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Political polarization : an exploration of its effects on congressional action and public opinion.

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I. Introduction

It should come as no surprise that the 112th Congress, which met from January 2011 until the beginning of January 2013, was one of the least productive in American history. In a time of bitter political polarization, getting even the simplest bills to pass in the House or Senate quickly escalates into a battle. Our lawmakers attempt to shape policy based on their differences rather than their commonalities as Americans. Their actions are guided by the interests of their party, not their constituents' interest. Partisan polarization in Congress leads to gridlock, which decreases the overall productivity and effectiveness of the legislative branch. In my quest to show how polarization shapes the outcomes of congressional activity as well as public opinion, I will take several steps.

Part one will review previous works on the topic. I will explore the Framers' views on partisanship, the relationship between congressional and public polarization and the effects of such polarization, and lastly, the roots of polarization. In part two of this paper, I will discuss case studies of polarization in Congress. I will discuss the Civil Rights Act of 1964, welfare reform in 1996, and the failure of comprehensive immigration reform in 2007; each of these bills illustrates the effects of partisanship on congressional outcomes. I will discuss the effect of polarization on Congressional productivity by exploring processes used to pass or bury major pieces of legislation in each of the aforementioned decades. In part three, I will conduct research on the partisanship of the public and its relationship to public opinion using American National Election Studies Data on civil rights, welfare spending, and immigration. I will analyze the links between procedures, partisanship, and productivity in Congress.

II. Literature Review

The Framers and Political Parties

It can be argued that our political system was born out of polarization, or to state this more mildly, differences of opinion. Sarah Binder urges us to look at the institutional context of gridlock and polarization, reminding us that Alexander Hamilton warned in the *Federalist Papers* that the institutional arrangements and internal procedures of the Continental Congress were the perfect recipe for deadlock, and in turn, frustrated members of the Congress (Binder, 2006, p. 302). Her point is that the occurrence of gridlock is not a new invention in American politics.

What did the Framers have to say about political parties? In *Federalist No. 10*, James Madison, under the guise of the pen name "Publius," discusses factions in government. He acknowledges that differences of opinion are natural by writing, "...the latent causes of faction are thus sown into the nature of man" (Madison, 1787). He refers to factions as a disease to the Republican form of government. The goal of the *Federalist Papers* was to convince states to ratify the new Constitution, so Madison asserts his belief that a large Republic (as established by the Constitution) would guard against factions and control against their damages (Madison, 1787). This is perhaps the most convincing evidence that our political system as envisioned by the Framers was not built for the bitter two-party division visible today.

George Washington warns against the dangers of sectionalism in his farewell address of 1796, and expounds upon the importance of unity as Americans. He declares, "The name American, which belongs to you in your national capacity, must

always exact the just pride of patriotism more than any appellation derived from local discriminations” (Washington, 1796). Although political parties as we know them were not fully in existence at the time of this address, we can apply this to contemporary times and assume that Washington would want Americans to place their national patriotism above their political party identity; in other words, work for the benefit of the country, not the party. Washington talks a great deal about the strength found in unity. He, like Madison, acknowledges that factions are natural by saying that they find their “root in the strongest passions of the human mind” (Washington, 1796). Both Madison and Washington acknowledge the existence of factions and warn of their danger.

Public Polarization and its Effects

On the topic of public polarization, there are two major points of view. To be clear, the term “public” in this discussion is used in reference to American citizens outside of the political sphere. The first is the view that the public is growing increasingly polarized. Alan Abramowitz very much believes this. In his book, *The Disappearing Center*, Abramowitz begins by examining what he has deemed “the Bush Effect.” He argues that in the 2004 presidential election, the public’s evaluations of George W. Bush set a new standard in an era of increasing partisan polarization (Abramowitz, 2010, p. 27). He points to a 2004 American National Election Studies (ANES) survey, in which 90 percent of Republicans approved of Bush’s performance, while 81 percent of Democrats disapproved (Abramowitz, 2010, p. 27). Abramowitz conducts a series of regression analyses of Bush ANES feeling thermometer rankings in 2000 and 2004¹.

¹ The feeling thermometer is a scale on which 0 degrees represents the lowest possible rating of an individual or group and 100 degrees represents the highest (Abramowitz, 2010, p. 27).

The independent variables included party identification, as well as such things as gender, race, income, education level, and frequency of church attendance. He found that the overall explanatory power of the regression analysis increased dramatically. In 2000, the regression analysis explained only 37.5 percent of the variance in Bush evaluations; in 2004, it explained 53.7 of the variance (Abramowitz, 2010, p. 29). Abramowitz uses the Bush Effect as one of the main tenants of his argument for the increasing polarization of the American public.

Other indicators of polarization Abramowitz uses are party identification and voter registration statistics to show that the proportion of pure independents in the electorate has been declining since the 1970s, while the level of partisan voting has been increasing (Abramowitz, 2010, p.55). He explains recent high levels of partisan voting by showing that the degree of consistency between party identification and ideology is increasing. He cites a Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) that surveyed voters in the 2006 election. The survey found that 94 percent of Democratic identifiers and leaners were found on the left side of the liberal-conservative scale, while 88 percent of Republican leaners and identifiers were found on the right side of the scale.

In another book on the same topic, entitled *Polarized Public? Why American Government is So Dysfunctional*, Abramowitz once again tackles the issue of public polarization. He argues that there has been a steady increase in the ideological distance between supporters of the two major parties. He cites an ANES study that tracks trends in the average location of Republican and Democratic voters on a seven point liberal-conservative scale between the 1970s and 2010 (Abramowitz, 2012, p.42-43). The study shows that the gap between the average Republican voter and the

average Democratic voter more than doubled, going from 1.0 units in 1972 to 2.2 units in 2008 (Abramowitz, 2012, p. 43). He reworks this data to present it in a more intuitive manner. He finds that among Republican voters between 1972 and 2008, the percentage of conservatives increased from 55 to 78 percent while the percentage of moderates decreased from 32 to 17 percent (Abramowitz, 2012, p. 43). Among Democratic voters within the same time period, the percentage of liberals increased from 38 to 55 percent while the percentage of moderates decreased from 38 to 32 percent. As a result, Abramowitz asserts that moderates have nearly disappeared from both major parties, making each party more ideologically extreme (Abramowitz, 2012, p. 43).

The opposing view of public polarization is of course that the public is not becoming more polarized. Morris Fiorina, author of *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*, holds this view. Fiorina describes the electorate as “closely divided” but not “deeply divided” (Fiorina, 2005, p.13). Interestingly enough, he blames politicians, asserting that voters are not more partisan but politicians are (Fiorina, 2005, p. 114). He makes the point that no matter how moderate the views of the voter, they can only choose from the names on the ballot, which increasingly reflect two ideologically extreme points of view. Fiorina reviews the findings of a 1996 analysis of statistical opinion trends put together by DiMaggio, Evans, and Bryson, which was published in the *Social Science Quarterly* (Fiorina, 2005, p. 34). The analysis shows that between 1975 and 2000 older and younger Americans became more alike in their views, not more dissimilar (Fiorina, 2005, p. 35). According to the analysis, the same

appears to be true for black and white Americans, more educated and less educated Americans, and Americans living in various regions of the country (Fiorina, 2005, p. 35).

Fiorina provides detailed research from an ANES study on how people in red and blue states are divided based on specific issues. In reference to results of the study, he reports,

“A solid majority of blue states support stricter gun control laws, but so does a narrow majority of red state voters. Support for women’s equality is overwhelming and identical among voters in both categories of states. ...Similar proportions in both red and blue states believe that the moral climate of the country has deteriorated since 1992, and identical proportions believe that others’ moral views should be respected” (Fiorina, 2005, p. 25).

This study seems to suggest that ideological differences in red and blue states may not be as prominent as expected.

Fiorina graphs partisan views on abortion between 1972 and 2000 using General Social Survey (GSS) data to find that at the time of the Roe decision (1973) and a little after, Republicans were slightly more pro-choice than Democrats; since 1988 the Democrats have been more pro-choice than Republicans, but the difference has never been more than three-quarters of a unit on a six point scale (Fiorina, 2005, p. 61). He asserts that differences in attitudes on abortion have been grossly exaggerated by political and media commentary (Fiorina, 2005, p. 63). Fiorina conducts similar research, with similar results, on attitudes toward homosexuality. He also examines demographic differences like economic cleavages, religious cleavages, and gender and finds no evidence of polarization. In the final chapter, Fiorina concludes that Americans today are not more polarized, they are just better sorted into parties based on their ideological orientations than they were 30 to 40 years ago (Fiorina, 2005, p. 61-70). This realignment, in technical terms, means that sorting involves an increase in the

distance between the mean locations of the two major parties on the ideological scale while polarization is marked by an increase in the standard deviation of the scale as a whole. The Republican party has become more conservative, while the Democratic party has become more liberal.

Alan Abramowitz directly challenges Fiorina's sorting theory in *Polarized Public? Why American Government is So Dysfunctional*. He acknowledges that Americans are better sorted into political parties based on their distinctive ideological orientations. However, he shows evidence from ANES research that the correlation between party identification and ideological identification has increased from a modest .32 in 1972 to a strong .61 in 2008 (Abramowitz, 2012, p. 46). He argues that the increase in sorting and the increase in polarization go hand in hand; both have increased between 1972 and 2008 (Abramowitz, 2012 p. 49).

A positive effect of polarization, according to Abramowitz, is increased public engagement in the political process. In the *Disappearing Center*, he argues that the polarization of government increased the "ideological sophistication of the public" (Abramowitz, 2010, p. 16). He cites evidence from ANES surveys from 1960s to the first decade of the 21st century to bolster his argument that public engagement is increasing. Comparing the percentage of engaged voters from each decade by looking at the percentage of those surveyed who were "very or somewhat interested in elections," "care which party wins the presidency," and were "politically active beyond voting," Abramowitz found that Americans between 2000-2004 scored higher than their counterparts in each past decade (Abramowitz, 2010, p.19).

Next, he argues that increasing polarization of the public has led to an increase in voter turnout among partisans in recent years (Abramowitz, 2010, p. 86-87). Once again citing ANES data, Abramowitz reports that the turnout rate among partisans has increased from about 80 percent in the 1950s to almost 90 percent in 2004 (p. 87). He contends that the more partisan the voter, the larger the stake they would have in the outcome of the election, so they would be certain to vote (Abramowitz, 2010, p. 87). Abramowitz also references Gallup polls from the 2000, 2004, and 2008 presidential campaigns to further support his point (Abramowitz, 2010, p. 112).

He writes, "In a Gallup Poll conducted between January 29, and February 2nd, 2008, for example, 71 percent of respondents stated that they were giving 'quite a lot' of thought to the presidential election. Four years earlier, in early February 2004, only 58 percent of respondents said the same thing; and and four years before that, in January 2000, the number was only 38 percent" (Ambramowitz, 2010, p.112-13).

Finally, upon examining levels of public participation in primaries in 2008 and 2000, he finds that around 57 million Republican and Democratic voters participated in primary elections in 2008, compared with around 33 million in 2000 (Ambramowitz, 2010, p. 113).

Polarization in Congress and its Effects

In their book *Congress and its Members*, Roger Davidson and Walter Oleszek make a strong argument that members of Congress are becoming increasingly polarized. They write, "Party affiliation is the strongest single correlate of members' voting decisions, and in recent years it has reached surprisingly high levels" (Davidson & Oleszek, 2006, p. 283). They examine the floor votes of the House and Senate in regards to articles of impeachment in 1998-1999, finding that 92 percent of members

voted on party lines (Davidson & Oleszek, 2006, p. 283). Davidson and Oleszek argue that there has been a revival of party voting in recent years, citing a graph of party unity votes in the House and Senate between 1972 and 2004 published by Congressional Quarterly Weekly (Davidson & Oleszek, 2006, p. 284). There is a noticeable upward trend in party unity voting beginning around 1980. They write, "The decline of conservative Democrats and moderate Republicans, especially in the House, underlies much of the ideological cohesion within, and chasm between, today's Capitol Hill parties" (Davidson & Oleszek, 2006, p. 286).

The authors also refer to a mapping of ideological distribution in the House in 1998 and in 1968 that was constructed by Sean Theriault (Davidson & Oleszek, 2006, p. 288). These distributions took the form of a bell-curve on points along a left-right scale in which liberal ideology appears on the left and conservative on the right. The ideological categories were drawn from members' voting records. Davidson and Oleszek analyze these distributions and find that in 1968, Democrats appeared at almost every ideological point on the scale; Republicans were more clustered to the right but there was still some spillover into liberal territory (Davidson & Oleszek, 2006, p. 288-89). In 1998, they found a much different distribution that appeared to be almost entirely polarized in which only a handful of members fall into moderate territory, at the middle of the scale (Davidson & Oleszek, 2006, p. 288-89).

Alan Abramowitz points to research in his book *The Disappearing Center* that reflects much of the same trends found in *Congress and its Members* in regards to congressional polarization. He contends that a dramatic ideological shift has taken place since the 1980s that has left hardly any moderates in Congress (Abramowitz,

2010, p. 139). He cites research that compares the ideological composition of the 95th Congress to that of the 108th. The study measured members' ideologies based on their scores on the first dimension of the DW-Nominate Scale created by Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal (Abramowitz, 2010, p. 141)². In Abramowitz's analysis of the study, he writes,

“ Between the 95th and 108th Congress, the moderate bloc shrank from 30 percent of the membership to only 8 percent. Meanwhile, strong conservatives grew from only 6 percent of the membership in the 95th Congress to 33 percent in the 108th Congress- by far the largest ideological bloc. Strong liberals and conservatives combined grew from 27 percent of House members in the 95th Congress to 57 percent of House members in the 108th Congress,” (Abramowitz, 2010, p. 141).

In further analysis of the aforementioned research, Abramowitz provides more evidence that supports his view of increasing polarization in Congress. Strong liberals went from around a third of House Democrats in the 95th Congress to over half in the 108th. Strong conservatives grew from a sixth of House Republicans in the 95th Congress to roughly two-thirds of the 108th (Abramowitz, 2010, p. 142). According to his research, it is growing increasingly difficult to find members of Congress who identify themselves as either a “moderate liberal” or a “moderate conservative.”

The next natural area to explore is the way in which polarization affects the political landscape in the United States government, if at all. John Gilmour discusses the effect polarization has on the procedural workings of Congress. Sarah Binder finds that consequences of hyper-partisanship in Congress include increased congressional retirements, as well as lower congressional approval ratings. Finally, Mann and Ornstein

² Using the DW-Nominate Scale, members of Congress were scored ranging from -.1999 to 4.001. Their placement on the scale represents their ideological position (Abramowitz, 2010, p.183).

discuss the consequences of polarization in respect to obstruction on behalf of members of Congress.

In his book, *Strategic Disagreement: Stalemate in American Politics*, John Gilmour writes, "The underlying cause of deadlock is a fragmented political structure in which factions are able to block legislation and which consequently requires broad agreement for legislation to pass," (Gilmour, 1995, p. 5). Factions, as applicable to our discussion, would be the Republican and Democratic parties. He makes it clear that he believes strategies of disagreement may be optimal for the politicians who employ them, but not for their constituents (Gilmour, 1995, p. 166). It seems as though Gilmour believes deadlock as a by-product of partisanship is detrimental to American citizens.

Gilmour discusses reasons why politicians refuse to compromise. He points to Gingrich's strategy in the House of Representatives as an example of a reason to avoid compromise, writing, "Cooperating with Democrats on the enactment of legislation may have produced slightly better bills in the short term, but hindered efforts to win the big prize- Republican majorities in Congress" (Gilmour, 1995, p. 24). In other words, the main goal of politicians is to stay in office, and if politicians make concessions to the other party, their polarized constituents may view the compromise as unfavorable and vote them out. Gilmour also believes that politicians avoid compromise because it is beneficial to maintain distance between the two parties. He explains, "When politicians enter into compromise agreements with competitors, they allow legislation to pass, but they also sacrifice the opportunity to criticize their opponents" (Gilmour, 1995, p. 37). By the same token, Gilmour attests that compromise can diminish future electoral prospects because it reduces or eliminates issue advantages (Gilmour, 1995, p. 39). In

a discussion of polarization, Gilmour's inclusion of the following quote from 1964 Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater seems particularly relevant: "I would remind you that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice! And let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue!" (Gilmour, 1995, p.119).

Gilmour next outlines strategies employed in gridlock to avoid compromise. One strategy he discusses is what he has deemed "pursuit and avoidance," which involves efforts by the disadvantaged party to avoid political harm by changing its position on a issue in order to become closer to the advantaged party (Gilmour, 1995, p. 52). Another strategy he discusses is strategic encroachment, which defines its overarching goal as minimizing the opponent's political advantages in respect to a specific issue by blurring the positions of the respective parties (Gilmour, 1995, p. 96). A third strategy he discusses is the deliberate provocation of a presidential veto by Congress in order to generate public support for Congress and disapproval for the president (Gilmour, 1995, p.120). However, this tactic could only be employed under divided government (a situation in which one party controls Congress and another has the White House).

Sarah Binder addresses gridlock in a book entitled *Congress Reconsidered*. She begins by admitting that gridlock is not a new part of American legislative behavior, and points to only two eras not tainted by it in the 19th century: the New Deal and the Great Society (Binder, 2001, p. 293). She defines gridlock as "the share of salient issues on the nation's agenda left in limbo at the close of each Congress" (Binder, 2001, p. 295). Binder makes the point that if major policy change is likely when bipartisan coalitions are formed, it is expected that gridlock will rise with polarization (Binder, 2001, p. 300). She discusses the consequences of Congressional gridlock. Interestingly enough, she

finds that a major consequence is the retirement of Congressmen (Binder, 2001, p. 309). In a study using the level of gridlock as an independent variable to predict the number of retirements from Congress between 1947 and 1994, she found that gridlock is a significant predictor in accounting for patterns of Congressional retirements (Binder, 2001, p. 309). Another consequence of legislative deadlock according to Binder is low public approval ratings of Congress (Binder, 2001, p. 310). She found that between 1974 and 1994, public approval ratings were directly related to legislative productivity (Binder, 2001, p. 310). Binder's correlation, if valid, would certainly explain the low public approval rating of the 112th Congress.

In their book, *It's Even Worse Than it Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism*, Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein discuss the partisan strategy of "hostage taking" in Congress and its detrimental effects on governing effectively. Mann and Ornstein believe that what was meant to be a routine vote to raise the debt ceiling in 2011 turned into a hostage crisis (Mann & Ornstein, 2012). They contend that Republicans in the House and Senate were incredibly open about their obstructionist goals in this situation; The "Young Guns" in the House of Representatives (Paul Ryan, Majority Leader Eric Cantor, and Kevin McCarthy) wanted to use the debt ceiling vote to their political advantage. (Mann & Ornstein, 2012, p. 10)

As evidence of this, they cite an address Cantor made at a conservative retreat in Baltimore, in which he said, "I'm asking you to look at a potential increase in the debt limit as a leverage moment when the White House and President Obama will have to deal with us. Either we stick together and demonstrate that we're a team that will fight

for and stand by our principles, or we will lose that leverage” (Mann & Ornstein, 2012, p. 11). After roughly a month and a half of negotiations between the White House and a congressional committee, the topic shifted from spending cuts to tax increases, at which point Cantor abruptly pulled out of talks (Mann & Ornstein, 2012, p. 15). He publicly criticized the negotiations, making it clear that the House would never pass any plan that included tax increases. Even at the risk of being put on review for a credit downgrade, the Young Guns and House Republicans refused to make concessions (Mann & Ornstein, 2012, p. 17).

In the end, a deal was never reached. House Speaker Jim Boehner sent a letter to his House Republican colleagues in which he wrote, “A deal was never reached, and was never really close. In the end, we couldn’t connect. Not because of our different personalities, but because of different visions for our country” (Mann & Ornstein, 2012, p. 21). According to Mann and Ornstein, it became increasingly clear that Senate Minority Leader, Mitch McConnell, believed party trumped policy in this instance. He said, “I think some of our members may have thought the default issue was a hostage you might take a chance at shooting. Most of us didn’t think that. What we did learn is this- it’s a hostage worth ransoming” (Mann & Ornstein, 2012, p. 25). The authors believe that in this statement, McConnell is alluding to the idea that Republicans will use the debt ceiling as a bargaining chip in the future. Mann and Ornstein believe such “hostage taking” as seen in the 2011 debt ceiling debacle is a clear example of ineffective governance on behalf of Congress as a result of hyper-partisanship (Mann & Ornstein, 2012, p. 30).

Roots of Polarization

Views of where the roots of polarization lie differ greatly. Stonecash, Brewer, and Mariani provide a less widely accepted view of the roots of polarization. The authors contend that liberal voting comes from urban, lower-income, mostly non-white districts, while conservative voting comes from higher-income, largely white districts. Democrats thus represent liberal districts, while Republicans represent suburban affluent districts (Stonecash, Brewer, & Mariani, 2003, p. 18). They write, “Given their different constituencies, Democratic and Republican party members propose different policies and find themselves opposing each other. As they continue to oppose each other, the sense of difference increases, and party members pressure each other to join together, resulting in even greater polarization” (Stonecash, Brewer, & Mariani, 2003, p.18).

Others argue that polarization is on the rise because the institution of Congress itself has changed, and in doing so, has made room for partisanship. In his article *Congress and Constitutional Responsibility*, Jeffrey Tulis asserts that Congress in the 19th century was a much healthier institution than Congress today (Tulis, 2009, p. 520). Now, partisanship has become dominant, and party politics take precedence over institutional processes and history (Tulis, 2009, p. 520). Tulis considered former West Virginia Senator Robert Byrd an anachronism in present day Congress, pointing to the way he stood up for the prerogatives of the institution, regardless of which party is control (Tulis, 2009, p. 520). Tulis believes that the anachronism of Byrd reflects “the loss of congressional constitutional consciousness” (Tulis, 2009, p. 520). Davidson and Olsezek, authors of *Congress and Its Members*, would agree with this assessment. They point to social patterns that make friendship across party lines much more rare

now than in the past, saying that this leads to legislatures to turn to party colleagues when looking for voting cues (Davidson & Oleszek, 2006, p. 286).

Mann and Ornstein share a similar point of view; they too discuss a loss of institutional identity in Congress, pointing to a decrease in “institutional patriotism” since the 1960s (Mann & Ornstein, 2006, p. 146). Mann and Ornstein point to the Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act of 2005 as an example of the abandonment of institutional processes for party politics. The bill, which was nearly identical to the old version passed eight years prior that had been drafted by the credit industry, came to the Senate floor in March 2005; Senate Republicans pledged to shun all proposed amendments to the bill in order to bypass a conference committee to pass a bill that the House would accept in full (Mann & Ornstein, 2006, p. 143). House Republicans also pledged that they would not accept any changes to the original draft (Mann & Ornstein, 2006, p. 143). Three amendments were proposed, and as promised, were categorically rejected (Mann & Ornstein, 2006, p. 144-45). Upon reaching the House, the bill went through the Judiciary Committee with limited debate, and brought to the floor under a rule that prohibited amendments. It then went directly to President Bush to be signed into law (Mann & Ornstein, 2006, p.145). In summarizing this process, the authors write,

“ Working off an industry-created draft that was eight years old, and blocking any significant input from anyone directly involved in the bankruptcy process, denying any perfecting or corrective amendments, even when it was clear that they eased flaws or gaps in the bill, and actively seeking to prevent any deliberative process, the leaders of the House and Senate obtained a law- but one that was filled with holes and problems, many easily anticipated, that would bring substantial upheaval and injustice to large numbers of Americans” (Mann & Ornstein, 2006, p. 146).

Mann and Ornstein believe this example of the passage of the Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act illustrates the dysfunction of Congress because it shows several examples of complete disregard for institutional norms, like debate. The authors believe that situations like this breed polarization.

Another idea is that the realignment of the South was the root of polarization. The realignment of the South, which took place in the 1960s, marked the time period in which southern conservative Democrats shifted into the Republican party, while northern liberal Republicans shifted into the Democratic party. The 1964 election, in which Barry Goldwater ran against Lyndon B. Johnson, is often cited because of race-related issues. Mann and Ornstein cite the realignment of the South because the House lost all Southern conservative Democrats, and the Republican Party became more cohesively conservative (Mann & Ornstein, 2006, p.11). The Democratic party became a more “homogenous and left-of-center party” (Mann & Ornstein, 2006, p.11).

In *The Disappearing Center*, Abramowitz mentions the southern strategy of Nixon as one of the causes of polarization (Abramowitz, 2010, p. 2). In the 1968 election, Nixon reached out to southern whites, who had historically been members of the Democratic Party, using a “states’ rights” approach, which some argue was a euphemism for opposition to enforcement of civil rights for African Americans. Abramowitz also cites the Republican takeover of the House in 1994 led by Newt Gingrich, as well as the bitter battle over Clinton’s impeachment in 1998 as additional sources of polarization (Abramowitz, 2010, p. 2).

Another argument that has gained some traction among scholars of polarization is that redistricting in states is a cause of increased polarization. Redistricting is the

process by which electoral boundaries are drawn. In the majority of states, the state legislature has the responsibility of creating a redistricting plan in response to population changes. Partisans are then able to redraw boundaries for their political advantage using tactics like packing, cracking, and kidnapping. Packing crams more of a party's supporters into a district that is already heavily in favor of the party. Cracking involves taking a constituency that normally favors a certain party, and splitting them up among several districts to weaken their influence. Kidnapping involves placing two unwanted incumbents in the same district so that one will inevitably lose. In their article *Redistricting and Party Polarization in the United States House of Representatives*, Carson, Crespin, Rohde, and Finocchiaro point to evidence that supports the idea that districts that have undergone significant changes from redistricting have become even more polarized. In their research, the authors created a data set linking congressional districts from 1962 to 2002. Each district was placed into one of three categories: significant redistricting (new), modest redistricting (continuous), or no change (also continuous) (Carson, Crespin, Finocchiaro, & Rohde, 2007, p. 885). In comparing the strength of the two parties in each district with their strength in the nation, the authors employed the normalized presidential vote in each congressional district; more specifically, they subtracted the Democratic presidential candidate's share of the vote in the entire nation from that in each congressional district for every presidential election from 1968 to 2000 (Carson, Crespin, Finocchiaro, & Rohde, 2007, p. 889).

In a graph, the standard deviation of the Democratic presidential vote was plotted in each of three categories of districts over time. According to the authors, the standard deviation indicates the "spread of district partisanship, with greater spread

indicating more polarization” (Carson, Crespín, Finocchiaro, & Rohde, 2007, p. 890).

Fiorina also used standard deviation as a measure of polarization. The authors believe that this graph suggests that while all congressional districts have grown more polarized over time, the districts classified as “new” are always more extreme in the preferences of voters (Carson, Crespín, Finocchiaro, & Rohde, 2007, p. 890). Carson, Crespín, Finocchiaro and Rohde contend that the results of their research support their claim that most of the redistricting that has occurred in recent years has been partisan in nature; the authors do, however, concede that redistricting is just one of many of the causes of polarization in Congress (Carson, Crespín, Finocchiaro, & Rohde, 2007, p. 890).

In the *Disappearing Center*, Abramowitz rejects the argument correlating increasing polarization with redistricting. He points to evidence that partisanship has increased in both the Senate and the House, and state boundaries have remained the same (Abramowitz, 2010, p.143). He divides the redistricting hypotheses in two, part one stating that partisan redistricting has led to an increase in the number of safe districts and a decrease in the number of swing districts within the House (Abramowitz, 2010, p.143). The second part states that the decreasing competitiveness in the House has led to increased polarization (Abramowitz, 2010, p.143). Abramowitz tests these two parts by examining changes in the competitiveness of House districts between 1980 and 2002 and by analyzing district competition and ideological polarization between the 95th and 108th Congress (Abramowitz, 2010, p.143). The results support his claim that neither part of the redistricting hypothesis is true because ideological polarization has increased among representatives from both safe and marginal districts (Abramowitz, 2010, p.143).

Summary

Upon analysis of my brief review of the vast amount of scholarship on the topic of polarization, I can draw a few conclusions. It cannot be denied that the Framers, such as James Madison and George Washington, were wary of the effects political parties or factions would have on the American political system; both men acknowledged that factions are natural, but they also warn of their danger. In respect to public polarization, Fiorina and Abramowitz obviously disagree as to whether or not the public is becoming increasingly polarized. While both authors present valuable arguments, it is important to note a few issues I have with the authors' arguments. Fiorina's book, though published in 2005, does not contain any data dated past 2000; this is troublesome because it could suggest that recent data does not corroborate his point of view that the public is not growing increasingly polarized. Abramowitz, on the other hand, is fixated on the election of 2004. It would be helpful if he were to provide more examples that fall outside of the scope of this one election year.

The way Abramowitz discusses the positive effects of increased public polarization on public political engagement is refreshing; it is interesting to view polarization in a positive light. It seems as though there is a general consensus that Congress is becoming more polarized, and that this is shaping its procedural function. I readily accept this claim. After reading the opinions of various scholars on the roots of polarization, I feel as though all explanations put forth have worth and have played a role in increasing partisanship in American politics.

III. Case Studies of Partisanship in Congress

In this section, I will discuss in detail the process of passing or failing three major pieces of legislation in each of the following decades: 1960s, 1990s, and 2000-2010. First, I will discuss the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This bill eventually became law, but it bitterly divided both the House and the Senate in the process, mainly because of the opposition it faced from the segregationist Southern Democrats. Next, I will examine the process of passing the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996. While it was hailed as a great bipartisan success, details of the debates leading up to its passage reveal the lack of civility with which partisans treated one another. Lastly, I will analyze the failure of the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007. A product of bipartisan efforts on behalf of the Bush administration as well as Senate Democrats and Republicans, it eventually failed because the far right refused to compromise on certain moderate provisions of the bill. I chose these three pieces of legislation because they illustrate the impact of partisanship in Congress on the process of legislative politics. These case studies provide concrete examples of the effect of partisanship in Congress; I will later provide my results in regards to public opinion data and partisanship in relation to the topics of civil rights, welfare, and immigration within each of their respective decades.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was certainly one of the most, if not the most, contentious piece of legislation in the 1960s. It exemplifies the extreme procedural measures that can be implemented in the House and Senate to pass or defeat

legislation in situations of gridlock. The necessity of such a bill was called for by President Kennedy in a speech in June of 1963. He spoke of the need for legislation “giving all Americans the right to be served in facilities which are open to the public” as well as “greater protection for the right to vote.” The passage of such legislation was nearly a year in the making; pro-civil rights legislators faced obstacles in the process that seemed nearly insurmountable, such as the longest senatorial filibuster in American history (Zietlow, 2006, p.105). Many events led up to the creation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. First, there was the Brown v. Board of Education decision in 1954, which effectively deemed segregated schools unconstitutional and ordered desegregation. While the Supreme Court held the power to make this order, it did not have the power to enforce it. As it was, many southern states maintained segregation in their schools. Efforts by the federal government to forcefully desegregate schools led to violence in states like Arkansas and Mississippi. The Civil Rights Act of 1957 was passed under the Eisenhower administration; it was initially heralded as a historic success until it had no real impact on racial discrimination or segregation.

The Kennedy Administration constructed the first draft of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; it reached the floor of the House of Representatives as H.R. 7152 on June 20, 1963 (Zietlow, 2006, p. 104). Some of the main provisions of the bill included the prohibition of racial discrimination in public places, prevention of employment discrimination on the basis of race or sex, and prevention of discrimination by recipients of federal funds. The bill originated in the House for strategic reasons: the chair of the House Judiciary Committee, Emmanuel Celler, was a supporter of civil rights, while the chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, James Eastland, was a staunch segregationist

(Zietlow, 2006, p.104). Congressional Democrats were divided by region, so bipartisan efforts were necessary to pass this bill. In the House, the biggest obstacle to passing the bill was Representative Howard Smith, the segregationist Democratic chairman of the House Rules Committee (Zietlow, 2006, p. 104). The original bill did not provide for the prevention of employment discrimination based on sex; this amendment was actually proposed by Howard Smith as a measure to defeat the bill (Zietlow, 2006, p.107). His plan backfired, however, because the amendment was greeted with enthusiasm by his colleagues in the House, especially females. In its original form, the bill would have covered 20 million African Americans. With the addition of gender, it covered around 100 million Americans. It can be said that the introduction of Smith's amendment contributed to the bill's success in the House. On February 10, 1964, the bill passed the House by a vote of 290 to 130.

When H.R. 7152 reached the Senate, Senate Leader Mike Mansfield was prepared for a certain battle. Before he could offer the motion to consider the House-passed bill, it had to be put on the Senate calendar, where it could either be motioned up or sent to Eastland's Judiciary Committee, where it would surely die (Stewart, 1997, p. 213). In order to circumvent the Judiciary Committee, Mansfield had to use the Rule XIV procedure. In enacting Rule XIV, Mansfield noted, "the procedures which the leadership will follow are not usual, but neither are they unprecedented. And the reasons for unusual procedures are too well known to require elaboration" (Stewart, 1997, p. 214). He asked for unanimous consent that H.R. 7152 be referred to the Judiciary Committee and sent back in its original form no later than March 4, 1964

(Stewart, p. 215). Southern Democrats like Eastland, Russell, and Keating objected vehemently.

Next, Mansfield attempted to introduce the bill during the “Morning Hour,” which was the time before 2:00pm during which a motion to take a bill from the calendar would be non-debatable. The Southern Democrats were prepared for this, however, and held the floor during the morning hour by reading the previous day’s Journal in full, and then offering and debating amendments to the Journal (Stewart, 1997, p. 217-18).

Eventually Mansfield resolved to offer his motion to consider after 2:00pm. Immediately after his remarks, Southern Democrats from states like Alabama, Louisiana, Arkansas, and North Carolina took the floor, and the filibuster of the motion to consider began (Stewart, p. 219).

Nearly three weeks later, the Southern Democrats decided that it was in their best interest to end the initial filibuster. The Senate voted, 67-15, to proceed with the motion to consider on March 26, 1964 (Stewart, 1997, p. 224). The fact that a vote to merely consider the bill on the Senate floor took over a month to obtain says a great deal about the strength of opposition H.R. 7152 faced in the Senate.

Mansfield appointed a pro-civil rights team comprised of Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota, Minority Whip Thomas Kuchel of California, and Senator Earl Warren, also of California, to guide the bill through the Senate (Zietlow, 2006, p.109). Attempting to wear out the Southern Democrats during filibusters of previous civil rights bills had failed in 1957, 1960, and 1962. The team strategized and decided they would attempt to obtain a cloture vote to end the filibuster (Zietlow, 2006, p. 109). A cloture

vote is a procedure used to end debate that requires a two-thirds majority vote. A bipartisan effort proved to be crucial in obtaining this cloture vote.

Pro-civil rights senators focused their attention on getting Illinois Senator Everett Dirksen, a conservative Republican, to support the bill. They believed his support could garner enough votes from the moderate and conservative camps to achieve cloture (Zietlow, p.109). On April 20, Dirksen offered several amendments to the bill, making it clear that if the amendments were adopted, he would support the bill. The amendments he offered essentially limited the authority of the Department of Justice in filing suit in cases of jurisdiction, and gave the states an initial period of jurisdiction (Zietlow, 2006, p.110). A month later, Dirksen made a public appearance in support of the bill. The cloture vote was held on June 10, 1964. The southern Democrats' filibuster ended with West Virginia Senator Robert Byrd's fourteen hour address in opposition of the legislation. Dirksen gave final remarks before the vote, saying, "The time has come for equality of opportunity in sharing the government, in education, and in employment. It must not be stayed or denied" (Zietlow, 2006, p.110). The final tally of the cloture vote was 71 to 29. The cloture vote was historic in the sense that it had ended the longest filibuster in the history of the Senate, but also because it was the first successful cloture vote of a civil rights measure.

The vote on the passage of the bill itself was held on June 19, 1964, nearly four full months after it first entered the Senate. The vote on the bill was 73 to 27. The bill then had to return to the House for another vote because of the Dirksen amendments. It passed by a vote of 289 to 126, and President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the bill into law on July 2, 1964. Because the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed before the

southern realignment (defined in section I), it does not necessarily portray partisan division in Congress as we know it today. Instead, the bitter debate in the House and Senate over this piece of legislation was one of a regional nature, between Southern Democrats, who opposed the bill, seeing themselves as protecting the southern way of life, and pro-civil rights Republicans and Democrats, who believed it was time to guarantee equal protection of the rights of all citizens. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 exemplifies the extreme procedural measures that can be implemented in the House and Senate to pass or defeat legislation in situations of gridlock.

1996 Welfare Reform

In 1994, Republicans took over both the House and Senate for the first time in 40 years, in part because of the success of their Contract with America as a campaigning tool. The Contract, the brainchild of the conservative think tank the Heritage Foundation and party leaders like Newt Gingrich, detailed the actions Republicans promised to take if they became the majority party. It included such topics as crime, fiscal responsibility, job creation, and national security. Welfare reform was also one of the cornerstones of the Contract with America. In 1992, Bill Clinton campaigned to “end welfare as we know it,” and promised to assemble a task force to tackle the issue (Haskins, 2006, p. 37). Voters were hopeful that he truly wanted to pass legislation to reform welfare. Once elected, however, Clinton spent the first two years in office focused on passing healthcare reform. Clinton did assemble a task force, which grew to 32 members; it represented the wide array of views on welfare reform within the Democratic party (Haskins, 2006, p.

39). Clinton quickly realized that there was no one proposal for welfare reform that would unite Democrats.

Republicans saw their Congressional majority and the failure of Clinton's task force as the perfect opportunity to step in and take control of welfare reform. The debate on welfare was lodged in two separate philosophies: the Democrats believed that the solution lay in getting people trained to work and into jobs, while Republicans believed the whole system needed to be overhauled because the welfare system was being abused (Drew, 1996, p.140). In 1996, Republicans constructed two welfare reform bills that Clinton vetoed. In his book, *Work Over Welfare*, Ron Haskins, an economist and former congressional advisor on welfare issues, underscores the frustration Republicans felt after Clinton's second veto. He writes:

"The night of January 9, with the government closed because of a blizzard, Clinton announced his veto of the welfare reform bill that Congress had sent him on December 22. Now welfare, the debt ceiling, two continuing resolutions and reconciliation- some of the most important legislation produced by Congress in decades- had been vetoed. Our agenda had been smashed. The Republican revolution was floundering" (Haskins,2006, p. 266-267).

Encouraged by Republican governors around the nation, Republicans decided to once again attempt to draft a bill that could gain the support of the president. They filed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 in the House on July 31, 1996. The goal of H.R. 3507, as stated in the bill, was:

"To restore the American family, enhance support and work opportunities for families with children, reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies, reduce welfare dependance by requiring work, meet the health care needs of America's most vulnerable citizens, control welfare and Medicaid spending, and increase state flexibility" (H.R. 3507, 1996).

Provisions of the bill included such things as instituting the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, stricter conditions for food stamp eligibility, reductions

in immigrant welfare assistance, and work requirements for welfare recipients (H.R. 3507, 1996). In general, it aimed to make welfare more temporary, as well as give some autonomy over its operations to the individual states.

As major debates on the bill were expected to begin, Democrats were in an uneasy position. They had not yet been informed of President Clinton's intentions, they were wavering and wanted to take the same course of action as Clinton (Haskins, 2006, p. 325). What happened next was the House of Representative's clever version of a filibuster. Democrat Lloyd Doggett asked for unanimous consent to use a chart on the House floor (Haskins, 2006, p. 325). Doggett's chart was blank. Next, Harold Volkmer, another Democrat, objected to this request and asked for a recorded vote, which would take around a half hour to conduct (Haskins, 2006, p. 326). This same process occurred seven times with other Democrats requesting a recorded vote to use their blank charts on the House floor (Haskins, 2006, p. 326). These tactics were used to delay a vote, so that Democratic representatives could hear what Clinton's action would be on the bill. Along with these absurd stall tactics, there was actual legitimate debate on the bill. The debate was bitter and heated. Democrats accused Republicans of proposing to "take food from the mouths of children" to pay for their "tax cuts for the rich," while Republicans likened welfare recipients to animals (Drew, 1996, p. 144-45). What was meant to be an intellectual debate on the merits and shortfalls of the proposed bill turned into an barbaric spectacle. Hours later, Clinton held a press conference announcing his decision to sign the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 if it were to pass in Congress.

Upon hearing this, Representative Clay Shaw, the first sponsor of the bill, walked to the Democrats' side of the House and spoke from their microphone, saying:

"I hope [Democrats] will give me their understanding in my coming over to their side, because I do it not out of smugness or arrogance. I do it out of coming together...The degree of success we have now is going to be a victory for the American people, for the poor. It is not going to be a victory for one political party. It is now time for us to put our hands out to one another and to come together to solve the problems of the poor" (Haskins, 2006, p. 330-31).

This was quite the change of pace from the bitter debate that had taken place on the House floor just a few hours prior. The bill passed the House by a vote of 328 to 101, and the next day passed the Senate by a vote of 78 to 21 (Haskins, 2006, p. 331).

While the bill eventually passed the House and Senate by impressive bipartisan margins, it is important to remember that votes were still cast along party lines. Democrats would have certainly voted against the bill had Clinton announced that he would veto it. Welfare reform is yet another example of legislation that faced obstruction in Congress because of partisanship. Democrats employed tactics of delay because they did not want to stray from the mandate of their president, and in essence, their party. Welfare reform of 1996 is contemporarily heralded as a bipartisan success, perhaps because the bitterness and infighting was kept from the public eye.

Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007

In a speech in the summer of 2006, President George W. Bush called for comprehensive immigration reform in an oval office speech, saying:

"The issue of immigration stirs intense emotions, and in recent weeks, Americans have seen those emotions on display. On the streets of major cities, crowds have rallied in support of those in our country illegally. At our southern border, others have organized to stop illegal immigrants from coming in. Across the country, Americans are trying to reconcile these contrasting images. And in Washington,

the debate over immigration reform has reached a time of decision” (Bush, 2006).

Comprehensive immigration reform could be considered Bush’s one major attempt at bipartisan policy-making during his second term. After months of negotiation between Republican and Democratic senators, the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act was brought to the Senate on May 9, 2007, sponsored by Democratic Senator Harry Reid of Nevada (S. 1348, 2007). Its provisions were aimed at reconciling the differences between liberal and conservative views on immigration. It provided for a new class of visa, the “Z visa,” which gave illegal immigrants the legal right to remain in the United States, and made them eligible for a green card after eight years (S. 1348, 2007). It also made family reunification requirements stricter: only the spouse and children of a new citizen would be eligible for green cards rather than all relatives (S. 1348, 2007). It also ended the employer-sponsored component of immigration and replaced it with a point-based merit system based on such qualifications as education, job skills, family connections, and English proficiency (S. 1348, 2007). The bill laid out provisions for a guest worker program (the “Y” visa) as well as increased enforcement of the US-Mexico border (S. 1348, 2007). The bill’s most controversial provision was the DREAM Act, which provided a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants who met specific qualifications (S. 1348, 2007).

The bill was supported wholeheartedly by the Democratic leadership of the House and Senate, as well as several prominent Republicans, like Senator John McCain (Abramowitz, 2010, p. 166). Opposed to the bill were the extremely conservative members of the Republican base. They attacked the “path to citizenship” provision, saying it was too close to outright amnesty and rewarded illegal immigrants

(Smith, 2007). In a June 2007 speech, McCain defended his supportive stance on the bill vehemently, saying:

“I defend with no reservation our proposal to offer the people who harvest our crops, tend our gardens, work in our restaurants, care for our children, and clean our homes a change to be legal citizens of this country. They will have to earn it. They must come out from the shadows, pay their penalties, fees and taxes, stay employed, obey our laws, learn our language and history, and go to the back of the line and wait years for the privilege of being an American” (McCain, 2007).

After the bill was brought up for consideration on the Senate floor, nearly 40 amendments were proposed by Republicans and Democrats alike. 33 of the amendments even reached a floor vote. In order to advance toward a final vote, cloture needed to be obtained, which is a 60 person vote in the Senate. A June 2007 cloture motion failed with 46-53 vote (Smith, 2007). 33 Democrats, 12 Republicans, and one Independent voted to advance the bill to a final vote, while 15 Democrats, 37 Republicans, and one Independent voted against advancement (Smith, 2007). In comments after the failure of the bill, a frustrated President Bush stated, “A lot of us worked hard to see if we couldn’t find common ground. It didn’t work” (Smith, 2007). The process of the proposal and eventual failure of the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007 illustrates perfectly the difficulty in building bipartisan coalitions in Congress, especially under intense hyper-partisan conditions. Since the 110th Congress’s failure to overhaul immigration, it has remained a contentious issue in American politics.

Summary of Case Studies

I chose the to focus on these three case studies because each of them demonstrates the result of partisanship on the legislative process. In the case of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, extreme procedural measures were enacted in the Senate to circumvent gridlock. Pro-civil rights senators worked for weeks to obtain the cloture vote they needed to end the filibuster of the Southern Democrats and bring the bill forward. In the case of welfare reform in 1996, Clinton's failure to unify the Democratic Party with his committee's proposals on welfare reform allowed Republicans to push their initiative through the House and Senate. Afraid of being viewed as obstructionists, Clinton and the Democrats reluctantly threw their support behind a the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act although they disagreed with a number of its provisions.

The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007 failed because a faction of extremely conservative Republicans objected vehemently to the "path to citizenship" provision of the bill. This faction refused to compromise, believing that no reform was better than accepting a bill that did not serve their interests. These three initiatives, regardless of their eventual success or failure, were all shaped in a major way by the hyper-partisan atmosphere of Congress.

IV. Findings: Public Opinion and Partisanship

The last portion of my paper will discuss the significance of the results of my research that explored public opinion in regards to civil rights, welfare, and immigration reform in the 1960s, 1990s, and early 2000s, respectively. To conduct my research, I used American National Election Study (ANES) survey data found using the Survey Documentation and Analysis archive maintained by the Computer-assisted Survey Methods Program at the University of California, Berkeley. I generated tables using party identification as the dependent variable and responses to survey questions about policies as the independent variables.

In 1972, a question asking respondents to identify themselves as liberal or conservative on a seven-point scale appeared on the ANES for the first time. Included this information, when applicable, as well as party identification information in order to determine if the opinions of Republicans matched up with those of conservatives, and if the opinions of Democrats matched up with liberals. To simplify the data, I have produced my own tables using my findings from the tables generated from the SDA archive. It should be noted that for purposes of efficiency, I manually collapsed the liberal/conservative responses from a 7-point scale of ideology to simply liberal, conservative, moderate, and in some cases, "other." Upon analyzing the results of this research, it becomes obvious that ideological and political identification have an increasingly undeniable impact on public opinion.

Civil Rights

Figure 1.1: *Opinion on Government's Role in Ensuring Fair Treatment of Blacks, by Party Identification- 1964*

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Gov't should see to it that blacks get fair treatment in jobs	44.5%	46.3%	25.4%
Not the federal government's business	35.5%	33.9%	51.4%
Other	20%	19.8%	23.2%

Source: American National Election Study Cumulative Data File

Figure 1.1 is interesting because the ANES data comes from 1964, which was the beginning of the southern realignment of political parties (Southern Democrats transferred to the Republican Party); yet the results appear exactly as we would expect them to after the realignment. Results show that the Democratic Party was much more pro-civil rights. 44.5% of self-identified Democrats surveyed believed that it was the government's role to ensure that African-Americans were treated fairly at work, compared to only 25.4% of self-identified Republicans.

Figure 1.2 shows surprising findings. There are not significant changes in respect to the Democratic Party, but Republicans actually appear to have become more receptive to civil rights since study conducted eight years prior. 34.5% of Republicans surveyed in 1972 believed that the government should ensure that African-Americans receive fair treatment in their jobs, compared to 25.4% of Republicans surveyed in 1964. This could be explained by the general acceptance of civil rights initiatives by

American society. In 1972, more Democrats than Republicans believed that it was the government's role to ensure fair treatments of blacks in the workplace.

Figure 1.2: *Opinion on Government's Role in Ensuring Fair Treatment of Blacks, by Party Identification- 1972*

	Democrats	independents	Republicans
Gov't should see to it that blacks get fair treatment in jobs	46.3%	41.0%	34.5%
Not the federal government's business	33.3%	32.5%	39.7%
Other	20.5%	26.6%	25.8%

Source: American National Election Study Cumulative File

When the fair treatment of African-Americans question is analyzed from the angle of self-identification as a liberal or conservative rather than by party identification, we do not find the level of consistency we would expect. Conservative and Republican views are more consistent than liberal and Democratic views, but neither match up as closely as anticipated. For instance, in Figure 1.3 we see that 69.1% of self-identified liberals believe that the government should see to it that African-Americans receive fair treatment in their jobs, as opposed to only 46.3% of Democrats.

Upon examining 1972 ANES data in regards to public opinion on the government's responsibility involving the fair treatment of African-Americans, it appears that the southern realignment had not yet fully taken effect. While a great majority of liberals believe that the government should see to it that blacks get fair treatment in the workplace, less than half of Democrats shared the same opinion. This could be

explained by the “sorting” idea, discussed by Fiorina and Abramowitz in section one of this paper. It appears that in 1972, liberals were not yet fully sorted into the political party that shared their ideological position: the Democratic party. In the present day, the terms “Democrat” and “liberal” are for the most part synonymous. This was not the case in 1972.

Figure 1.3: *Opinion on Government’s Role in Ensuring Fair Treatment of Blacks, by Liberal/Conservative Identification- 1972*

	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Gov’t should see to it that blacks get fair treatment in jobs	69.1%	36.3%	33%
Not the federal government’s business	20.8%	39.7%	45.5%
Other	10.1%	24.0%	21.4%

Source: American National Election Study Cumulative File

Figure 1.4: *Opinions on Government’s Responsibility to Integrate Schools, by Party Identification- 1964*

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
gov’t should ensure integration of schools	43.9%	35.5%	37.9%
gov’t should stay out of this area	36.2%	43.0%	43.3%
no opinion	19.9%	21.5%	18.8%

Source: American National Election Study Cumulative Data File

In figure 1.4, opinions of respondents on the government's responsibility to enforce integration mandates is displayed in respect to party identification. As expected, more Democrats (43.9%) than Republicans (37.9%) believe it is the responsibility of the government to integrate schools. While this is certainly significant, it is not a staggering statistical difference; it could, just as in the case of Figure 1.1, be explained by the fact that the survey took place in 1964 before the southern realignment.

Figure 1.5: *Opinions on Government's Responsibility to Integrate Schools, by Party Identification- 1972*

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
gov't should ensure integration of schools	39.7%	38.2%	32.4%
gov't should stay out of this area	42.9%	40.7%	49.0%
no opinion	17.4%	21.1%	18.6%

Source: American National Election Study Cumulative Data File

Upon analysis of Figure 1.5, which reflects opinions on integration by party identification in 1972, the same trends that were observed in Figure 1.4 appear. It is therefore more useful to examine Figure 1.5 in respect to Figure 1.6. Just as in the case of attitudes toward the fair treatment of blacks in the workplace, it seems that the ideological positions of liberal and conservative were still not yet fully sorted into the Democratic and Republican parties, respectively. Only 39.7% of Democrats believed that the government should ensure integration of schools, while 64.4% of liberals hold

this view. Again, the difference is not as stark between Republicans and conservatives, but it is present. 49% of Republicans believed that the government should not concern itself with integration, compared to 57.8% of self-identified conservatives.

In sum, it can be observed that public opinion on civil rights issues was divided by partisanship in both 1964 and 1972, but perhaps not in the same way we define partisanship today. Generally speaking, Democrats were slightly more pro-civil rights than Republicans. It can be said with a greater level of certainty, however, that liberals were much more in favor of civil rights legislation on behalf of the federal government than conservatives. This discrepancy appears because the southern realignment was still in progress, so liberals and conservatives were not yet fully sorted into the parties that share their ideological values.

Figure 1.6: *Opinions on Government's Responsibility to Integrate Schools, by Liberal/Conservative Identification-1972*

	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
gov't should ensure integration of schools	64.4%	33.6%	26.5%
gov't should stay out of this area	25.8%	51.5%	57.8%
no opinion	9.8%	15.0%	15.6%

Source: American National Election Study Cumulative Data File

Welfare Reform

Figure 2.1: *Opinions on Federal Welfare Spending, by Party Identification-1992*

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
spending should be increased	22.2%	18.8%	9.7%
spending should be decreased or cut entirely	32.9%	39.6%	54.1%
spending should remain the same	43.2%	38.6%	35.0%
other	1.6%	2.9%	1.3%

Source: American National Election Study Cumulative Data File

Figure 2.1, which shows opinions on whether welfare spending should be increased, decreased, or should stay the same in correlation with party identification, reflects that opinions on this matter are made along party lines. It can be assumed, based on general knowledge of party platforms, that Republicans would be more likely to favor a decrease in welfare spending, while Democrats would be more likely to favor an increase. This holds true in accordance with Figure 2.1: 22.2% of Democrats believed that welfare spending should be increased, in comparison with a mere 9.7% of Republicans. 32.9% of Democrats believed that welfare spending should be cut, while a majority (54.1%) of Republicans held the same view. While more Democrats than Republicans believed welfare spending should be increased, still only a small portion of Democrats held this view. This could reflect why President Clinton included welfare reform in his campaign platform in 1992.

Figure 2.2: *Opinions on Federal Welfare Spending by Liberal/Conservative Identification-1992*

	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
spending should be increased	31.0%	15.9%	21.3%
spending should be decreased or cut entirely	26.2%	40.8%	56.4%
spending should remain the same	41.2%	41.8%	32.0%
other	2.1%	1.4%	1.3%

Source: American National Election Study Cumulative Data File

Upon analysis of Figure 2.2, I have found that the positions of liberals on welfare spending in 1992 matched those of Democrats, and the positions of conservatives matched those of Republicans. For example, Figure 2.1 shows that 9.7% of Republicans believed welfare spending should be increased, compared to 10.3% of conservatives as reflected in Figure 2.2. 54.1% of Republicans believed welfare spending should be decreased, compared to 56.4% of conservatives. While the positions of conservatives are slightly stronger than those of Republicans, this is not statistically significant.

Figure 2.3: *Opinions on Federal Welfare Spending, by Party Identification- 1996*

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
spending should be increased	16.6%	12.1%	6.9%
spending should be decreased or cut entirely	43.4%	55.2%	75.4%
spending should remain the same	40.0%	32.8%	17.7%

Source: American National Election Study 1996

As discussed in the case study on passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996, welfare reform was a hot topic in the 1996 presidential election. Figure 2.3 reflects Americans' frustration with President Clinton's inaction on welfare reform. In 1992, 54.1% of those who identified as Republicans believed welfare spending should be decreased or cut entirely, compared to a whopping 75.4% of Republicans in 1996. There was even a significant increase in the number of Democrats between 1992 and 1996 who believed welfare spending should be decreased: the number of Democrats who held this view increased from 32.9% in 1992 to 43.4% in 1996.

Figure 2.4: *Opinions on Federal Welfare Spending, by Liberal/Conservative*

Identification-1996

	Liberals	Moderates	Conservatives
spending should be increased	20.2%	15.1%	11.3%
spending should be decreased or cut entirely	47.8%	50.1%	56.4%
spending should remain the same	32.0%	34.5%	32.3%

Source: American National Election Study 1996

Figures 2.3 and 2.4 are important because they reflect that the American citizenry, regardless of ideology, had nearly reached a consensus that welfare spending needed to be decreased. In 1996, significantly more liberals and Democrats believed that spending on welfare needed to be decreased rather than increased. For the most part, opinions on behalf of respective ideologies and parties match up, except for one exception. It appears that opinions of self-identified Republicans were stronger than those of self-identified conservatives: 75.4% of Republicans believed welfare spending should be decreased, compared to 56.4% of conservatives. This could be explained by methodology, however. The “conservative” category in Figure 2.4 was condensed from respondents identifying as “slightly conservative,” “conservative,” and “extremely

conservative.” Respondents self-identifying as Republicans in Figure 2.3 are probably from the more ideologically extreme end of the conservative spectrum.

Opinions on welfare spending are particularly interesting because while they are divided along partisan lines, the division is certainly not as sharp as that found in the case of public opinion on civil rights. Perhaps welfare reform was more of a bipartisan issue than was reflected by the process of its passage as described in the case study in part two of this paper. Upon analysis of figures 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4, it becomes clear that welfare reform became generally more important to the American public between 1992 and 1996, regardless of ideology or party.

Immigration

Questions inquiring directly about respondents’ views on immigration (legal or illegal) did not appear on the American National Election Study survey until 2004, at which time respondents were asked the following question in a post election survey:

“How likely is it that recent immigration levels will take jobs away from people already here--EXTREMELY likely, VERY likely, SOMEWHAT likely, or NOT AT ALL likely?”

The question does not specify the type of immigration, or from where the immigrants in question would be coming. In turn, opinions on the matter do not depend on partisanship in any significant way.

Figure 3.1: *Likelihood Increased Immigration Will Take Jobs Away, by Party Identification- 2004*

	Republican	Democrat	Independent
extremely likely	17.8%	23.8%	19.4%
very likely	24.7%	23.9%	26.7%
somewhat likely	46.0%	40.0%	35.5%
not at all likely	11.5%	12.3%	18.4%

Source: American National Election Study 2004

Figure 3.1 shows that 17.8% of Republicans and 23.8% of Democrats believed it is extremely likely that a spike in immigration will result in a loss of American jobs, while 24.7% of Republicans and 23.9% of Democrats believed it is very likely that immigration will take jobs away. The trend continues in Figure 3.2, which analyzes responses to the aforementioned question in respect to ideological identification. 21.7% of liberals and 23.9% of conservatives believed it is extremely likely that increased immigration will take jobs away. 28% of liberals and 31.3% of conservatives believed it is very likely that increased immigration will result in job loss for Americans. Because of the standard nature of the question, it is simply not useful to examine it in regards to party or ideological identification. The results of Figure 3.1 and 3.2 clearly show that opinions on the likelihood of increased immigration taking away American jobs do not depend on partisan or ideological positions. It is significant, however, that the American National

Election Study began asking questions on immigration in 2004; perhaps this means the topic had officially landed on the nation’s political agenda by this year.

Figure 3.2: *Likelihood that Increased Immigration will Take Jobs Away, by Ideological Identification- 2004*

	Liberal	Conservative	Moderate
extremely likely	21.7%	23.9%	29.7%
very likely	28.0%	31.3%	27.5%
somewhat likely	40.2%	34.3%	29.0%
not at all likely	10.0%	10.5%	13.0%

Source: American National Election Study 2004

In 2008, the ANES did not include the same question about immigration that was examined in Figures 3.1 and 3.2. Respondents were questioned on immigration in a new way: “How important is this issue [citizenship of illegal immigrants] to you personally?” While the question did include the word “illegal,” which could have negative connotations, it again was posed in such a way that respondents’ answers, overall, did not correlate with their ideological preferences or party identification. There is an exception to this statement, however: 12.7% of Democrats believed the issue was extremely important, compared to 19.6% of Republicans. This is significant because it reflects the stronger stance Republicans have historically taken on illegal immigration. The findings of figure 3.4, which examine opinions on the issue in respect to ideological identification are also insignificant. Unlike prior ANES questions on civil rights and welfare reform, respondents are only asked their opinions on the importance of the

immigration issue. If a question was posed asking respondents' opinions on solutions to the illegal immigration issue, I am fairly confident that responses would have reflected partisan positions, just as they did in the cases of on civil rights and welfare spending.

Figure 3.3: *Opinions on the Importance of the Citizenship of Illegals Issue, by Party Identification- 2008*

	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
not important	6.1%	7.5%	10.6%
slightly important	22.1%	12.5%	23.6%
moderately important	33.7%	27.0%	24.1%
very important	25.4%	28.5%	26.1%
extremely important	12.7%	19.6%	15.6%

Source: American National Election Studies 2008

Figure 3.4: *Public Opinion on the Importance of the Citizenship of Illegals Issue, by Ideological Identification- 2008*

	Liberal	Conservative	Moderate
not important	14.3%	10.8%	5.3%
slightly important	24.5%	21.3%	22.9%
moderately important	19.9%	30.7%	37.8%
very important	25.0%	23.2%	23.4%
extremely important	16.3%	14.1%	10.6%

Source: American National Election Study 2008

Summary of Independent Research

The research I conducted on public opinion in relation to salient issues in various decades certainly shows that partisanship and ideology are both strong influence on the opinions of respondents in the American National Election Study. In 1964, more Democrats than Republicans were pro-civil rights, as expected. Upon analyzing the results of the 1972 ANES in respect to civil rights, it can be noted that the Republican and Democratic parties were not ideologically extreme: self-identified liberals and conservatives held strong views on issues than self-identified Democrats or Republicans. In respect to welfare reform, ANES data clearly shows that by 1996, most Americans believed that welfare reform was necessary. In both 1992 and 1996, more Republicans than Democrats thought welfare spending should be decreased; this aligns with partisan beliefs, as expected. Public opinion on immigration when correlated with ideological and party identification was not as revealing as in the cases of civil rights and welfare. Because of the way immigration questions were posed in 2004 and 2008, partisan views on the topic were not expressed. Questions on immigration focused on opinions on the importance of the issue, rather than opinions on possible reform solutions or the role of government in the arena of immigration. Public opinion regarding civil rights and welfare reform was certainly shaped by party and ideological identification.

Conclusions

In section one of this paper, I discussed previous scholarship on the polarization of the American public as well as Congress, and the effects of such polarization. While

scholars like Abramowitz and Fiorina disagree on whether or not the public is becoming increasingly polarized, it cannot be denied that the Republican and Democratic parties have become more ideologically extreme in recent years. It is possible that this is because liberals have sorted into the Democratic Party, while Republicans have sorted into the Republican Party.

Regardless of the reason why this is happening, we know that there are fewer moderates in Congress now than ever before. As exemplified in the case studies, hyper-partisanship manifests itself in Congress in a number of negative ways: gridlock, obstruction, and name-calling on behalf of partisans. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, welfare reform of 1996, and the failure of the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007 illustrate each of these manifestations. It is obvious that members of contemporary Congress work to serve partisan interests rather than the interests of the nation as a whole; they are becoming less and less concerned with compromise or the prospect of finding common ground.

Partisanship also shapes the opinion of the American public. According to my research on American National Election Study survey data, party and ideological differences account for a great deal of differences of opinion among Americans. This paper aimed to show the effects of polarization on Congress and the public, and discuss the linkages between the two. It is important to note that I do not believe polarization is a new phenomenon in American politics. It is obvious that polarization accounts for much of the behavior of members of Congress, and well as the opinions of the public. Only time will reveal the long-term effects of such hyper-partisanship as found in both the public and governmental spheres of America today.

