



What About *Affective* Polarization?

Morris P. Fiorina

We argue that affective polarization is largely distinct from the ideological divide, and that extremity in issue opinions is not a necessary condition for affective polarization.

—Shanto Iyengar and coauthors (my emphasis)¹

Highly sorted partisans will be biased against their out-party friends, neighbors, and romantic interests, no matter what they think about political issues.

—Lilliana Mason (my emphasis)²

Although seemingly contrarian, data-based arguments like those offered in our 2005 book *Culture War* generally were accepted as other scholars examined the data.³ Nevertheless, qualitative impressions of the toxic state of American politics seemed (and still seem) out of proportion to the actual differences that citizens expressed on public policy issues. Consequently, the discussion of polarization moved in a new direction, as indicated in the above quotes. Perhaps scholars were looking for the explanation of “toxic partisanship” in the wrong place. Maybe it was not something that existed on a cognitive level based on policy disagreements about what to do about healthcare, income inequality, gay rights, assault weapons, climate change, and myriad other issues. Maybe partisan polarization reflected more emotional, affective, gut-level feelings and beliefs about one’s party and the opposing party. The notion that partisan polarization was affectively based rather than cognitively based was particularly attractive to psychologically oriented scholars in the political behavior subfield who could bring an arsenal of psychological concepts and theories to bear on the question.

Although affective polarization struck me as a plausible hypothesis that deserved investigation, it made a quick transition from hypothesis to accepted finding not only across the research community in the United States but across similar communities around the world.⁴ It is a rare day that Google Scholar does not call attention to research reports on affective polarization not only in the usual Western European suspects but also in Chile, Israel, Serbia,

An Era of Unstable Majorities Continues: Essays on Contemporary American Politics

New Zealand, and numerous other faraway places.⁵ This rapid transition in the affective polarization research program brings to mind a runaway train that roared through a number of scientific stations where it should have at least slowed, if not stopped. Although I continue to believe that affective polarization deserves consideration as a plausible hypothesis, I also believe that its widespread acceptance has been too uncritical. This essay briefly raises several questions about the affective polarization research program proceeding from the obvious to the more fundamental.

THE CHASM BETWEEN DATA AND INTERPRETATIONS

*Over the past few decades American politics has become like a bitter sports rivalry, in which the parties hang together mainly out of **sheer hatred** of the other team.*

—Alan Abramowitz and Steven Webster (my emphasis)⁶

*Although most liberals feel conflicted about the Democratic party, they **really hate** the Republican Party. And even though most conservatives feel conflicted about the Republican Party, they **really hate** the Democratic Party.*

—Yascha Mounk (my emphasis)⁷

*Contemporary American politics is notable for its **staggeringly high levels** of division and **partisan antipathy**.*

—Steven Webster (my emphasis)⁸

*A **poisonous cocktail** of othering, aversion, and moralization poses a threat to democracy.*

—Eli J. Finkel and fourteen coauthors (my emphasis)⁹

Findings like these are very sobering. In a society full of such poisonous hatred, it's surprising that so many voters dare to leave their houses on Election Day. Are things really that bad?

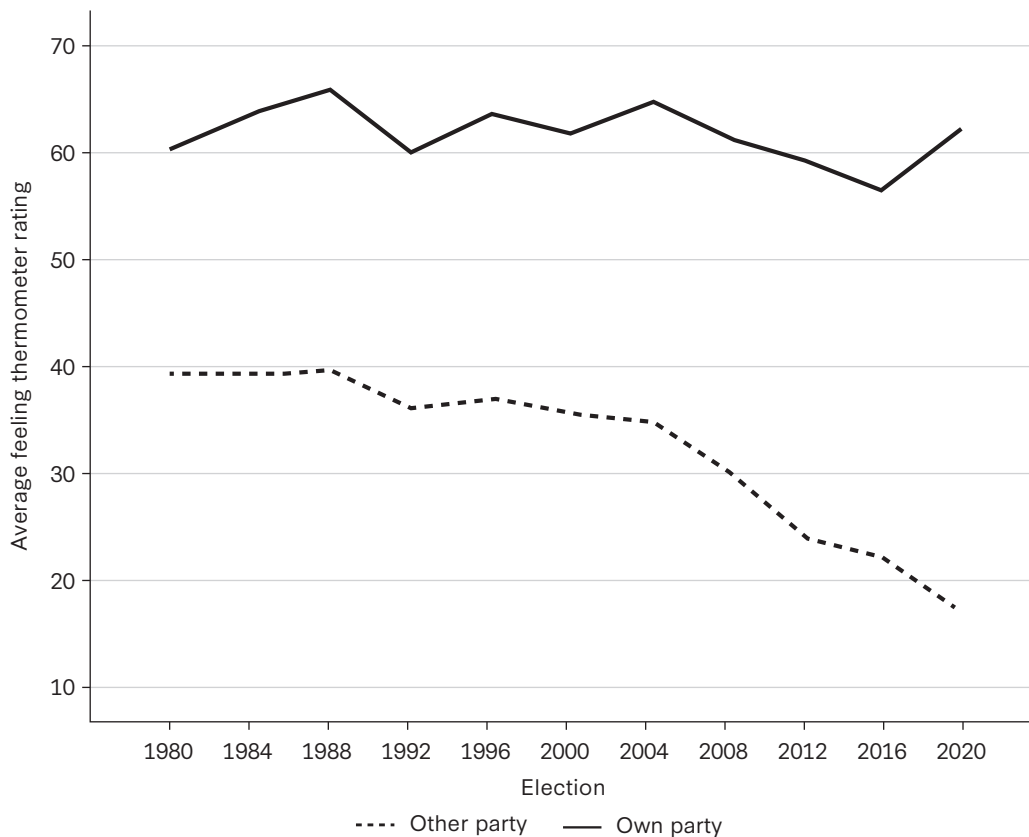
As Iyengar and colleagues note, the “most central” or “primary” measure of affective polarization is the American National Election Study (ANES) thermometer score.¹⁰ This survey item reads,

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.

Figure 1 shows that ratings of the opposition party have steadily declined since the late 1980s. These ratings are numbers, but whether those numbers constitute “hatred,” “loathing,” “staggeringly high antipathy,” or a “poisonous cocktail” are interpretations. I am sure that there are days when my wife rates me at 20 degrees (maybe even lower), but I doubt that she would say she loathes me even on such days. In fact, there are numerous reasons noted in the literature that suggest a significant gulf between the numbers elicited by measures of affective polarization and the all-too-common overheated interpretations of those numbers.¹¹

If one happens to watch a baseball game on TV, say the Giants versus the Dodgers, at some point in the game the camera will likely focus on two guys drinking beer and yukking it up, with one wearing a Dodgers jersey and the other a Giants jersey. If a scholar were to administer the thermometer measure, each fan probably would rate his friend’s fans at zero. This is an example of partisan “cheerleading,” a kind of expressive responding. Answering a question on a survey is basically costless—it is cheap talk. Why not just respond in a way that expresses some inner consideration, rather than a true belief? “Yea for my team, boo for yours,” as in this example.

FIGURE 1 Average thermometer ratings of parties



Source: Calculated by Alan Abramowitz from ANES surveys

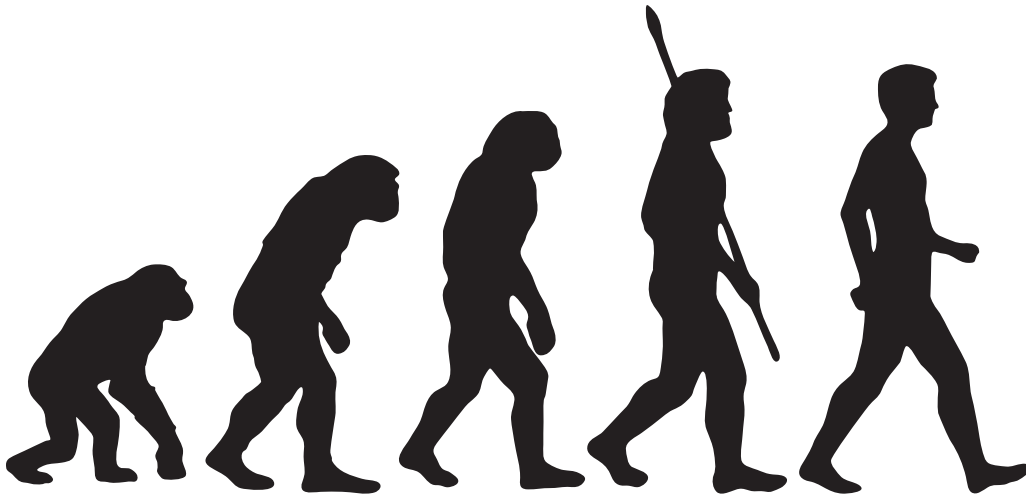
The most striking examples of expressive responding found in the literature are studies of partisan misperception. Various polls report disturbing partisan distortions of reality: half of Republicans claim that weapons of mass destruction actually were found in Iraq after the US invasion, and a majority of Democrats contend that inflation rose during the Reagan administration.¹² As it turns out, however, if respondents are paid for giving correct answers, nearly half the misperceptions disappear, suggesting that a significant number of people know the correct answer but take the opportunity to dump on the other team when there is no cost to indulging their partisanship and some psychological benefit in doing so.¹³ Studies that find little tendency to actually discriminate in behavior, despite a willingness to discriminate verbally, suggest that many such responses are expressive.¹⁴

Other researchers point out that in many surveys the partisan objects being rated are unclear. When Democrats rate “Republicans,” are they thinking of the neighbor with a Trump sign in his yard, or are they thinking of Donald Trump and Ann Coulter? When Republicans rate “Democrats,” are they thinking of the neighbor with a Harris bumper sticker on his car or Rachel Maddow and Joe Scarborough? Several studies find that ratings of ordinary partisans are much less polarized than ratings of partisan exemplars.¹⁵ Moreover, research shows that when queried simply about parties, voters seem to think of the exemplars, rather than ordinary Democrats and Republicans, suggesting that affective polarization of ordinary partisans is exaggerated.

A widely noted study by Ahler and Sood illustrates both cheerleading and party exemplars.¹⁶ The scholars asked people to estimate what proportions of Republicans and Democrats came from different social groups. The reported estimates were wildly inaccurate. For example, Republicans estimated that 38 percent of Democrats were LGBT and 36 percent were atheists or agnostics. The actual percentages at the time were 6 percent and 9 percent, respectively. Democrats in turn estimated that 44 percent of Republicans were senior citizens and that the same percentage made more than \$250,000 per year. The actual figures at the time were 21 percent and 2 percent, respectively. Do Republicans and Democrats really believe the numbers they report, or do Republicans find it satisfying to dismiss Democrats as gay atheists, while Democrats find it satisfying to dismiss Republicans as rich old bigots? And even among those who do believe such erroneous figures, are they basing their estimates on ordinary partisans they know or the exemplars they see on FOX and MSNBC?

In sum, the research literature provides reasons to believe that many reported findings on affective polarization exaggerate its extent and intensity. Yet, I am not aware of any findings that show the contrary: considerations that would lead to systematic understating rather than overstating affective polarization. This surely is good news. A country in which Republicans and Democrats loathe their neighbors in the other party is likely in more trouble than a country in which Republicans loathe America-hating atheists and Democrats hate evolution-denying racists. There is hope that the latter misperceptions may be countered, given that accurate data can overcome them, at least in theory, although studies suggest that it is difficult in practice.¹⁷

FIGURE 2 Ascent of Man Scale



Source: Alvaro Cabrera Jimenez/Shutterstock.com.

BEYOND THERMOMETERS

Affective polarization among ordinary citizens has reached the point where party affiliation is now a litmus test for interpersonal relations.

—Shanto Iyengar and Masha Krupenkin¹⁸

Although thermometer ratings are the “workhorse” measure of affective polarization, the preceding cautions against too literal interpretations of those scores apply to other measures as well. For example, going back to the two baseball fans in the preceding section, I suspect that if I were to show them another measure, the Ascent of Man Scale (figure 2), each would likely say that the other team’s fans look like one of the monkey or ape figures on the far left. Such responses obviously should not be taken at face value without further analysis.

The same goes for various “social distance” measures. A decade ago, my friend Shanto Iyengar became the envy of his colleagues for a study that achieved widespread notice in the professional and popular media.¹⁹ He reported that in 1960 the proportion of parents who would be upset if a child married someone of the other party was a trivial 5 percent for Republicans and 4 percent for Democrats. Fifty years later, those figures had surged: one-quarter of Republicans and one-fifth of Democrats would now be upset.²⁰ Talk about affective party polarization! Contemporary American parents would prefer that a child marry across racial lines than partisan lines. Although the study has been subject to some qualifications, I focus here on the question of taking the reported figures at face value.²¹

Eitan Hersh administered a survey in six New England states, New York, and Pennsylvania. Respondents who were asked Iyengar’s question about marrying someone from the other

TABLE 1 WOULD YOU BE UPSET IF YOUR CHILD MARRIED A ____?

	Iyengar (%)	Hersh (%)
Democrat	20	19
Republican	27	32
Red Sox fan		17
Yankee fan		18
Phillies fan		20
Mets fan		20

Source: See Hersh 2016, note 22

party gave answers roughly in line with Iyengar’s findings (table 1), with northeastern Democrats (Hersh’s findings) expressing even more negativity toward having a Republican in-law than did Democrats nationally.

Hersh also asked respondents whether they were baseball fans. A bit less than 60 percent said yes, about the same proportion as claiming a Republican or Democratic party identification. He then asked Red Sox fans whether they would object to a child marrying a Yankee fan, and vice versa, and Phillies fans whether they would object to a child marrying a Mets fan, and vice versa. Hersh’s results were just a bit lower than Iyengar’s marriage figures but in the same ballpark. About one out of five parents would object to a child marrying across fandom lines. Yet, rather than writing that baseball fandom was much more divisive than previously recognized, Hersh states, “What’s likely happening here is that in both cases of sports and politics, these survey respondents are offering a lot of hot air. . . . It’s not that partisans actually hate each other (as the social identity perspective typically infers), but rather that they permit themselves to play a role in a game.”²²

Other evidence supports Hersh’s view that the aversion to interparty marriages is exaggerated. *Washington Post* reporters found a 1939 survey that queried respondents about the importance of eighteen desirable marriage qualities in a partner.²³ In 1939 “similar political background” ranked dead last and only rose one rank by 2013. Also of interest were the qualities that changed most over seven decades. Among women, the biggest gainer was education/intelligence, which rose from rank 11 to 4; the second-biggest gainer was “good looks,” which rose from rank 14 to rank 8. So, according to this survey, American women would much rather marry a smart hunk than someone who shares their partisanship.²⁴

HAS ANYONE ACTUALLY MEASURED AFFECTIVE POLARIZATION?

Affective polarization is increasingly studied comparatively, and virtually all studies that do so operationalize it using the feeling thermometer. Yet this survey instrument has not yet been validated in a multi-party context.

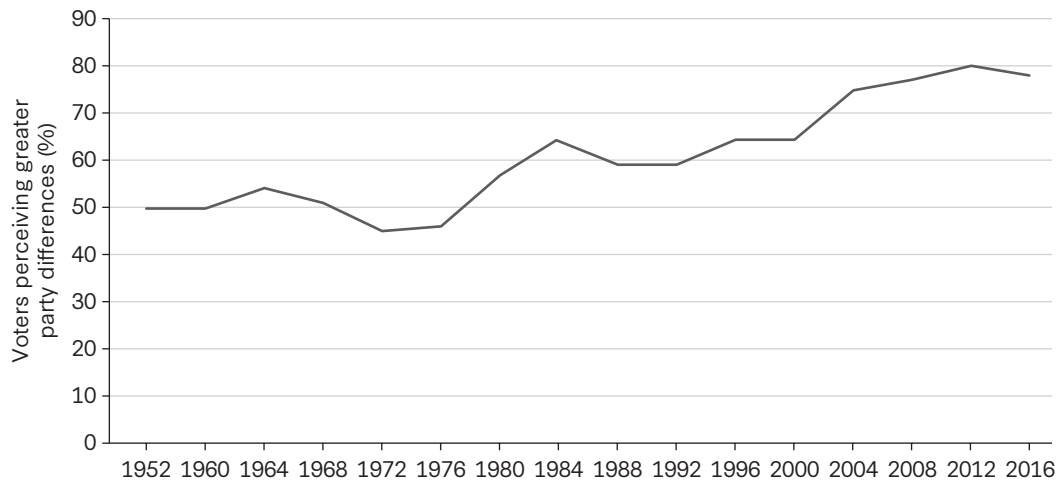
—Noam Gidron, Lior Sheffer, and Guy Mor²⁵

Indeed! But not only in a multiparty context: Has the feeling thermometer been validated in *any* context as a measure of affect?²⁶ When first encountering the flood of affective polarization studies, I assumed that I had somehow overlooked a line of research demonstrating that thermometer scores were valid measures of affect. During my 1980s stint on the ANES board, we viewed thermometer ratings as *left-hand-side* variables.²⁷ By that time, political methods scholars were advising the research community to use limited dependent variable methods, such as logit and probit, when analyzing binary variables like the Democratic or Republican vote choice or ordinal variables like a strongly approve to strongly disapprove approval scale. Thermometer ratings provided a continuous measure that could be analyzed with standard statistical methods.²⁸ What factors contributed to the scores would be determined analytically by putting explanatory variables on the right-hand side. As best as I recall, there was no presumption that affective variables were the primary determinants of thermometer responses. In fact, affect and trait batteries were added to the ANES time series in the 1990s as a response to complaints from the community that the survey was lacking in affective measures.

There is good evidence that the survey instrument is reliable.²⁹ However, despite being used for more than a decade as a measure of affective polarization, only recently have there been serious attempts to assess whether the thermometer scale has construct validity: Does it measure affect and not something else or in addition to something else?³⁰ Does Donald Trump earn a low rating because of his crude remarks and questionable personal history or because the respondent disagrees with Trump's positions on the issues? Did Joe Biden earn a low rating because of his age-related verbal gaffes or because the respondent disagreed with Biden's spending and border policies? My first reaction to trends like those in figure 1 was akin to those of Rogowski and Sutherland, Bougher, and Abramowitz and Webster.³¹ As figure 3 shows, voters now perceive that party differences are much greater than in earlier decades, an accurate recognition of the sorting described in Essay 2, "Once More Unto the Breach: Is America Polarized?" One need not resort to any psychological theories to infer that people who disagree with others will like the others less than if they agreed with them.³² But no, say affective polarization researchers. Affective partisanship occurs in addition to or even unrelated to issue disagreement.

Only recently have scholars begun to conduct a serious conversation about the construct validity of thermometer scores. In an impressive series of articles, members of a new generation of scholars have moved our understanding of thermometer scores (and other measures of affective polarization) forward.³³ Although this is a welcome development, such a

FIGURE 3 Americans See That the Parties Have Become More Distinct



Source: Data from ANES

conversation should have begun a decade ago before the affective polarization train was let loose on the tracks. The conversation is still ongoing, but it currently suggests that policy considerations clearly make a significant contribution to measures of affective polarization.

PARTISANSHIP AS SOCIAL IDENTITY

The psychological theory most often cited in support of studies of affective polarization is social identity theory.³⁴ As one proponent writes, “We suggest that the *cumulative* relationship between social identities and partisan identities creates a generalized politicization of Americans’ otherwise nonpolitical identities.”³⁵ The key part of the argument for a social identity theory of contemporary partisanship is that, more than in the past, group identities today “stack up” or reinforce, rather than crosscut. A consequence of this “great alignment” partisanship has become a “mega-identity” that subsumes other group identities: “one tribe to bind them all.”³⁶

There are some questions about applying social identity theory to contemporary partisanship. For one thing, the theory posits that in-group feelings are stronger than out-group feelings, but most empirical studies report the opposite.³⁷ As figure 1 shows, own-party ratings have changed little, but other-party ratings have dropped significantly; thus, heightened partisan hostility would seem to be more a product of out-party feelings. Some studies note this conflict between theory and data but then quickly move on. Another problem is that Tajfel (the seminal figure in social identity theory) defined an attitude as having affective, cognitive, and evaluative dimensions, a definition that seems in some conflict with the argument that the affective and cognitive are independent or can be cleanly separated.³⁸ Nevertheless, studies of affective polarization typically doff their hat to social identity theory without attempting to resolve these apparent conflicts between theory and empirical findings.

Another problem involves empirical findings that in combination do not seem consistent with the theory or with each other. If today's partisanship is a widespread mega-identity, why do significantly fewer people express such an identity now compared to the past? During the mid-twentieth century, fully three-quarters of the electorate claimed to be either Republicans or Democrats. Today that figure stands lower than 60 percent. One school of thought rejects voters' responses, arguing that many independents are actually closet partisans; therefore, if leaning independents are reclassified as partisans, today's electorate is equally as partisan as that in the 1950s.³⁹ The evidence for that position is weaker than commonly believed, but even if we were to accept that argument, it leads to an obvious next question: If that identity is so important, why do significant numbers of people keep it in the closet? Wouldn't people proudly display their mega-identity? Diehard Yankee fans wear their jerseys into Fenway Park (at some risk to life and limb) and ditto for Red Sox fans at Yankee Stadium.

In sum, the social-identity-based literature on partisan identities claims that

1. most people have deep partisan (mega) identities,
2. but significant numbers of these people (independent leaners) will not admit that they hold such identities,
3. and even partisans who have these identities don't like potential in-laws who talk about them.⁴⁰

There seems to be some tensions here.

I hasten to emphasize that none of this is to deny the existence of partisan identities. Such identities were common in my parents' and grandparents' generations. They were Catholics, the men belonged to unions, and they were Democrats. These partisan identities seemed to my young ears equally as strong as the social group identities that underlay them. I can recall loud arguments at family get-togethers when younger members of the family mused about voting for Eisenhower. But I rarely see such identities today. What I see are partisan self-classifications largely based on what the two parties stand for.⁴¹

WHY WERE NONIDENTITY CONCEPTS OF PARTISAN IDENTIFICATION EVER ADOPTED?

Identity-based concepts of party identification are now widely accepted, but why were they ever abandoned by some and at least questioned by others in the first place? The Michigan School's conception of party identity was rooted in the idea of social groups.⁴² True, the idea was not very well developed, but the Michigan conception and today's social identity approach clearly share a common lineage. Why then did our leading journals publish four articles in a five-year period by then-younger scholars (excepting Converse) that attempted to ground partisan identification in political factors such as issues, ideology, and performance?⁴³

1. John Jackson, "Issues, Party Choices, and Presidential Votes," *American Journal of Political Science*, 1975
2. Morris Fiorina, "An Outline for a Model of Party Choice," *American Journal of Political Science*, 1977
3. Benjamin Page and Calvin Jones, "Reciprocal Effects of Policy Preferences, Party Loyalties, and the Vote," *American Political Science Review*, 1979
4. Gregory Markus and Philip Converse, "A Dynamic Simultaneous Equations Model of the Electoral Choice," *American Political Science Review*, 1979

To that generation of scholars, the Michigan School's conception of party ID in particular and voting behavior in general appeared inconsistent with the political turmoil that was occurring in the 1960s and early 1970s (table 2).

George Wallace, a segregationist, got 14 percent of the national vote in 1968 and made serious inroads into the Democratic blue-collar base. The Democrats lost nearly 40 percent of their 1964 vote eight years later as racial issues and the Vietnam war disrupted the New Deal coalition. Why were voters in those elections seemingly paying more attention to issues and performance and less to group identities than earlier research had concluded? Party ID was thought to be the "unmoved mover," but Democratic ID surged 5 percent in 1964 and then plunged 12 percent in eight years from its 1964 high. Why were the numbers of political independents growing? Was partisan identification really something learned at an early age and largely devoid of political content?

Political change then caused scholars to think differently. Someday the present era of electoral stasis will end. And when rapid political change next occurs, how will social identity scholars explain it? When the associations between particular social identities and parties change, as they did a half-century ago, what will be the reason given?⁴⁴ The answer is very likely again to be issues and performance that disrupted the prevailing associations between

TABLE 2 THE CHAOTIC SIXTIES

Year	Democratic presidential vote (%)	Democratic party ID (%)
1960	49.7	47
1964	61.1	52
1968	42.7	46
1972	37.5	40

Source: Author's compilation

parties and social groups. As Levendusky concludes, the affective and ideological are inextricably linked.⁴⁵

CODA

This essay raises scientific questions about the affective polarization program. It did not address another large literature that takes existing findings at face value and proceeds to the conclusion that levels of affective polarization pose a threat to the very survival of our democracy.⁴⁶ I will not enter this intellectual thicket, because discussion of the consequences of affective polarization before we have accurately described and analyzed it is premature. But it is worth making one observation that comes from considering the United States in a comparative context. As noted in an earlier footnote, comparative studies using the thermometer measure place the United States near the middle of twenty developed democracies—one study puts the US in thirteenth place.⁴⁷ The most affective polarized democracy—Switzerland! An uncritical acceptance of thermometer scores in particular and of affective polarization research findings in general suggests that a long-standing democracy, located in the heart of Western Europe, actually is a boiling kettle of resentments. Who knew?

NEXT: ECONOMIC ANXIETY OR CULTURAL BACKLASH: WHICH IS KEY TO TRUMP'S SUPPORT?

NOTES

1. Shanto Iyengar, Yphtach Lelkes, Matthew Levendusky, Neil Malhotra, and Sean J. Westwood, "The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States," *Annual Review of Political Science* 22, no. 3 (2019): 129–46.
2. Lilliana Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018). Quote on p. 72. Mason is referring to social sorting here, not the issue and ideological sorting discussed in Essay 2.
3. "On one side of the debate scholars examined how raw attitudes approached bimodality. That is, were Americans moving toward the extremes of the distribution? Studies have consistently shown that this is not the case at the level of the mass public." Bert Bakker and Yphtach Lelkes, "Putting the Affect into Affective Polarisation," *Cognition and Emotion* 38, no. 4 (2024): 418–36.
4. Historical note: at the suggestion of Sam Popkin, I briefly considered this possibility in *Culture War*, not finding much supporting evidence at that time. Morris P. Fiorina, with Samuel J. Abrams and Jeremy Pope, *Culture War: The Myth of a Polarized America*, 3rd ed. (New York: Longman, 2005), 42–43.
5. For myriad citations, see Bakker and Lelkes, "Putting the Affect," 4.
6. Alan Abramowitz and Steven Webster, "Negative Partisanship Explains Everything," *Politico*, September 5, 2017, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/09/05/negative-partisanship-explains-everything-215534/>.
7. Yascha Mounk, "Republicans Don't Understand Democrats—and Democrats Don't Understand Republicans," *The Atlantic*, June 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/06/republicans-and-democrats-dont-understand-each-other/592324/>.
8. Steven Webster, "The Role of Political Elites in Eliciting Mass-Level Political Anger," *The Forum*, 19, no. 3 (2021): 17, <https://doi.org/10.1515/for-2021-0023/>. Actually, levels of affective polarization in the United States are only middling compared to other democracies. One study found that the United States

- ranked thirteenth of twenty developed democracies. See Noam Gidron, James Adams, and Will Horne, "Toward a Comparative Research Agenda on Affective Polarization in Mass Publics," 2019, <https://scholar.harvard.edu/gidron/publications/toward-comparative-research-agenda-affective-polarization-mass-publics>.
9. Eli J. Finkel, Christopher A. Bail, Mina Cikara, Peter H. Ditto, Shanto Iyengar, Samara Klar, Lilliana Mason, et al., "Political Sectarianism in America," *Science* 370, no. 6516 (2020): 533-36.
 10. Iyengar et al., "Origins and Consequences," 3.
 11. Interestingly, a recent study of US and Israeli respondents concluded that disappointment, not hatred, was the predominant negative emotion underlying affective polarization. Mabelle Kretchner, Julia Elad-Strenger, Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, Tal Orian-Harel, and Eran Halperin, "The Disappointing (Not Hateful) Divide: Uncovering the Negative Emotions That Underlie Affective Polarization," January 2024, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/377656238_The_Disappointing_Not_Hateful_Divide_Uncovering_the_Negative_Emotions_That_Underlie_Affective_Polarization.
 12. Among other distortions of political reality. See Christopher H. Achen and Larry M. Bartels, *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 277-78.
 13. Markus Prior, Gaurav Sood, and Kabir Khanna, "You Cannot be Serious: The Impact of Accuracy Incentives on Partisan Bias in Reports of Economic Perceptions," *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 10 (2015):489-518; John G. Bullock, Alan S. Gerber, Seth J. Hill, and Gregory A. Huber, "Partisan Bias in Factual Beliefs About Politics," *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 10 (2015):519-78. For a dissenting view, see Erik Peterson and Shanto Iyengar, "Partisan Gaps in Political Information and Information-Seeking Behavior: Motivated Reasoning or Cheerleading?" *American Journal of Political Science* 65, no. 1 (2021): 133-47.
 14. Yphtach Lelkes and Sean J. Westwood, "The Limits of Partisan Prejudice," *Journal of Politics* 79, no. 2 (2017): 485-501.
 15. James N. Druckman and Matthew S. Levendusky, "What Do We Measure When We Measure Affective Polarization?" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 83 (2019):114-22; James N. Druckman, Samara Klar, Yanna Krupnikov, Matthew Levendusky, and John Barry Ryan, "(Mis)estimating Affective Polarization," *Journal of Politics* 84, no. 2 (2022): 1106-17; Jon Kingzette, "Who Do You Loathe? Feelings Toward Politicians vs. Ordinary People in the Opposing Party," *Journal of Experimental Political Science* 8, no. 1 (2021): 75-84.
 16. Douglas Ahler and Gaurav Sood, "The Parties in Our Heads: Misperceptions About Party Composition and Their Consequences," *Journal of Politics* 80 (3): 964-81.
 17. Rachel Hartman, Will Blakey, Jake Womick, Chris Bail, Eli J. Finkel, Hahrie Han, John Sarrouf, et al., "Interventions to Reduce Partisan Animosity," under review.
 18. Shanto Iyengar and Masha Krupenkin, "The Strengthening of Partisan Affect," *Advances in Political Psychology* 30 (2018):201-18.
 19. Shanto Iyengar, Guarav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes, "Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Polarization," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76 (2012): 405-31.
 20. In another survey that used the adverb "unhappy" rather than "upset," the figures were even higher.
 21. Most prominently, Klar, Krupnikov, and Ryan replicated Iyengar's experiment but added the proviso that the prospective marriage partner talked about politics a lot. Parents even objected to a child marrying someone of their own party if the person talked a lot about politics. Samara Klar, Yanna Krupnikov, and John Barry Ryan, "Affective Polarization or Partisan Disdain? Untangling a Dislike for the Opposing Party from a Dislike of Partisanship," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 82 (2018):379-90.
 22. Eitan Hersh, "What the Yankees-Red Sox Rivalry Can Teach Us About Political Polarization," 2016, <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/what-the-yankees-red-sox-rivalry-can-teach-us-about-political-polarization/>.
 23. Ana Swanson, "What Men and Women Wanted in a Spouse in 1939—and How Different It Is Today," *Washington Post*, April 19, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/04/19/what-men-and-women-wanted-in-a-spouse-in-1939-and-how-different-it-is-today/>.

24. These findings identify a problem for women: if popular stereotypes are at all accurate, intellectual capacity and hunky-ness are negatively correlated. Meanwhile, among men, good looks rose only from seventeenth place to twelfth.
25. Noam Gidron, Lior Sheffer, and Guy Mor, "Validating the Feeling Thermometer as a Measure of Affect in Multi-Party Systems," *Electoral Studies* 80, no. 2 (2022), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0261379422000981>.
26. This omission has been noted only recently in the psychometric literature as well: "There has been little analysis of content validity, item wording, or construct validity." See Brandon McMurtrie, Michael Phillipp, Ross Hebden, and Matt Williams, "Development and Validation of the Affective Polarization Scale," *International Review of Social Psychology* 37, no. 1 (2024): 1-16.
27. Generally referred to as dependent variables at the time. The term "outcome variables" has come into use more recently.
28. Not really but close enough for most researchers.
29. Matthew Tyler and Shanto Iyengar, "Testing the Robustness of the ANES Feeling Thermometer Indicators of Affective Polarization," *American Political Science Review* 118, no. 3 (2024): 1570-76.
30. Recall an analogous discussion of the racial resentment measure in the preceding essay.
31. Jon C. Rogowski and Joseph L. Sutherland, "How Ideology Fuels Affective Polarization," *Political Behavior* 38 (2016):485-508; Lori Bougher, "The Correlates of Discord: Identity, Issue Alignment, and Political Hostility in Polarized America," *Political Behavior* 39 (2017):731-62; Steven W. Webster and Alan J. Abramowitz, "The Ideological Foundations of Affective Polarization in the U.S.," *American Politics Research* 45 (2017):621-47.
32. When I try to explain the concept of affective polarization to "normal" people, I often get the reaction, "Why would I dislike someone if I didn't disagree with them about anything important?"
33. In order, see Yphtach Lelkes, "Affective Polarization and Ideological Sorting: A Reciprocal, Albeit Weak, Relationship," *The Forum* 16 (2018):67-79; Lilla V. Orr and Gregory A. Huber, "The Policy Basis of Measured Partisan Animosity in the United States," *American Journal of Political Science* 64 (2020):569-86; Nicholas Dias and Yphtach Lelkes, "The Nature of Affective Polarization: Disentangling Policy Disagreement from Partisan Identity," *American Journal of Political Science* 66 (2022):775-90; Lilla V. Orr, Anthony Fowler, and Gregory A. Huber, "Is Affective Polarization Driven by Identity, Loyalty, or Substance?" *American Journal of Political Science* 67 (2023):948-62.
34. Henri Tajfel and John Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, edited by William G. Austin and Stephen Worchel (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1979), 33-47.
35. Alan Abramowitz, *The Great Alignment: Race, Party Transformation, and the Rise of Donald Trump* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Lilliana Mason and Julie Wronski, "One Tribe to Bind Them All: How Our Social Group Attachments Strengthen Partisanship," *Advances in Political Psychology* 39 suppl. (2018): 257-77 [their emphasis].
36. Mason and Wronski, "One Tribe."
37. There are some exceptions. See, for example, Karyn Amira, Jennifer Cole Wright, and Daniela Goya-Tocchetto, "In-Group Love Versus Out-Group Hate: Which Is More important to Partisans and When?" *Political Behavior* 43, no. 2 (2021): 473-94; Bakker and Lelkes, "Putting the Affect," 8-9.
38. Viktoria Kaina, "How to Reduce Disorder in European Identity Research," *European Political Science* 12 (2012):184-96.
39. See chapter 6 of Morris Fiorina, *Unstable Majorities* (Stanford CA: Hoover Press, 2017). I am not aware of any other case in which a voter says, "I am this," and the analyst peeks at the dependent variable and says, "No you're not; I'm recoding you as a that." The authors of the *American Voter* considered defining partisanship by a respondent's vote but rejected the idea. Angus Campbell, Philip Converse, Warren Miller, and Donald Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York: Wiley, 1960), 122.
40. Klar, Krupnikov, and Ryan, "Affective Polarization or Partisan Disdain?"

41. For a thoughtful treatment of how party labels interact with policy, see Paul M. Sniderman and Joseph H. Stiglitz, *The Reputational Premium* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), especially chaps. 3 and 4.
42. Campbell et al., *The American Voter*, 120–22, 327–31.
43. To rephrase the question in today’s professional argot, What caused revisionists to reconceptualize party ID as endogenous to issues, ideology, or performance?
44. Currently some polling data has stimulated discussion about a potential weakening of the link between African American and Hispanic racial identity and support for Democrats, especially among working-class males.
45. Matthew Levendusky, *Our Common Bonds* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023), 129.
46. For example, see Finkel et al., “Political Sectarianism in America.”
47. Gidron, Adams, and Horne, “Toward a Comparative Research Agenda,” table 1.



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