	0.0674 (0.0387)
Gender (Female)		0.0209 (0.0183)	0.0398* (0.0185)
Age		0.674*** (0.162)	0.486** (0.161)
Age²		-0.381* (0.183)	-0.235 (0.182)
Income Level		0.220*** (0.0411)	0.164*** (0.0407)
Income Dummy		0.113** (0.0388)	0.0592 (0.0398)
Race (Non-white)		-0.0389 (0.0250)	-0.0187 (0.0253)
Education		0.382*** (0.0357)	0.278*** (0.0378)
Church Attendance		0.0941*** (0.0261)	0.0853*** (0.0258)
Church Dummy		-0.131*** (0.0324)	-0.0933** (0.0322)
Home Ownership		0.0684*** (0.0202)	0.0517** (0.0199)
Employment Status		0.00310 (0.0336)	-0.0374 (0.0336)
Internal Efficacy			-0.00214 (0.0302)
External Efficacy			-0.116*** (0.0325)
Political Knowledge			0.0703 (0.0493)
Attention to Government			0.209*** (0.0316)
Strength of Partisanship			0.0346*** (0.00997)
Trust in Government			0.0350 (0.0482)
Electoral Competitiveness			-0.0217 (0.0226)
Party Mobilization			0.0784*** (0.0216)
_cons	0.714*** (0.0135)	0.148* (0.0603)	0.128 (0.0779)
N	2160	1957	1866
adj. R^2	0.013	0.172	0.210

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses. Binary indicators for mean-replaced income and church attendance are shown. Source: ANES 1992 Time Series Studies. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

B.7. Perceived Partisan Polarization and Care about Electoral Outcome, 2016 Presidential Election

	(1) Care about Electoral Outcome (Bivariate Model)	(2) Care about Electoral Outcome (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Care about Electoral Outcome (Full Covariates)
Party Polarization	0.263*** (0.0146)	0.227*** (0.0152)	0.109*** (0.0156)
Gender (Female)		0.0142 (0.00826)	0.0315*** (0.00829)
Age		0.149* (0.0609)	0.0627 (0.0601)
Age²		0.00698 (0.0564)	0.00395 (0.0555)
Income Level		0.0374* (0.0165)	0.0203 (0.0164)
Income Dummy		-0.0356 (0.0261)	-0.0347 (0.0269)
Race (Non-white)		0.0106 (0.00945)	0.00316 (0.00952)
Education		0.137*** (0.0199)	0.0452* (0.0203)
Church Attendance		0.0251** (0.00835)	0.0166* (0.00830)
Home Ownership		0.00706 (0.00989)	0.00299 (0.00980)
Employment Status		-0.00626 (0.0188)	-0.00138 (0.0183)
Internal Efficacy			-0.0452** (0.0167)
External Efficacy			-0.0188 (0.0167)
Political Knowledge			0.0589*** (0.0140)
Attention to Government			0.255*** (0.0168)
Strength of Partisanship			0.174*** (0.0122)
Trust in Government			-0.00496 (0.0189)
Electoral Competitiveness			0.0213* (0.00908)
Party Mobilization			0.0138 (0.00877)
_cons	0.659*** (0.00898)	0.494*** (0.0341)	0.396*** (0.0391)
N	4152	3952	3360
adj. R^2	0.072	0.124	0.266

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses. Binary indicators for mean-replaced income and church attendance are shown. Source: ANES 2016 Time Series Studies. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

B.8. Perceived Partisan Polarization and Interest in the Campaign, 2016 Presidential Election

	(1) Interest in Campaign (Bivariate Model)	(2) Interest in Campaign (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Interest in Campaign (Full Covariates)
Party Polarization	0.268*** (0.0188)	0.206*** (0.0190)	0.0575*** (0.0174)
Gender (Female)		-0.0427*** (0.0103)	0.0101 (0.00924)
Age		0.434*** (0.0764)	0.243*** (0.0670)
Age²		-0.0944 (0.0706)	-0.0959 (0.0618)
Income Level		0.0364 (0.0207)	0.0122 (0.0183)
Income Dummy		-0.0440 (0.0328)	-0.0425 (0.0300)
Race (Non-white)		0.00468 (0.0118)	-0.000513 (0.0106)
Education		0.192*** (0.0249)	0.0113 (0.0227)
Church Attendance		0.0129 (0.0105)	0.00302 (0.00925)
Home Ownership		-0.0156 (0.0124)	-0.0118 (0.0109)
Employment Status		0.00920 (0.0236)	0.00993 (0.0205)
Internal Efficacy			-0.0360 (0.0186)
External Efficacy			-0.0190 (0.0186)
Political Knowledge			0.0457** (0.0157)
Attention to Government			0.705*** (0.0187)
Strength of Partisanship			0.0574*** (0.0136)
Trust in Government			0.0456* (0.0211)
Electoral Competitiveness			0.0125 (0.0101)
Party Mobilization			0.0118 (0.00978)
_cons	0.558*** (0.0115)	0.313*** (0.0427)	0.110* (0.0436)
N	4157	3955	3363
adj. R^2	0.047	0.142	0.435

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses. Binary indicators for mean-replaced income and church attendance are shown. Source: ANES 2016 Time Series Studies. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

B.9. Affective Polarization and Care about Electoral Outcome, 2016 Presidential Election

	(1) Care about Electoral Outcome (Bivariate Model)	(2) Care about Electoral Outcome (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Care about Electoral Outcome (Full Covariates)
Affective Polarization	0.362*** (0.0132)	0.337*** (0.0132)	0.227*** (0.0159)
Gender (Female)		0.00869 (0.00783)	0.0293*** (0.00807)
Age		0.103 (0.0578)	0.0285 (0.0584)
Age²		0.0273 (0.0534)	0.0348 (0.0539)
Income Level		0.0565*** (0.0156)	0.0328* (0.0159)
Income Dummy		-0.0338 (0.0247)	-0.0272 (0.0262)
Race (Non-white)		-0.00964 (0.00895)	-0.00579 (0.00927)
Education		0.165*** (0.0185)	0.0687*** (0.0196)
Church Attendance		0.0247** (0.00791)	0.0205* (0.00808)
Home Ownership		0.00571 (0.00935)	0.00458 (0.00952)
Employment Status		-0.0174 (0.0178)	-0.00902 (0.0178)
Internal Efficacy			-0.0430** (0.0163)
External Efficacy			-0.0246 (0.0162)
Political Knowledge			0.0628*** (0.0135)
Attention to Government			0.233*** (0.0165)
Strength of Partisanship			0.0953*** (0.0133)
Trust in Government			-0.00835 (0.0184)
Electoral Competitiveness			0.0133 (0.00882)
Party Mobilization			0.0138 (0.00853)
_cons	0.661*** (0.00647)	0.486*** (0.0318)	0.413*** (0.0377)
N	4170	3965	3363
adj. R^2	0.153	0.209	0.302

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses. Binary indicators for mean-replaced income and church attendance are shown. Source: ANES 2016 Time Series Studies. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

B.10. Affective Polarization and Interest in the Campaign, 2016 Presidential Election

	(1) Interest in Campaign (Bivariate Model)	(2) Interest in Campaign (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Interest in Campaign (Full Covariates)
Affective Polarization	0.307*** (0.0175)	0.261*** (0.0171)	0.0899*** (0.0181)
Gender (Female)		-0.0486*** (0.0102)	0.00711 (0.00920)
Age		0.404*** (0.0751)	0.235*** (0.0665)
Age²		-0.0840 (0.0694)	-0.0904 (0.0614)
Income Level		0.0556** (0.0202)	0.0223 (0.0181)
Income Dummy		-0.0401 (0.0321)	-0.0304 (0.0298)
Race (Non-white)		-0.00880 (0.0116)	-0.00257 (0.0106)
Education		0.220*** (0.0241)	0.0190 (0.0224)
Church Attendance		0.0133 (0.0103)	0.00489 (0.00921)
Home Ownership		-0.0132 (0.0122)	-0.00929 (0.0109)
Employment Status		0.00749 (0.0231)	0.0122 (0.0203)
Internal Efficacy			-0.0388* (0.0185)
External Efficacy			-0.0192 (0.0185)
Political Knowledge			0.0481** (0.0154)
Attention to Government			0.697*** (0.0188)
Strength of Partisanship			0.0367* (0.0152)
Trust in Government			0.0388 (0.0209)
Electoral Competitiveness			0.00918 (0.0101)
Party Mobilization			0.00851 (0.00972)
_cons	0.585*** (0.00858)	0.310*** (0.0414)	0.107* (0.0430)
N	4175	3970	3368
adj. R^2	0.069	0.170	0.440

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses. Binary indicators for mean-replaced income and church attendance are shown. Source: ANES 2016 Time Series Studies. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

B.11. Care about the Electoral Outcome and Voter Turnout in the 2016 Presidential Election

	(1) Voter Turnout (Bivariate Model)	(2) Voter Turnout (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Voter Turnout (Full Covariates)
Care about Electoral Outcome	0.589*** (0.0230)	0.467*** (0.0236)	0.356*** (0.0262)
Gender (Female)		0.0236 (0.0125)	0.0298* (0.0127)
Age		0.248** (0.0919)	0.208* (0.0918)
Age²		-0.0584 (0.0847)	-0.0715 (0.0847)
Income Level		0.130*** (0.0249)	0.108*** (0.0250)
Income Dummy		0.0115 (0.0397)	-0.00403 (0.0407)
Race (Non-white)		-0.0286* (0.0143)	-0.0254 (0.0145)
Education		0.222*** (0.0299)	0.167*** (0.0309)
Church Attendance		0.0441*** (0.0126)	0.0363** (0.0127)
Home Ownership		0.0531*** (0.0150)	0.0415** (0.0150)
Employment Status		-0.0108 (0.0281)	-0.00941 (0.0280)
Internal Efficacy			-0.0101 (0.0256)
External Efficacy			-0.0317 (0.0255)
Political Knowledge			0.0798*** (0.0214)
Attention to Government			0.0829** (0.0266)
Strength of Partisanship			0.153*** (0.0188)
Trust in Government			-0.0846** (0.0288)
Electoral Competitiveness			-0.0157 (0.0139)
Party Mobilization			0.0432** (0.0134)
_cons	0.313*** (0.0195)	0.0143 (0.0524)	0.0547 (0.0598)
N	3666	3499	3424
adj. R^2	0.152	0.221	0.244

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses. Binary indicators for mean-replaced income and church attendance are shown. Source: ANES 2016 Time Series Studies. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

B.12. Interest in the Campaign and Voter Turnout in the 2016 Presidential Election

	(1) Voter Turnout (Bivariate Model)	(2) Voter Turnout (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Voter Turnout (Full Covariates)
Interest in Campaign	0.374*** (0.0186)	0.275*** (0.0195)	0.185*** (0.0240)
Gender (Female)		0.0414** (0.0129)	0.0396** (0.0129)
Age		0.194* (0.0945)	0.184* (0.0935)
Age²		-0.0213 (0.0868)	-0.0523 (0.0861)
Income Level		0.147*** (0.0254)	0.118*** (0.0254)
Income Dummy		0.00433 (0.0407)	-0.0128 (0.0414)
Race (Non-white)		-0.0282 (0.0147)	-0.0251 (0.0148)
Education		0.243*** (0.0307)	0.183*** (0.0314)
Church Attendance		0.0547*** (0.0129)	0.0424** (0.0129)
Home Ownership		0.0586*** (0.0154)	0.0434** (0.0152)
Employment Status		-0.0128 (0.0288)	-0.0105 (0.0284)
Internal Efficacy			-0.0207 (0.0261)
External Efficacy			-0.0367 (0.0260)
Political Knowledge			0.0952*** (0.0217)
Attention to Government			0.0479 (0.0311)
Strength of Partisanship			0.207*** (0.0186)
Trust in Government			-0.0902** (0.0292)
Electoral Competitiveness			-0.0115 (0.0141)
Party Mobilization			0.0451*** (0.0137)
_cons	0.521*** (0.0147)	0.175*** (0.0524)	0.186** (0.0599)
N	3673	3504	3429
adj. R^2	0.099	0.180	0.216

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses. Binary indicators for mean-replaced income and church attendance are shown. Source: ANES 2016 Time Series Studies. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

B.13. Voter Turnout, Perceived Partisan Polarization, and Affective Polarization, 2016 Presidential Election

	(1) Voter Turnout (Bivariate Model)	(2) Voter Turnout (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Voter Turnout (Full Covariates)
Party Polarization	0.234*** (0.0253)	0.142*** (0.0254)	0.0959*** (0.0253)
Affect Polarization	0.207*** (0.0238)	0.189*** (0.0233)	0.0475 (0.0265)
Gender (Female)		0.0249 (0.0130)	0.0369** (0.0131)
Age		0.347*** (0.0958)	0.274** (0.0948)
Age²		-0.106 (0.0885)	-0.114 (0.0876)
Income Level		0.142*** (0.0260)	0.117*** (0.0259)
Income Dummy		-0.0215 (0.0421)	-0.0203 (0.0424)
Race (Non-white)		-0.0318* (0.0150)	-0.0240 (0.0151)
Education		0.251*** (0.0314)	0.176*** (0.0321)
Church Attendance		0.0484*** (0.0131)	0.0364** (0.0131)
Home Ownership		0.0543*** (0.0156)	0.0402** (0.0155)
Employment Status		-0.00483 (0.0294)	-0.00242 (0.0290)
Internal Efficacy			-0.0129 (0.0264)
External Efficacy			-0.0439 (0.0263)
Political Knowledge			0.0894*** (0.0222)
Attention to Government			0.171*** (0.0268)
Strength of Partisanship			0.183*** (0.0218)
Trust in Government			-0.0800** (0.0299)
Electoral Competitiveness			-0.00915 (0.0143)
Party Mobilization			0.0453** (0.0138)
_cons	0.582*** (0.0157)	0.206*** (0.0546)	0.175** (0.0618)
N	3527	3374	3313
adj. R^2	0.062	0.164	0.205

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses. Binary indicators for mean-replaced income and church attendance are shown. Source: ANES 2016 Time Series Studies. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

B.14. Voter Turnout, Perceived Partisan Polarization, Affective Polarization, Care about Electoral Outcome, Interest in the Campaign, 2016 Presidential Election

	(1) Voter Turnout (Bivariate Model)	(2) Voter Turnout (Demographic Covariates)	(3) Voter Turnout (Full Covariates)
Party Polarization	0.142*** (0.0241)	0.0896*** (0.0246)	0.0695** (0.0248)
Affect Polarization	0.0320 (0.0239)	0.0545* (0.0239)	-0.0272 (0.0265)
Care about Electoral Outcome	0.415*** (0.0282)	0.348*** (0.0283)	0.321*** (0.0287)
Interest in Campaign	0.175*** (0.0209)	0.119*** (0.0214)	0.0902*** (0.0251)
Gender (Female)		0.0284* (0.0126)	0.0273* (0.0128)
Age		0.257** (0.0926)	0.240** (0.0927)
Age²		-0.0976 (0.0853)	-0.114 (0.0856)
Income Level		0.123*** (0.0251)	0.106*** (0.0253)
Income Dummy		-0.00453 (0.0405)	-0.00881 (0.0414)
Race (Non-white)		-0.0276 (0.0145)	-0.0228 (0.0147)
Education		0.181*** (0.0305)	0.155*** (0.0314)
Church Attendance		0.0385** (0.0127)	0.0299* (0.0128)
Home Ownership		0.0516*** (0.0150)	0.0397** (0.0151)
Employment Status		-0.00327 (0.0283)	-0.00162 (0.0283)
Internal Efficacy			0.00228 (0.0258)
External Efficacy			-0.0347 (0.0257)
Political Knowledge			0.0682** (0.0217)
Attention to Government			0.0344 (0.0311)
Strength of Partisanship			0.151*** (0.0214)
Trust in Government			-0.0843** (0.0292)
Electoral Competitiveness			-0.0149 (0.0140)
Party Mobilization			0.0405** (0.0135)
_cons	0.241*** (0.0217)	0.0120 (0.0539)	0.0419 (0.0613)
N	3524	3371	3310
adj. R²	0.172	0.226	0.244

Table shows coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses. Binary indicators for mean-replaced income and church attendance are shown. Source: ANES 2016 Time Series Studies. * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

B.15. Descriptive Statistics for all Survey Variables, 2016 Presidential Election

	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Voter Turnout	3673	.786006	.4101785	0	1
Party Polarization	4157	.5481517	.2788533	0	1
Affect Polarization	4175	.3925749	.2951221	0	1
Interest in the Campaign	4270	.7001171	.3479182	0	1
Care about Electoral Outcome	4263	.8000821	.2753703	0	1
Gender (Female)	4218	.5289237	.4992219	0	1
Age	4149	.5366353	.2853213	0	1
Age²	4149	.3693661	.3103358	0	1
Income Level	4258	.5323313	.2924595	0	1
Income Dummy	4270	.9555035	.2062196	0	1
Race (Non-white)	4270	.2885246	.4531294	0	1
Education	4231	.6423068	.2308106	0	1
Church Attendance	4251	.6000941	.4899364	0	1
Home Ownership	4234	.6235239	.4845589	0	1
Employment Status	4254	.3017944	.2342662	0	1
Internal Efficacy	3633	.4465318	.264607	0	1
External Efficacy	3629	.6056421	.2549382	0	1
Political Knowledge	3648	.5221217	.3281362	0	1
Attention to Government	4270	.6236534	.2754225	0	1
Strength of Partisanship	4247	.6245193	.3562209	0	1
Trust in Government	4248	.3614054	.2234698	0	1
Electoral Competitiveness	4243	.2750412	.4465877	0	1
Party Mobilization	3645	.3231824	.4677559	0	1
N	4270				

Source: ANES 2016 Time Series Studies.

B.16. Descriptive Statistics for all Survey Variables, 2008 Presidential Election

	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Voter Turnout	2102	.762607	.4255863	0	1
Party Polarization	2100	.4815079	.2924587	0	1
Affect Polarization	2243	.3623585	.302634	0	1
Interest in the Campaign	1178	.6494058	.3566394	0	1
Care about Electoral Outcome	2313	.8058798	.3956074	0	1
Gender (Female)	2322	.5697674	.4952152	0	1
Age	2300	.3877075	.2586057	0	1
Age²	2300	.2171649	.2344564	0	1
Income Level	2322	.5268806	.2516069	0	1
Income Dummy	2322	.9211886	.2695022	0	1
Race (Non-white)	2311	.3760277	.4844919	0	1
Education	2308	.4896014	.2597382	0	1
Church Attendance	2316	.6632124	.4727136	0	1
Home Ownership	2313	.6156507	.4865463	0	1
Employment Status	2317	.3100993	.244199	0	1
Internal Efficacy	2320	.4159483	.3030568	0	1
External Efficacy	2316	.3868739	.2894741	0	1
Attention to Government	2099	.4673654	.2516765	0	1
Strength of Partisanship	2282	.6180251	.3442185	0	1
Trust in Government	2090	.4074163	.204175	0	1
Electoral Competitiveness	2271	.2448261	.4300787	0	1
Party Mobilization	2102	.4134158	.4925633	0	1
N	2322				

Source: ANES 2008 Time Series Studies.

B.17. Descriptive Statistics for all Survey Variables, 2000 Presidential Election

	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Voter Turnout	1554	.7606178	.4268438	0	1
Party Polarization	1343	.4887069	.2406917	0	1
Affect Polarization	1731	.3041421	.2636287	0	1
Interest in the Campaign	1555	.6344051	.3486592	0	1
Care about Electoral Outcome	1799	.7793218	.4148192	0	1
Gender (Female)	1807	.5628113	.4961764	0	1
Age	1798	.389726	.2559997	0	1
Age²	1798	.2173857	.2384945	0	1
Income Level	1807	.3686194	.2696973	0	1
Income Dummy	1807	.8384062	.3681797	0	1
Race (Non-white)	1766	.7887882	.4082839	0	1
Education	1800	.5481481	.2698422	0	1
Church Attendance	1794	.6962096	.4600215	0	1
Home Ownership	1792	.672433	.469457	0	1
Employment Status	1800	.3097222	.2430199	0	1
Internal Efficacy	1550	.4266129	.341445	0	1
External Efficacy	1551	.4182785	.3096088	0	1
Political Knowledge	1550	.5424194	.2393954	0	1
Attention to Government	1543	.5569238	.3224277	0	1
Strength of Partisanship	1776	.6049174	.3397554	0	1
Trust in Government	1545	.4901834	.1980239	0	1
Electoral Competitiveness	1778	.124297	.3300129	0	1
Party Mobilization	1553	.3779781	.4850383	0	1
N	1807				

Source: ANES 2000 Time Series Studies.

B.18. Descriptive Statistics for all Survey Variables, 1992 Presidential Election

	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Voter Turnout	2254	.7542147	.4306474	0	1
Party Polarization	1999	.4549775	.26722	0	1
Affect Polarization	2378	.281148	.250891	0	1
Interest in the Campaign	2475	.6078788	.3589126	0	1
Care about Electoral Outcome	2447	.7568451	.4290755	0	1
Gender (Female)	2485	.534004	.4989428	0	1
Age	2485	.1952808	.2671408	0	1
Age²	2485	.10947	.2023357	0	1
Income Level	2482	.5997618	.2824832	0	1
Income Dummy	2482	.9190169	.2728641	0	1
Race (Non-white)	2450	.1534694	.3605129	0	1
Education	2420	.4689394	.2818306	0	1
Church Attendance	2484	.8240741	.3808338	0	1
Church Dummy	2484	.5466989	.4979147	0	1
Home Ownership	2325	.6563441	.4750301	0	1
Employment Status	2483	.2341637	.2979794	0	1
Internal Efficacy	2237	.6284086	.3208449	0	1
External Efficacy	2223	.484368	.2913733	0	1
Political Knowledge	2248	.5839858	.1787853	0	1
Attention to Government	2240	.6110119	.3150057	0	1
Strength of Partisanship	2445	1.790184	.9945359	0	3
Trust in Government	2223	.4352977	.1870913	0	1
Electoral Competitiveness	2393	.1809444	.3850526	0	1
Party Mobilization	2250	.2008889	.4007542	0	1
N	2485				

Source: ANES 1992 Time Series Studies.

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