

his experience observing human nature, and noting the natural inclination toward factionalism that seemed to be always close to the surface of political interaction. He warned that this factionalism, once set in motion, could cause citizens to misrepresent the opinions of other citizens, and could cause fellow citizens to consider each other as enemies, even as the nation itself was struggling to form.

The data presented in this chapter would do little to reassure Washington that partisanship has not done exactly what he predicted. However, while American partisanship has existed since Washington left office, the current brand differs in nature from what Washington may have expected. This is because the factionalism that Washington feared is not only applicable to partisan teams. People form factions in all sorts of dimensions. We have long known that religion, race, and even sports-team affiliations have driven people into factions, set against each other along a dividing line. Partisanship may be necessary for government to organize and assist its citizens in decision-making. The problem arises when partisanship implicitly evokes racial, religious, and other social identities. As the sorting of the previous chapter occurs, parties become increasingly socially homogeneous. It is this social dimension of the partisan divide that makes it far easier for individual partisans to dehumanize their political opponents.

Social contact and shared social identities are the things that allow individuals to understand each other and tolerate differences in opinion. As those connections grow scarce, the effects of party no longer affect parties alone. Partisan battles become social and cultural battles, as well as political ones. The social homogenization of parties reduces room for compromise and increases the importance of simple party victory. The brand matters more than the good of the nation. This is what George Washington was concerned about, and it is now increasingly visible as American social identities reinforce the partisan divide.

FIVE

Socially Sorted Parties

The recent increases in levels of partyism shown in the previous chapter are not rooted solely in increasing practical disagreements. Partisans do not need to hold wildly extreme political attitudes in order to grow increasingly biased against their opponents. Partisanship alone cannot tell the whole story either. It turns out that one essential factor driving partisan prejudice is a set of well-sorted political identities.

The social psychologist Marilynn Brewer and her colleagues noticed a few years ago that, while there was plenty of evidence of the psychological effects of a single social identity, little research existed that explained how exactly our social identities work *together*. After all, none of us has just one social identity. A strongly identified Democrat or Republican is also a member of any number of other social groups. Each partisan could also identify as a woman, a conservative, a Christian, a runner, a football fan, a graduate of their particular college or high school; the list is endless. Brewer and her colleagues therefore decided it was important to examine the psychological effects of holding multiple social identities (Rocca and Brewer 2002).

When they asked people to think about how much their various social identities overlapped, they found a large difference between the thinking of people with highly aligned identities and the thinking of people with very unaligned identities. Identities are aligned when a large portion of the members of one group are (or are believed to be) also members of the other group. When multiple identities align, Brewer and her colleagues found, people are less tolerant, more biased, and feel angrier at the people in their outgroups. As an example, people who are Irish and Catholic (highly aligned national and religious identities) are more likely to be intolerant of non-Irish people than are people who are Irish and Jewish (relatively unaligned national and religious identities).

This is because a person with two highly aligned social identities sees outsiders as very different from herself. Her understanding of who she is will be constrained, and the list of the identities that define her feels smaller. On the other hand, when a person holds two social identities that are unaligned, outside groups seem more approachable. A person with cross-cutting identities feels that she is defined by a broad range of groups, and this makes her more tolerant toward groups that aren't exactly like her. An Irish-Jewish person will feel closer to non-Irish people than an Irish-Catholic person will.

The intolerance generated by a set of aligned identities can also come simply from lack of exposure to people unlike oneself. According to Allport's intergroup contact hypothesis, interaction between members of different groups can, under the right circumstances, reduce prejudice against those outgroups. A homogeneous set of social identities reduces the chance for that outgroup exposure. In fact, Diana Mutz found in 2002 that cross-cutting political identities *do* reduce intolerance toward outgroups by giving people the "capacity to see that there is more than one side to an issue, that a political conflict is, in fact, a *legitimate* controversy with rationales on both sides" (Mutz 2002, 122). Without this exposure to members of the political outgroup, it becomes far easier to view opponents with prejudice and their values as illegitimate. Thus, even as increasing numbers of Americans call themselves political independents, they tend to maintain partisan allegiances, as the social identities connected to the parties remain intact (Klar and Krupnikov 2016).

A lack of exposure to other ideas and people can make other ideas seem extreme and other people seem totally foreign, even when they are not. This includes both an intolerance of the policy positions of the other side and, more basically, an intolerance of the increasing strangeness of the outsiders. It can make a relatively moderate person intolerant of other views. The response is based on the strength and alignment of the identities, not the content of the identity-linked issue positions. This type of intolerance does not require partisan identities to correspond to highly extreme policy opinions. Even when our policy opinions remain relatively moderate, the alignment between our partisan and other identities can drive us toward prejudice against our opponents.

Magnified Ingroup Bias

The gradual sorting of partisans into the "correct" parties during the last fifty years has transformed a nation of cross-cutting partisan identities into a nation of increasingly aligned partisan identities. As Democrats and Repub-

licans grow socially sorted, they have to contend not only with the natural bias that comes from being a partisan but also with their own growing intolerance, sharpened by the shrinking of their social world. A conservative Democrat will feel closer to Republicans than a liberal Democrat would. A secular Republican will feel closer to Democrats than an evangelical Republican would. The sorting of our parties into socially distinct groups intensifies the partisan bias that we've always had. This is the American identity crisis. Not that we have partisan identities, we've always had those. The crisis emerges when partisan identities fall into alignment with other social identities, stoking our intolerance of each other to levels that are unsupported by our degrees of political disagreement.

In the previous chapter, I looked at feelings toward the two parties as an example of the emergence of partisan prejudice. Partisanship alone, in those models, was capable of driving identity-based prejudice. Independent of policy positions, partisans like their own party better than the other party. This is not surprising, but it is also not an unbiased choice.

In this chapter, however, I look at the added effect of a well-sorted partisan identity. As other identities fall into alignment with party, partyism only grows stronger. The other party seems more distant to a partisan, and it becomes easier to dislike them. I use the same measures of partisan prejudice—warmth bias and social-distance bias—so that the contribution of sorting will be clear. Sorting can be thought of in two different ways. The traditional understanding in political science is that sorting is simply the alignment between party and ideology. I argue that a number of additional social identities can be involved as well, as was demonstrated in chapter 2. In order to provide a thorough picture of the effects of sorting, I include both types of sorting here—simple ideological sorting and the more complex social sorting.

Warmer Feelings

In order to look at the added effect of sorting, I first examine only strong partisans. Although most people are not strong partisans, those who are most committed to their parties provide the strongest test for the effects of sorting. We know that strong partisans will be the most biased against the outgroup party, but if their ideological or other social identities are aligned with that strong partisan identity, can their partisan bias grow even larger? It turns out that it can.

In figure 5.1, I show the predicted difference in feeling-thermometer ratings between the two parties, controlling for political knowledge, education, race, gender, income, age, and church attendance.¹ Importantly, the regres-

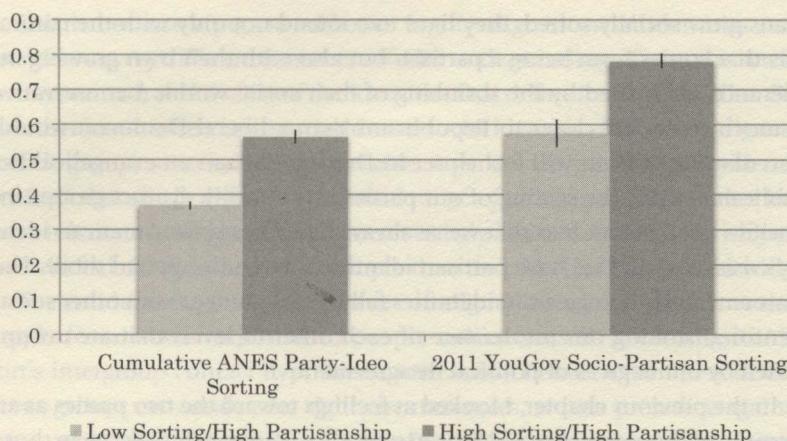


Figure 5.1. Predicted values of partisan prejudice (warmth bias) among strong partisans across levels of sorting

Note: Bars represent predicted values of warmth bias at varying levels of partisan-ideological sorting in the ANES models and social sorting in the YouGov model, controlling for issue extremity and constraint, political knowledge, education, race, gender, income, age, and church attendance. Originating regressions are shown in appendix table A.4. Ninety-five percent confidence intervals are shown. ANES samples are fully weighted. The low sorting score in the ANES models is not zero but 0.0857, the lowest sorting score possible given a strong partisan identity. In the YouGov sample, the lowest possible value of the social-sorting scale among strong partisans is 0.4286, and this is therefore the low sorting value used.

sions used to generate these predicted values also control for the extremity and constraint of policy positions,² so the intensity of policy attitudes about abortion, gay marriage, health care, race, immigration, defense spending, government spending in general, the importance of the deficit versus unemployment, and the degree to which they are all ideologically consistent is unchanging. I also constrain partisan identity to be as strong as it can be. The two bars in each cluster, therefore, are demonstrating the difference between a strong partisan with cross-cutting identities and a strong partisan with well-sorted identities. The only difference between the two bars is the level of sorting. This way, the added effect of sorting, above the regular effects of partisanship, is made clear. The two clusters of columns show the difference between sorted and unsorted partisans in two separate data sets.³

ANES Results

In the first column of figure 5.1, all of the American National Election Studies data from 1972 to 2012 are combined, showing a general picture of

partisan prejudice averaged over the last few decades. In these data, sorting is measured as the alignment between party and ideology, both measured using the seven-point scale traditionally used in the ANES.⁴ The partisan-ideological sorting score is calculated by taking the difference between the party and ideology scores, reverse-coding that difference, then multiplying it by the rated strength of each identity (i.e., lean, weak, strong). The sorting variable is coded to range from 0 (weakest and least-aligned identities) to 1 (strongest and perfectly aligned identities). In the cumulative file sample, a strong partisan with a cross-cutting ideological identity is predicted to rate the two parties about 37 degrees apart. However, add a strong and matching ideological identity, and the two parties all of a sudden have 56 degrees of warmth separating them. On a scale of 0 to 100, this is a large difference, and it is also statistically significant (the 95 percent confidence intervals are shown). Once the predicted difference between the two parties' feeling thermometers rises above 50, the respondent must be, to some extent, feeling coolly toward one party and warmly toward another. Even if one party is given a thermometer rating of zero (coldest), a 51 degree difference would put the other party at 51 degrees (on the warm side of the scale). There is no room for analogous feelings when the two parties are separated by more than 50 degrees. The addition of a sorted ideological identity, even when nothing else changes, causes a strong partisan to prefer his or her own party by 20 more degrees than partisanship alone can account for.

YouGov Results and the Social-Sorting Measure

The second cluster of bars is drawn from the 2011 YouGov study, which included the four-item social identity scale to measure partisan identity (described in chapter 4) and social-identity-based measures of six other identities, including liberal, conservative, secular, evangelical, black, and Tea Party.⁵ This is a far more powerful measure of sorting than the simple partisan-ideological sorting used in the ANES analyses⁶ and a far more powerful measure of partisan identity. It is created to assess the feeling described as early as 1961 by V. O. Key, who said, "A person may have so intimate an identification with the Republican Party that when it is assaulted he cringes as if he had been attacked personally" (219). This type of attachment is assessed by the social identity measure, and it is assessed for all of the identities listed.

The sociopartisan sorting scale is designed to (1) assess the objective alignment between a respondent's social identities, while (2) accounting for the subjective strength of those identities. This is done because the align-

ment between identities means nothing if a person does not identify with one or more groups. The objective alignment of these various identities is determined by linking each nonparty identity to one of the two parties according to connections found in prior research and verified by examining the mean level of each identity for each party separately in the data. Aligned identities are found to be, for the Democratic Party, liberal, secular, and black identities, and, for the Republican Party, conservative, evangelical, and Tea Party identities.

The social-sorting scale is constructed so that, for each party, aligned identities are coded with positive values while unaligned identities are coded negatively. The mean of the identity scores is then taken for each party, with aligned identities increasing the total value and unaligned identities decreasing the final score. The party-specific scores are gathered into one measure, recoded to range from 0 to 1, with 0 representing consistently weak or totally unaligned identities, and 1 representing the strongest, most consistently aligned identities.⁷ This is an additive scale, rather than an interactive model, because here I am not interested in what happens when one identity moves while the others are held constant. Instead, this measure is constructed to allow all of the identities to move in relation to each other, generating varying sorting scores.

Using the social identity scale generates stronger results than the seven-point scales available in the ANES. In figure 5.1, the strong partisan in the YouGov data whose ideological, racial, and/or religious identities are in conflict with his or her party still feels 58 degrees of difference between the inparty and the opposing party. This person already feels warmly toward one party and coolly toward the other. Even this powerful effect of partisanship, however, can be strengthened by adding a set of well-sorted social identities. Once this strong partisan is socially well sorted, the difference between the two parties rises to 78 degrees. This means that, even if the inparty is placed at the warmest possible location on the thermometer, the opposing party is nearly 30 degrees colder than a neutral evaluation.

The effect of sorting across both data sets is to increase the biasing effects of partisan identity, even when nothing else changes, including policy extremity and constraint. This means that as the country grows more sorted, our ability to judge each other fairly is diminished. Even if we can find realistic policy solutions that we could all agree on, the alignment of our social identities behind our parties can generate its own animosity and partisan bias.

The Role of Issues

In figure 5.1, issue positions were held constant, but what role do issues play as our identities pull us apart? In figure 5.2, I look only at the YouGov data, due to their superior measurement possibilities, and I replicate the sorting effects versus the partisanship effects across three levels of issue-position extremity.⁸ At low issue extremity, people have consistently moderate policy attitudes, and they consider those issues to be unimportant. At mean issue extremity, people are generally representative of the average American's policy attitudes and their sense of the importance of those policies. At high issue extremity, people have very extreme policy attitudes that they consider to be highly important.

Again, when partisanship is strong but combined with cross-cutting social identities, levels of bias are significantly lower than when a strong partisan identity is well aligned with other party-linked identities. But even more importantly, this is true across all three levels of issue-position extremity.

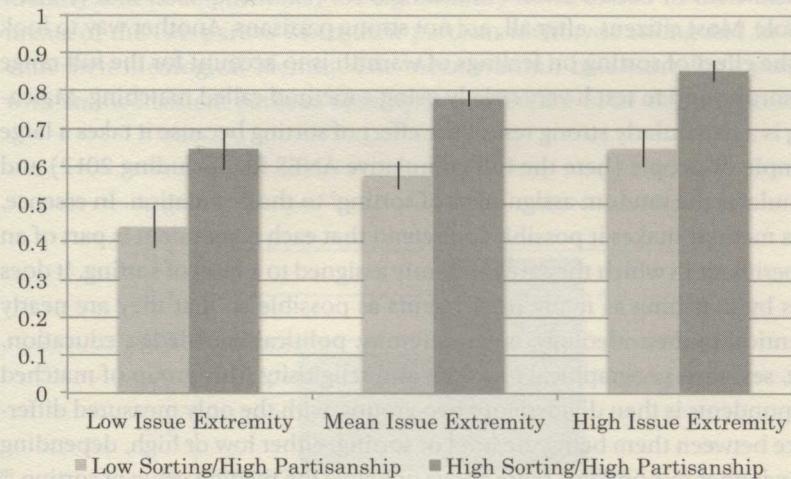


Figure 5.2. Predicted values of partisan prejudice (warmth bias) among strong partisans across levels of sorting and issue polarization

Note: Bars represent predicted values of warmth bias at varying levels of social sorting in the YouGov 2011 sample, across three levels of issue extremity, controlling for issue constraint, political knowledge, education, race, gender, income, age, and church attendance. Originating regression is shown in appendix table A.5. Ninety-five percent confidence intervals are shown. The lowest observed value of the social-sorting scale among strong partisans is 0.4286, and this is therefore the low sorting value used. The mean value of issue extremity is 0.65 (the median, not shown here, is 0.67).

ity. At every level of issue extremity, a cross-cutting set of identities reduces the partisan bias of a strong partisan by about 20 degrees on the feeling thermometer. Though overall bias is lower when issue extremity is low compared to when issue extremity is high, the difference between sorted partisans and unsorted partisans is significant no matter whether issue positions are extreme or moderate. This means that even in the moderate center of the electorate, where partisans from both sides find common ground on issues, a sorted identity is capable of driving citizens to feel increasingly warmly toward their own party and coolly toward their partisan opponents. The moderation of their policy attitudes does not protect them from the biasing effects of social sorting. However, a cross-cutting set of identities combined with a moderate set of issue positions does appear to be the only condition in which a strong partisan might place both parties on the same end of the feeling thermometer.

Matching

The previous tests looked at the effect of sorting among strong partisans. But this doesn't demonstrate the full effect of sorting in the electorate as a whole. Most citizens, after all, are not strong partisans. Another way to look at the effect of sorting on feelings of warmth is to account for the full range of sorting and to test it very strictly using a method called matching. Matching is a particularly strong test of the effect of sorting because it takes a large sample of people (here the full cumulative ANES file including 2012) and simulates the random assignment of sorting⁹ to the population. In essence, this method makes it possible to pretend that each respondent is part of an experiment in which they are randomly assigned to a level of sorting. It does this by matching as many respondents as possible so that they are nearly identical in their ideology, issue extremity, political knowledge, education, age, sex, race, geographical location, and religiosity. This group of matched respondents is then divided into two groups, with the only measured difference between them being the level of sorting, either low or high, depending on whether respondents score above or below the median value of sorting.¹⁰

Once the matched sample is divided into low and high levels of sorting, I look at the differences between them in how warmly they feel toward the two parties. Because of the exact matching, a simple difference in means on the matched data can reveal whether sorting has a measurable effect on partisan prejudice. Little else can influence changes in partisan prejudice because the respondents are constrained to be essentially identical in all other aspects observed.

To find any effect of sorting at all on people who are identical in their education, political knowledge, age, sex, race, location, religiosity, issue-position extremity,¹¹ and ideological identity would be a powerful outcome, particularly because people who are highly sorted are generally demographically *different* from those who are unsorted. It would be unlikely to find, in the general population, people who are identical in these multiple demographic and social domains divided evenly between cross-cutting and sorted identities. More likely is that the types of people who hold well-aligned ideological and partisan identities are similar to each other in levels of education, knowledge, religiosity, and issue-position extremity and different from those with cross-cutting identities. These other social similarities would likely drive sorted individuals to hold even more partisan bias than what is observed here. If sorting has any effect on the partisan feelings of these matched and evenly divided individuals, it is likely an underestimate of the effect in the population as a whole.

In figure 5.3, the samples are matched on ideology (and the abovementioned variables), while the extent to which partisan identity is aligned with that ideological identity is varied. Ideologically identical people (in both identity and issue positions) are significantly more biased in their assessments of the two parties when their partisan identity is strong and in line with their ideological identity. The mean warmth bias score for a person with an inconsistent partisan identity is a difference of 27 degrees between

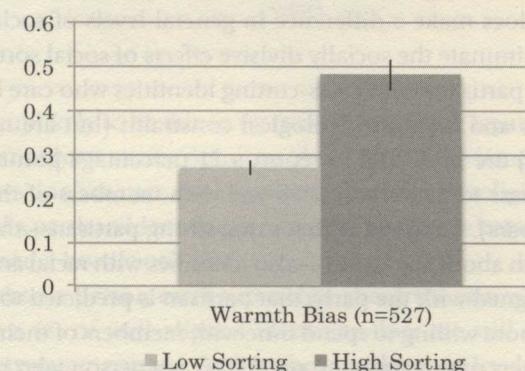


Figure 5.3. Difference in warmth bias by sorting in matched samples

Note: Respondents are matched on ideology, issue extremity, political knowledge, education, age, sex, race, geographical location, and church attendance. The only observed difference between the two bars is the degree to which party identity aligns with ideological identity. Bars represent the mean level of warmth bias for each group. Ninety-five percent confidence intervals are shown.

the two parties, while an otherwise similar person with a consistent partisan identity rates the parties 48 degrees apart. Moving from unsorted to sorted increases the difference in feelings toward the two parties by 20 degrees, even among people who are otherwise identical in multiple domains.

As partisanship moves into alignment with ideological identity, even when little else changes, partisan prejudice increases. People who are identical in their demographics, knowledge, issue positions, and ideological identity become significantly more biased when their party is aligned with their ideology. As the partisan rift in the American electorate falls into line with an ideological rift, average citizens are finding the opposing party increasingly different, unlikeable. Even when these citizens have a great deal in common, sorting alone is able to drive their opinions of the two parties apart.

Friends and Neighbors

It isn't only our feelings of warmth toward the political parties that are polarized by sorting. As the previous chapter showed, our feelings toward our fellow citizens are just as vulnerable to the prejudice that comes out of a highly sorted set of political identities. And again, just as in the case of warmth bias, our social bias against spending time with outgroup partisans is only strengthened by adding a set of sorted identities to our partisan loyalties. Figure 5.4 uses the YouGov data again to demonstrate the effects of social sorting, issue extremity, and constraint on individuals who are already strong partisans. Once again, though the level of policy-attitude extremity and constraint does make a difference in general levels of social-distance bias, it cannot eliminate the socially divisive effects of social sorting.

In figure 5.4, partisans with cross-cutting identities who care little about policy outcomes and have no ideological constraint (but are nonetheless strong partisans) are predicted to report a 21 percentage point difference in their willingness to be socially involved with members of the two parties (first set of bars). However, if that same strong partisan—the one who doesn't care much about any issues—also identifies with racial and religious social groups aligned with the party, that partisan is predicted to be 36 percentage points more willing to spend time with members of their own party than with members of the outgroup party. This is a person who holds moderate positions on abortion, gay marriage, immigration, health care, and the deficit and unemployment, considers all of these issues to be unimportant, and demonstrates no ideological bent one way or the other. Party-matched racial and religious social identities make a 15 percentage point difference in the social tolerance of ingroup and outgroup partisans. This social dis-

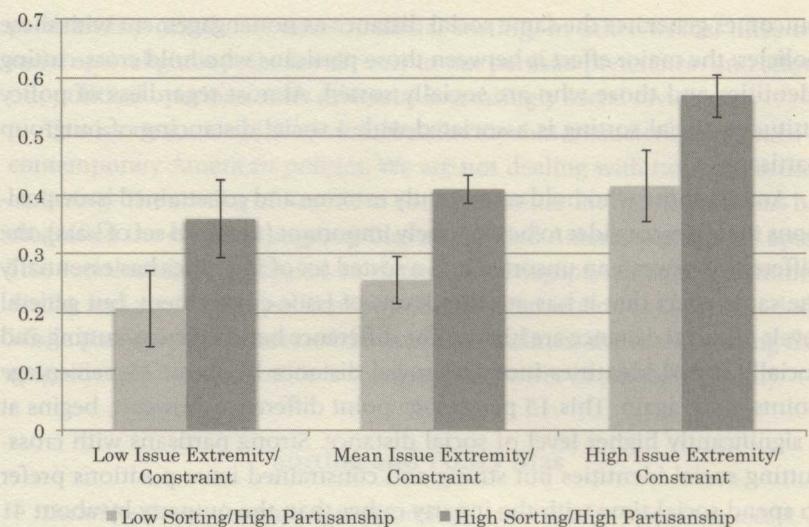


Figure 5.4. Predicted social-distance bias by social sorting

Note: Bars represent predicted values of social-distance bias at varying levels of social sorting in the YouGov 2011 sample, across three levels of issue positions, controlling for political knowledge, education, race, gender, income, age, and church attendance. Originating regression is shown in appendix table A.6. Ninety-five percent confidence intervals are shown. The lowest observed value of the social-sorting scale among strong partisans is 0.43, and this is therefore the low sorting value used. Social distance scale ranges from 0 (no difference in willingness to interact socially with members of the two parties) to 1 (maximal difference in willingness to interact socially with members of the two parties). There is a significant interaction between issue extremity and constraint in this model, so both variables are included, both set at their minimum, mean, and maximum values for each set of predicted values.

comfort is unlikely to be due to worries about policy arguments, these individuals do not have strong opinions about any of the issues measured here. When issues don't matter, the alignment of racial and religious social identities behind a partisan identity can make the difference between a welcoming neighbor and a hostile one.

Even when a person cares somewhat about the issues measured, when they hold a set of well-aligned identities they are still less comfortable around outgroup partisans. In fact, those with mean levels of issue extremity and constraint are not statistically different from those who do not care about issues. These moderate partisans with cross-cutting identities (in the second set of bars) are about 15 percentage points more comfortable spending time with outparty (versus inparty) members than are the partisans with well-aligned social identities. A moderate involvement with policy

outcomes generates the same social distance as nonengagement with these policies; the major effect is between those partisans who hold cross-cutting identities and those who are socially sorted. Almost regardless of policy attitudes, social sorting is associated with a social distancing of outgroup partisans.

Among those who hold consistently extreme and constrained issue positions that they consider to be extremely important (the third set of bars), the difference between an unsorted and a sorted set of identities has essentially the same effect that it has at other levels of issue engagement, but general levels of social distance are higher. The difference between cross-cutting and socially sorted identities increases social distance by about 15 percentage points, once again. This 15 percentage point difference, however, begins at a significantly higher level of social distance. Strong partisans with cross-cutting social identities but strong and constrained issue positions prefer to spend social time with the inparty rather than the outparty by about 41 percentage points. Add a set of well-sorted racial and religious social identities, and this preference difference increases to 57 percentage points. The effect of strong and constrained issue positions, then, is to increase the total level of social distance between partisans but not to alter the effect of social sorting at all.

All of this means that highly sorted partisans will be biased against their outparty friends, neighbors, and romantic interests no matter what they think about political issues. Not only that, but strong partisans with cross-cutting identities will demonstrate the most tolerance toward their political opponents. If any grounds can be found for political harmony in American politics, it will not be the common ground of shared policy opinions. One robust force for political harmony appears to be an increasingly rare set of cross-cutting political identities rather than a moderate set of issue positions. Even in a group of partisans who all hold moderate, conflicting issue positions, a set of sorted identities will drive them to dislike and avoid contact with their friends and neighbors from the outgroup party. And even among those strong partisans who care a great deal about issues, they are more likely to be socially tolerant of other partisans if their racial and religious identities do not match their party. The increasing levels of social sorting described in chapter 3 are encouraging Americans to avoid social contact with members of the opposing party. The more socially sorted American partisans become, the more they will want to pull away from one another. This outcome goes beyond the simple effect of partisan identity. Partisanship can drive significant levels of partisan prejudice, but, when our social identities line up behind our parties, our prejudices expand beyond what

partisanship can do on its own. Social sorting, in other words, links our racial and religious prejudice directly to our partisan preferences and allows our political opinions to be driven by increasingly social divides.

This is one source of the political acrimony that characterizes so much of contemporary American politics. We are not dealing with normal partisan bickering. The sorting of American social identities into partisan teams has magnified the effects of ingroup bias and pulled American partisans apart. This social sorting has created, in essence, two megaparties, whose members dislike and avoid their political opponents, even when they live next door. While partisanship is not new in American politics, the social sorting that magnifies partisan prejudice is changing the power of partisan identity.

Sorting and Policy Bias

The White House press starts from the premise: Is the President up or down today? Is this good politically or not good politically? There's far less interest in the substance of policy.

—Mike McCurry, White House Press Secretary, 2014

The primacy of social sorting as a driver of partisan prejudice is not consistent with a common view of politics. The folk theory of representative democracy, named by Achen and Bartels (2016a), assumes that individual citizens choose to vote for a party because it best represents their own interests and values. The classic Downsian view of voting assumes that parties compete, in their policy positions, for the approval of the median voter, who is always voting in his or her self-interest (Downs 1957). In this view, the party that comes closest to the median policy attitude among all voters will win the majority of the votes. This premise requires that voters make choices based mainly on the policy positions of parties and their proximity to voters' own positions. Davis, Hinich, and Ordeshook, in 1970, wrote that "the fundamental process of politics is the aggregation of citizens' preferences into a collective—a social—choice . . . in which the social choice is a policy package which the victorious candidate advocates" (426). The "social choice" is seen as policy-based. Policy positions are, in this traditional view, the fundamental basis of politics and of voter decision-making.

This view of the centrality of policy attitudes among the citizenry is a highly optimistic view of American political thought. A large body of literature has found Americans' understanding of political policy debates to be sorely lacking.¹² Still, this is the way that many Americans tend to under-

stand electoral contests and political battles. Democrats and Republicans are in a battle over health care, over abortion, over tax policy. The political fights in American politics are supposed to be *about* something.

An abundance of evidence, however, contradicts this view. Geoffrey Cohen, in 2003, found issue positions to be highly dependent on group and party cues. In an experiment in which he varied the policies of the two parties, liberals expressed support for a harsh welfare program and conservatives expressed support for a lavish welfare program when they were told that their ingroup party supported the policy. Notably, these respondents did not believe that their position had been influenced by their party affiliation. They were capable of coming up with explanations for why they held these beliefs. This result, in particular, casts doubt on the general perception expressed among partisans and pundits that our political evaluations are drawn entirely from the conviction of our issue opinions. In fact, issue positions appear to be quite slippery.

A Pew poll from June 2013 found that, under Republican president George W. Bush, 38 percent more Republicans than Democrats believed that NSA surveillance programs were acceptable, while under Democratic president Barack Obama, Republicans were 12 percent less supportive of NSA surveillance than Democrats. The question prompt was identical, the only difference was the party of the president. As in Cohen's experiment, it is likely that these voters, if asked, would have provided logical reasons for their change of heart. But, as Cohen experimentally demonstrated, the influence of party loyalty is capable of reversing a single person's well-argued issue position without them even realizing it.

Part of the reason that policy opinions are so vulnerable to partisan cues is that partisans tend to engage more in motivated reasoning when their social settings are more homogeneous (Klar 2014)—a condition that is more likely in more highly sorted groups (Mutz 2002). As we sort ourselves into socially uniform parties, we lose perspective on what we really believe and begin to simply defend the positions that our party takes. It is a self-defense mechanism that takes hold when our parties take up larger and larger parts of who we think we are. The more parts of our identities that are linked with our parties, the more the success of our parties becomes more important than any real policy outcomes.

This is why, when we judge the Democratic and Republican parties, our issue positions have become less consequential than our identities. In figure 5.5, predicted values of warmth bias are shown at varying levels of policy extremity¹³ and constraint and then, separately, at varying levels of sociopartisan sorting. The difference between the two panels is telling. The bars repre-

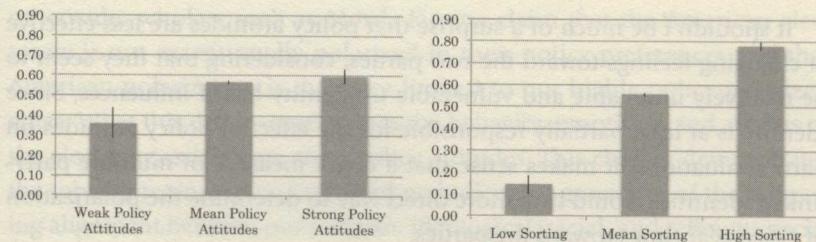


Figure 5.5. Predicted warmth bias by levels of social sorting and policy attitudes

Note: Bars represent predicted values of warmth bias (the difference between Democratic and Republican feeling thermometers) at varying levels of social sorting in the YouGov 2011 sample, controlling for political knowledge, education, race, gender, income, age, and church attendance. Originating regression is shown in appendix table A.7. Ninety-five percent confidence intervals are shown. Mean value of policy extremity is 0.66, of policy constraint is 0.56, and of social sorting is 0.71 out of 1.0.

sent the predicted distance between the Democratic and Republican feeling thermometers. In the first panel, levels of issue extremity and constraint are varied while all other variables are held at their means or modes. Policy attitudes do have a significant effect on feelings toward the two parties. People with the most extreme and constrained policy attitudes place the two parties 60 degrees apart, while those with the most moderate and unconstrained policy attitudes place the parties 36 degrees apart. The difference in our feelings toward the two parties grows by 24 degrees when we move from a total moderate who cares little about issues to an extreme ideologue who cares a great deal about issues.

This effect, however, is noticeably different from the effect of sorting shown in the second panel of figure 5.5. Those people with the most cross-cutting racial, religious, and partisan identities (and average policy attitudes) are predicted to place the two parties 14 degrees apart on the feeling thermometer. This is less than half the size of the partisan gap seen among those with the most moderate policy attitudes. A set of cross-cutting identities is much better than moderate issue positions at equalizing feelings toward the two parties. All else equal, the most moderate and unconstrained policy attitudes still allow a strong preference for one party over the other, while a set of cross-cutting identities is a truly moderating force in driving feelings toward the two parties. At the other end of the spectrum, a very well sorted person places the two parties 78 points apart. The difference in feelings toward the two parties grows by 64 degrees when we move from a set of cross-cutting identities to a set of well-sorted identities. The effect of sorting is nearly three times larger than the effect of issue extremity.

It shouldn't be much of a surprise that policy attitudes are less effective at changing feelings toward the two parties, considering that they seem to be relatively unreliable and vulnerable to identity-based influences. Since identity is at least partially responsible for the effect of policy attitudes on party evaluations, it makes sense that a direct measure of multiple party-linked identities would be a more direct way to determine the polarization of citizens' feelings toward the parties.

This does, however, fly in the face of the folk narrative about political polarization. Many media stories focus on the policy elements of partisan battles and present elections as referenda on public opinion about policies. Polls are examined to see what percent of America agrees with policies X, Y, and Z. Citizens assume that we have reasons for our opinions, and that parties win or lose based on our thoughtful choices. In fact, the data presented here reliably show that partisan identities and the social identities that line up behind them have a significant effect on our political judgments. Political scientists have long known that partisan identities can affect our policy attitudes and our feelings about political contests. What is new here is the idea that partisan identities are only part of the story. The sorting that has often been recognized as a simple realignment of identities has in fact been able to motivate substantially larger levels of partisan bias than partisanship alone could do.

When Americans decide how they feel about the Democratic and Republican parties, they only partially turn to an assessment of their own policy opinions. They are driven, substantially, by a need to maintain a positive distinctiveness for their own team. And as their team grows increasingly socially homogeneous, it becomes even more important for it to be the best. The opposing party becomes more distant and unfamiliar as our social identities line up behind our partisan identities. This makes it all the more important for partisans to see their own party as better than the other. Unfortunately, this is not normatively useful for democratic representation. The American system of democracy, as it grows increasingly socially polarized, will rely less on policy preferences and more on knee-jerk "evaluations" that should rightfully be called partisan prejudice.

Is This Polarization?

In the study of partisan polarization, a debate continues between two camps of political scientists. On one side, scholars such as Alan Abramowitz argue that the American electorate is polarizing at the level of the mass electorate and that this polarization is defined by American policy attitudes. On the

other side, scholars such as Morris Fiorina claim that the American electorate is not exceptionally polarized in their policy preferences and that American polarization is therefore limited to our highly policy-polarized elites. What this debate overlooks is the behavior, emotions, and actions of the electorate, aside from their policy attitudes. This chapter demonstrates the robust presence of an ingrained prejudice that grows out of the increasing alignment between our partisan, ideological, racial, and religious social identities. This is a distinctly social phenomenon, unbound by the extremity of policy attitudes, but undeniably a sign of a polarizing electorate. Political scientists can disagree until we are blue in the face over the extent of America's policy polarization, but are citizens prejudiced in their evaluations of political opponents? Absolutely. Even when they can agree with them.

Looking at partisan polarization in a less policy-focused way allows us to discover many areas of American political life, including our political judgment, emotion, and actions, that don't necessarily correspond to policy extremism or polarization but are nonetheless present. Policy attitudes are said to be polarized when they can demonstrate an extreme and bimodal distribution of policy positions, with Democrats clustered on the extreme liberal end of the spectrum and Republicans clustered on the extreme conservative end of the spectrum. Abramowitz and Fiorina have been going over this territory repeatedly in the last few decades, so I will not enter this particular debate here. However, it is possible for Americans to be socially polarized even when their policy positions are not, or when those policy attitudes are relatively less polarized. A distinctly social type of polarization that includes political prejudice, anger, enthusiasm, and activism does exist, and it is being driven by political and social identities. An electorate that increasingly treats its political opponents as enemies, with ever-growing levels of prejudice, offensive action, and anger, is a clear sign of partisan polarization occurring within the citizenry. If issue positions do not follow precisely this pattern of behavioral polarization, it does not make those increasingly tribal partisan interactions irrelevant.

SIX

The Outrage and Elation of Partisan Sorting

Trump has gotten voters who are so angry that they are willing to put their ideological concerns aside. We have never seen voters do that to this extent. They're saying, "We're so ticked off that that's the only message that matters."

—Patrick Murray, pollster, 2016 (quoted in Goldmacher 2016)

In April of 2014, the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) attempted to round up and repossess a herd of cows belonging to a man named Cliven Bundy. Bundy grazed his cattle on federal land in Nevada, for which he was legally required to pay grazing fees. He had refused to pay these fees since 1993, claiming ownership of the land. By 2014, the BLM estimated that Bundy owed the federal government \$1 million. As members of the BLM began to round up Bundy's cattle, some members of Bundy's family began protesting and confronting federal officials. Within days, a protest camp formed at Bundy's farm with a sign at the entrance reading "MILITA SIGHN IN" (Fuller 2014). Hundreds of self-identified members of armed militias gathered on Bundy's land, preparing for a violent battle against the federal employees. They dressed in paramilitary gear, set up illegal checkpoints, aimed their weapons at law-enforcement officials and federal employees, and threatened to bomb and kill people at local businesses (MacNab 2014). The story exploded in the national media, with conservative news sources praising Bundy as a hero, and liberal news sources calling him a terrorist and a "big fat million dollar welfare dead beat" (Vyan 2014).

Conservatives were outraged at the federal government's treatment of Bundy. And, with guns drawn, hundreds of militiamen joined Bundy in expressing their anger, if not outright rebellion, against the government. An attorney named Larry Klayman wrote in support of Bundy:

Before these government goons do come back, let this message go forth. Barack Hussein Obama, Harry Reid and the gutless Republican establishment leaders in Congress who roll over to and further this continued government tyranny, We the People have now risen up and we intend to remove you legally from office. This country belongs to us, not you. This land is our land! And, we will fight you will [sic] all legal means, including exercising our legitimate Second Amendment rights of self-defense, to end your tyranny and restore freedom to our shores! (Klayman 2014)

The case of a local rancher who hadn't paid his taxes was quickly turned into a national fiasco, and a source of potent outrage among conservatives. How did Cliven Bundy so quickly become a national conservative icon? The answer—as Paul Waldman (2014) put it in the *Washington Post*—was that "when conservatives looked at Bundy . . . everything about him told them he was their kind of guy."

Bundy checked off many of the boxes that make up the Republican Party. A strong conservative, a white man, a rural southerner, he represented the convergence of the social identities that hold the Republican Party together. This convergence of identities made it much easier for Republicans to get angry on his behalf, and for Democrats to get angry at him. Conservatives, as they defended Bundy, did focus on a policy aspect of the conflict—the overreach of the federal government. But for many conservatives, particularly under Democratic president Barack Obama, the federal government, as Larry Klayman decried, had become more of an enemy—a set of "goons"—than the foundation of a policy position.

This sort of intense anger is not rare in modern American politics. In 2009, when Congress was debating what would eventually become the Affordable Care Act, town hall meetings across America erupted with angry outbursts. *Politico* reported, "Screaming constituents, protesters dragged out by the cops, congressmen fearful for their safety—welcome to the new town-hall-style meeting, the once-staid forum that is rapidly turning into a house of horrors for members of Congress" (Isenstadt 2009). At the same time, members of the Tea Party held angry protests in Washington. In 2011, in New York City, a liberal group calling themselves Occupy Wall Street protested against a number of economic, political, and social injustices. The New York protests spread to dozens of other cities and were described by the *New York Times* as "Countless Grievances, One Thread: We're Angry" (Lacey 2011). Turn on almost any cable news station during the last ten years, and you can find a political pundit expressing anger at a new political development.

Perhaps the pinnacle of all of this anger has been the unexpected success of the 2016 presidential campaign of Donald Trump. According to a 2016 Pew poll, the Americans who expressed anger at the government tended strongly to be Trump supporters. Trump is a fascinating case because, as a candidate, his policy positions were well known to be quite flexible, if not nonexistent.

In a 2016 *Washington Post* article, Philip Rucker and Dan Balz wrote, "Donald Trump fits no simple ideological framework. The presidential candidate collects thoughts from across the spectrum. Added together, however, his ideas represent a sharp departure from many of the Republican Party's values and priorities dating back half a century or more. . . . Trump's presidential candidacy has been described as a hostile takeover of the Republican Party. In reality it appears more a movement that threatens to subsume the GOP behind a menu of ideas and instincts that might best be described as 'America Wins.'" In this sense, the Trump candidacy distilled perfectly what Tajfel found in his minimal group paradigm experiments. Winning grows increasingly important as identities grow stronger. To this point, Trump's support was also strongest among those voters who shared multiple Republican-linked identities (Mason and Davis 2016). These particularly include white and Christian identities. Trump's campaign did not tear the Republican Party apart; he spoke directly to the social groups that have aligned with the Republican Party in recent years, and he did so with little real policy content.

The alignment of multiple social identities can directly affect the degree of anger with which individuals respond to identity threats. As identities have moved into alignment in recent years, levels of anger at outgroup candidates have also increased. Though these are simply correlational trends, they serve to set up the story to come.

One crude way to examine average levels of anger over time is to look at one question asked by the American National Election Studies every year beginning in 1980. The item asks respondents whether each presidential candidate "has—because of the kind of person he is, or because of something he has done—made you feel angry." I coded this item so that it refers only to people's feelings of anger toward the outgroup candidate. The numbers in figure 6.1 represent the percentage of people who have reported feeling angry at the outgroup candidate in each presidential election year.¹

This is a rough measure and fluctuates widely depending on the context of the election. For example, Barack Obama's 2008 Yes We Can campaign was generally oriented toward hope and change and was the first election

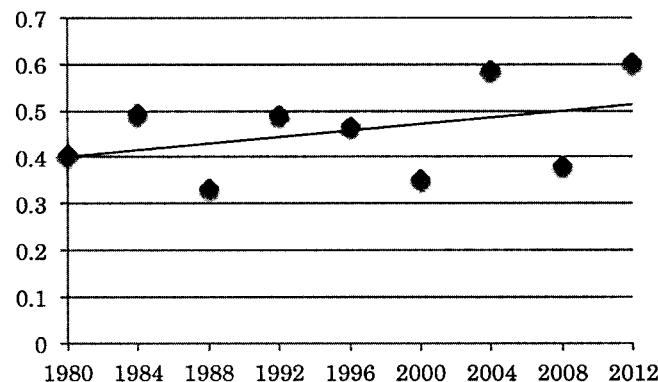


Figure 6.1. Anger toward the outgroup presidential candidate

Note: Data drawn from the weighted ANES cumulative data file, 1948–2012. Numbers represent the percentage of people who reported feeling angry at the outgroup presidential candidate, coded as a presidential candidate of the party that the respondent does not belong to. Question was first asked in 1980. Pure independents are excluded.

in which an African American was elected president. Republicans (those for whom Obama was the outgroup candidate), had little to openly express anger about. Not only did social norms against racism briefly tamp down open partisan rancor, but it was, after all, a Republican president who had only months before presided over one of the greatest financial disasters in national history. Republicans may have been angry, but in that moment they were not angry at the relatively unknown Barack Obama. (That would come later.)

In the same election, John McCain, the Republican, had a reputation as a centrist, party-bucking politician who could be relied upon to make compromises. Democrats (those for whom McCain was the outgroup candidate) therefore had little to hold against him personally. Their ire was reserved for the sitting president, George W. Bush, who held some of the lowest approval ratings of all time.

An earlier drop in anger had registered in the election of 2000, when voters famously saw little difference between the two major party candidates. But these relatively low-anger elections did nothing to reduce anger in the following elections. If anything, the low-anger elections worked as sling-shots, pulling levels of anger down, only to shoot them back up in the following elections to unprecedented levels. Voters in recent years, when they do feel angry, feel angrier. In both 2004 and 2012, levels of anger reached 60

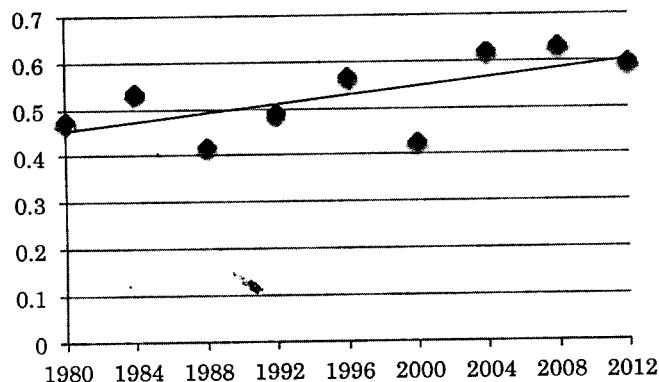


Figure 6.2. Enthusiasm for the ingroup presidential candidate

Note: Data drawn from the weighted ANES cumulative data file, 1948–2012. Numbers represent the percentage of people who reported feeling proud of the ingroup presidential candidate, coded as a presidential candidate of the party that the respondent does belong to. Pure independents are excluded.

percent of the partisan population for the first time since the measure was introduced in 1980.

In figure 6.1, the general trend over time is drawn as a straight line, which is moving upward, toward more anger. In 1980, 40 percent of partisans felt anger toward the opposing presidential candidate, and by 2012 that number had increased to 60 percent. Even accounting for fluctuations, the trend line indicates a 10 percentage point average increase in the proportion of people reporting angry feelings at their party's main opponent since 1980. The anecdotes of partisan rancor and vitriol don't seem to be simply isolated events. There has been a modest but increasing trend toward angrier American politics.

This is not the entire story, however. Americans are not only angrier at their political opponents, they are also happier with their own team's candidates. Figure 6.2 shows trends in the percentages of Americans who claim they have felt "proud" of their ingroup presidential candidate.

Just as in the case of anger toward the outgroup candidate, pride for the ingroup candidate is steadily, if noisily, rising. The general trend from 1980 to 2012 is a mean increase in pride of 12 percentage points. In the three presidential elections since 2000, around 60 percent of partisans felt proud of their presidential candidate, compared to numbers hovering around 50 percent in the decades before. So, just as Americans are growing increas-

ingly angry at their opponents' candidates, they are growing increasingly enthusiastic about their own.

Combine this anger and pride in every presidential election, and we see a picture of an electorate that is increasingly emotionally reactive. As time progresses, American partisans are more likely to feel angry at their opponents and proud of their own candidates. We are priming the pump for a very energetic battle.

Why Are We So Emotional?

Where is all this emotion coming from? In fact, anger and enthusiasm can be understood as very natural reactions to the group-based competition and threats that partisans face on a regular basis. As elections grow longer—and political media coverage explains governing as a constant competition between Democrats and Republicans—partisans are inundated with messages that their group is in the midst of a fight for superiority over the out-group. Every vote in Congress, then, has the potential to feel like a threat to an attentive partisan. These party threats are capable of motivating significant levels of both anger and enthusiasm in party identifiers, driven not simply by a dissatisfaction with potential policy outcomes or a potential policy victory, but by a much deeper, more primal psychological reaction to group competition.

Intergroup emotions theory (an outgrowth of social identity theory) has found that strongly identified group members react with stronger emotions, particularly anger and enthusiasm, to group threats (Mackie, Devos, and Smith 2000). According to this theory, group-based partisan bias leads strongly identified partisans to believe (correctly or not) that their party is the generally favored party—that Americans like them the best. The sense that the party is strong, enjoying collective support, increases their ability to feel anger and engage in confrontational behavior. This is because when the ingroup is perceived to be stronger than the outgroup, anger results from intergroup competition, while the perception of a weak ingroup leads to anxiety in the face of group competition. These are natural psychological reactions to group competition, driven not by practical thoughts about the concrete outcomes of an intergroup competition but by evolutionarily advantageous reactions to group competition and threat. A strong group is in a powerful position to react to threat with anger and offense, while a weak group is not. A weak group is expected to react to the same threat with anxiety. Partisan anger therefore is not only driven from a loss of tangible

resources but also an outgrowth of natural offensive behavior that emerges from faith in the power of the ingroup and the aggressive tendencies that group allegiance allows.

Importantly, this emotional reaction depends on a threat to the status of the group. As identities grow stronger, anger only increases if the group is perceived to be under some kind of threat from the outgroup. Kevin Arceaneaux and Martin Johnson in their 2013 book remind us that personalities on cable news shows “raise their voice in outraged frustration, badger hostile guests, and hurl insults at the other side. . . . The apparent goal is to steel and energize the in-partisans while taunting the out-partisans” (75). These types of partisan threats are present on cable news shows, in political commercials, in print media, and even, during election seasons, in simple polls. Status threats are potent emotional catalysts. Pierce, Rogers, and Snyder (2016) found that, in the week following the Democratic presidential victory in the 2012 election, Republicans felt significantly sadder than they had the previous week. But they weren’t simply sad. They felt sadder than American parents felt in the week after hearing about the Newtown Shootings. They felt sadder than Bostonians in the week after the Boston Marathon bombing. Republicans, because their party had lost, reported feeling some extremely powerful negative emotions.

These negative reactions can, however, help to generate positive emotions as well. In 1994, Nyla Branscombe and Daniel Wann conducted a study in which they asked people to watch the movie *Rocky IV*. For some respondents, they altered the movie so that, in the end, Rocky is defeated by the Russian fighter, Ivan Drago. In this condition, those people who felt most closely identified with being American took severe hits to their own self-esteem. They felt very negatively about themselves after watching Rocky lose. But they were then given a chance to express their levels of distrust and dislike of Russians in general. Those who did this, who expressed many kinds of negative feelings about Russians, restored their self-esteem. These people felt better about themselves by making insulting judgments about their Russian outgroup. Imagine these effects, now, in terms of partisan competition. When partisans lose an election, they take a hit to their self-esteem, which is wrapped up in their partisan identity. One effective way of soothing this damage is to lash out at partisan opponents. It is this threat to self-esteem that drives partisan insults and rage, which lead to a consequent improvement in self-esteem. This is a cycle, in which threats to group status lead to angry and insulting reactions, which then lead to higher assessments of group status, which cause threats to have even larger effects. Our anger and enthusiasm are fueling each other.

Not only do strong identities push partisans to react to threats with anger and excitement but aligned identities add even more anger to every threat response. Sonia Roccas and Marilyn Brewer (2002) raised the possibility that those with highly aligned identities may be less psychologically equipped to cope with threats to group status. This is because a person with a highly sorted set of identities is more socially isolated and therefore less experienced in dealing with measured conflict. This can lead to higher levels of negative emotions when confronted with threat.

When multiple identities are strongly aligned, a threat to one identity affects the status of multiple other identities. The possible damage to a person’s self-esteem grows as more identities are partnered with the damaged group. While stronger identities motivate increased anger and excitement in the face of group threat, more sorted identities have an even larger effect. We have more self-esteem real estate to protect as our identities are linked together.

Although anecdotal stories of political anger and fervor appear to be provoked largely by issues such as health-care reform, gay marriage, abortion, and taxation, social sorting can powerfully drive emotion, contrary to the popular perception that only practical disagreements trigger higher levels of political rancor. Because a highly sorted set of identities increases an individual’s perceived differences between groups, the emotions that result from group conflict are likely to be heightened among well-sorted partisans, regardless of policy opinions.

Why Do Emotions Matter?

Before delving into the evidence for the social roots of emotions, it is important to examine why emotions matter in the first place. Anger and enthusiasm seem like politically important emotions, but why? And why focus on these two emotions in particular?

The study of emotion in political science is relatively new, and only recently has it been studied using rigorous empirical methods. One of the better-known theories of emotion in politics is affective intelligence theory, introduced by Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen (2000). This theory argued that it was not sufficient to study the simple difference between positive and negative (valence) emotions and that far more information could be obtained if researchers looked at different types of emotions within each category—particularly in the category of negative emotions. They determined that the difference between anger and anxiety was significant, especially when looking at political behavior. The two types of negative emo-

tions, in fact, can have opposite effects on judgment and action. Anxiety was found to lead to more thoughtful processing of information, while anger led to more reliance on easily available cues such as social identities. More recent research on anxiety by Albertson and Gadarian (2015) has found that anxious citizens do in fact search out more information, but they do so in a biased way, looking especially for threatening information. In any case, while anxious citizens tend to look for new information, angry and enthusiastic citizens do not.

A related body of research has found anger and enthusiasm to be particularly good at driving action. In 2011, Valentino and colleagues found that those who were angry were more inclined to sign political petitions, register other people to vote, participate in political protests, volunteer for a campaign, and donate money. Van Zomeren, Spears, and Leach (2008) discovered that a strong group identity increased collective-action tendencies via group-based anger. That is, when members of a social group (students) were presented with a threat (rising student fees), they reacted with anger, and this anger precipitated collective political action. Furthermore, Groenendyk and Banks (2014) found that feelings of enthusiasm increased citizens' likelihood of urging others to vote for a particular candidate, wearing a campaign button, attending political rallies, and donating to a candidate or party. Banks (2016) has found fascinating evidence that feelings of anger in white Americans push them to think in more racial terms. In other words, the anger that Banks observes is directly linked to (and occurs prior to) racial divisions into ingroup and outgroup categories. Nonracial anger pushes racially conservative individuals to think about race.

Combined with intergroup emotions theory, all of this research points to the idea that strong group identities and intergroup divisions facilitate increasingly angry and enthusiastic responses to group threats. While political enthusiasm is not usually thought of as problematic, it, along with anger, leads to increased political activity based not on policy goals but on knee-jerk identity-defense responses. The key point, for the purposes of this book, is that anger and enthusiasm are the primary emotional drivers of political action, and they are not drivers of thoughtful processing of information. The following chapter addresses the direct effects of social sorting on activism, but these emotions are important to examine on their own, as they are capable of provoking much of the action and judgment that contributes to current levels of social polarization. The difference between anxious and angry responses (though they are highly correlated in any given event) helps to explain how it is that partisans can grow increasingly divided even when

their policy positions do not diverge. Anger is a powerful emotion that can drive group identifiers apart, reflexively. It is therefore important to examine the group-based drivers of both anger and enthusiasm, the two emotions that lead to relatively thoughtless political action.

Evidence from a Panel Study

Between 1992 and 1996, when partisan sorting was in flux, the ANES ran a panel study—interviewing the same people in 1996 that they had interviewed in 1992. In figure 6.3, I compare changes in anger at the outgroup candidate and issue intensity² among three groups of citizens—those whose level of partisan-ideological sorting increased, those whose level of sorting did not change, and those whose level of sorting decreased between 1992 and 1996.

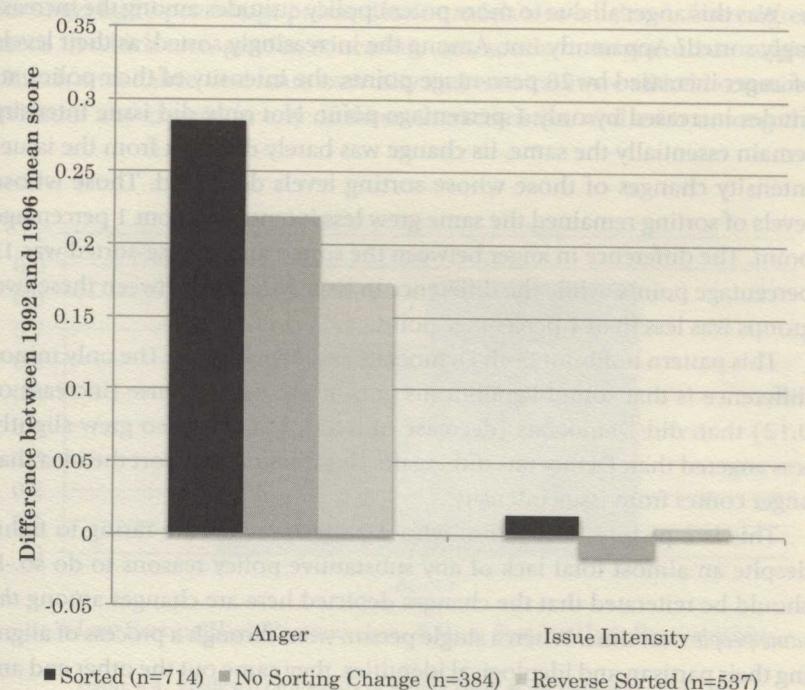


Figure 6.3. Change in anger and issue extremity between 1992 and 1996 by sorting
 Note: Data drawn from the ANES 1992–1996 Panel Study. Demographic controls are not necessary as this is a reinterview of the same individuals. Sorting is limited to the partisan-ideological sorting measure, due to data limitations.

Among those people who became increasingly sorted between 1992 and 1996, reported anger at the outgroup candidate increased by 28 percentage points. In comparison, among those whose sorting did not change, anger increased by 22 percentage points, and those whose level of sorting decreased reported a 17 percentage point increase in feeling angry at the outgroup candidate. All three groups reported an increase in anger, which is at least partly contextual. In the intervening four years, Republicans had taken the majority of the House of Representatives for the first time in forty years, and a new partisan conflict between the Democratic president and the Republican House had heated up to the point of a government shutdown in 1995. There was a general feeling of mounting partisan discord. But, importantly, Americans didn't all get angry in the same way. The people whose partisan and ideological identities had moved into alignment were the ones whose anger increased the most. In comparison, when partisan and ideological identities had not moved toward alignment, people were less readily angered.

Was this anger all due to more potent policy attitudes among the increasingly sorted? Apparently not. Among the increasingly sorted, as their levels of anger increased by 28 percentage points, the intensity of their policy attitudes increased by only 1 percentage point. Not only did issue intensity remain essentially the same, its change was barely different from the issue-intensity changes of those whose sorting levels decreased. Those whose levels of sorting remained the same grew less intense by about 1 percentage point. The difference in anger between the sorted and reverse-sorted was 11 percentage points, while the difference in issue intensity between these two groups was less than 1 percentage point.

This pattern holds for both Democrats and Republicans. The only minor difference is that sorted Republicans grew more issue intense (increase of 0.12) than did Democrats (decrease of 0.05), but they also grew slightly less angered than Democrats did. Again, this does not support the idea that anger comes from issue intensity.

This is a picture of a nation whose partisan teams are raring to fight, despite an almost total lack of any substantive policy reasons to do so. It should be reiterated that the changes depicted here are changes among *the same people* over time. When a single person went through a process of aligning their partisan and ideological identities, they came out the other end angrier than they entered. More so than other Americans. Partisan-ideological sorting, without affecting policy extremism, generated significant changes in anger.

Sorting or Party Identity?

Is it possible that these effects of sorting on emotion can be explained by the effects of partisan identity alone? Not likely. Figure 6.4 looks once again at strong partisans in the cumulative ANES data, predicting their probability of feeling angry using logit models (see originating models in the appendix). Among these intense partisans, those who have cross-cutting ideological identities are certainly angry at the outgroup candidate. There is a 66 percent probability that a cross-pressured but strongly committed partisan will report feeling anger. However, once that strong partisanship is accompanied by a strong and well-aligned ideological identity, there is an 86 percent probability that they will report feeling anger. These are substantively and statistically significant differences.³

In an emotionally charged election, a simple change in the alignment of partisan and ideological identities has the power to increase the potential for anger by 20 percentage points. These models also are drawn from regressions in which race, gender, education, age, southern origin, urban origin, church attendance, and issue extremity and constraint are all held constant. Without any change in any of these characteristics, and even among the

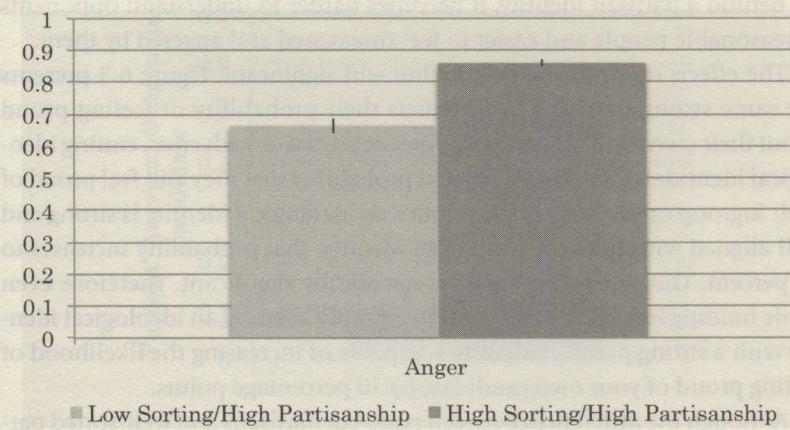


Figure 6.4. Predicted probability of feeling anger at the outgroup candidate
Note: Predicted probabilities drawn from a logit model using weighted ANES data from the cumulative file through 2012. Controls are included for issue extremity and constraint (and their interaction), education, sex, race, age, southern location, urban location, and church attendance. Originating regression is shown in appendix table A.8. Ninety-five percent confidence intervals shown.

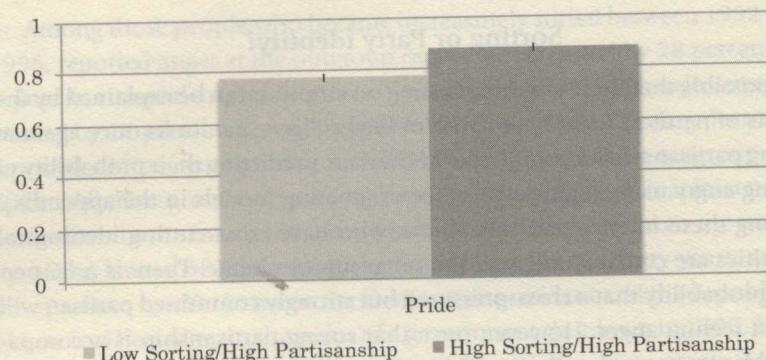


Figure 6.5. Predicted probability of feeling proud of ingroup candidate
Note: Predicted probabilities drawn from a logit model using weighted ANES data through 2012. Controls are included for issue extremity and constraint, education, sex, race, age, southern location, urban location, and church attendance. Originating regression is shown in appendix table A.8. Ninety-five percent confidence intervals shown.

strongest partisans, simply moving from a cross-cutting ideological identity to a sorted ideological identity can drive a significant increase in feelings of anger. This is a psychological response to the feeling that the party makes up a larger part of a person's social world. Once an ideological identity lines up behind a partisan identity, it becomes harder to understand opponents as reasonable people and easier to feel threatened and angered by them.

The effects on pride are smaller but still significant. Figure 6.5 presents the same strong partisans but predicts their probability of feeling proud about their own candidate. Among intense partisans with cross-cutting ideological identities, there is a 77 percent probability that they will feel proud of their ingroup candidate. However, once an ideological identity is strong and well aligned with this strong partisan identity, that probability increases to 88 percent. This difference, again, is statistically significant. Therefore, even while holding issue positions constant, simply aligning an ideological identity with a strong partisan identity is capable of increasing the likelihood of feeling proud of your own candidate by 10 percentage points.

Although the differences between cross-cut partisans and well-sorted partisans are relatively small in magnitude, they are significant, and they suggest something real about American politics. Even our strongest partisans have emotions that are kept slightly in check when their ideological identities are unaligned with their party. Once party and ideology move into alignment, as they have across large swaths of the American electorate, the likelihood

that partisans are feeling angry and proud increases significantly. Sorting is pushing us into emotional territory that partisanship alone cannot.

Matching

Another way to examine the effect of sorting on emotion is to go back to the matched sample used in chapter 5. Using the same sample—comprising members nearly identical in ideological identity, issue extremity, education, age, sex, race, geographical location, and religiosity—I again split the sample into low and high levels of sorting. This time I looked at the differences between the groups in their reported levels of anger at the outgroup candidate. This is a challenging test because, although the people are constrained to be matched, the political context in each year is drastically different, causing a large variance in anger across the cumulative ANES sample, which spans from 1972 to 2012. Despite the contextual variation, these highly similar individuals, when averaged across time, tend to be significantly angrier at the outgroup candidate when their ideological identities are aligned with their partisan identities. This is true despite large confidence intervals. Figure 6.6 presents the results of this matching test.

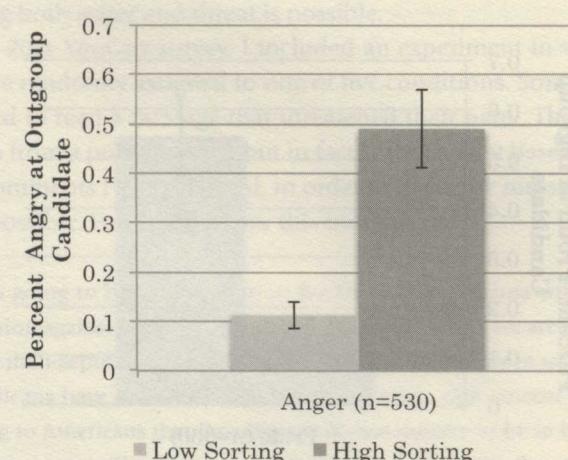


Figure 6.6. Percent angry at the outgroup candidate in matched sample
Note: Data drawn from ANES cumulative file through 2012. Ninety-five percent confidence intervals shown. Respondents matched on ideological identification, issue extremity, education, sex, race, age, southern location, and church attendance. Low sorting and high sorting are divided by cutting the sorting score at its median.

In this figure, ideologically matched people are significantly angrier at the outgroup candidate when their partisan identity is strong and aligned with their ideological identity. About 11 percent of people with cross-cutting partisan identities feel angry at the outgroup candidate, while 49 percent of the well-sorted sample reports feeling angry. This is a significant difference. Although they are quite similar in their characteristics, ideology, and political attitudes, those whose partisan identity is aligned with their matched ideologies are angrier, across the decades, than those whose partisan identities are unaligned with their matched ideologies. The alignment of these two identities is driving people to feel angrier, despite their agreement on policy outcomes and their similarity in every other measured way.

Looking at pride for the ingroup candidate offers a similar picture. In figure 6.7, the same matched sample is compared across levels of sorting. Once again, we see that across the years those individuals who are similar to each other in many ways, and differ in their level of partisan-ideological sorting, feel very differently toward their own party's candidates. Among those with cross-cutting partisan and ideological identities, only 14 percent report feeling proud of their own party's candidate. Move that party into alignment with ideology (again, an ideology matched across conditions), and 55 percent report feeling proud.

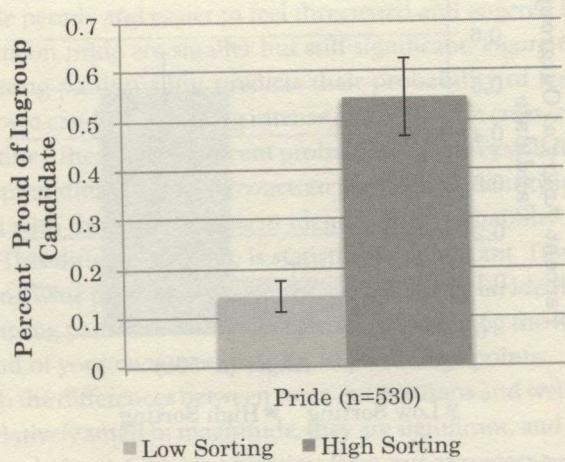


Figure 6.7. Percent proud of the ingroup candidate in matched sample
Note: Data drawn from ANES cumulative file through 2012. Ninety-five percent confidence intervals shown. Respondents matched on ideological identification, issue extremity, education, sex, race, age, southern location, and church attendance. Low sorting and high sorting are divided by cutting the sorting score at its median.

These differences are not only statistically and substantively significant, they are compelling because they occur among respondents that are as similar to one another as possible. Furthermore, though issue extremity is matched here, these models have been replicated using an issue-constraint measure instead, and the results support the same conclusions. Individuals who are similar on ideology and issue positions grow far more proud of their candidate when their party is well matched to their ideological identity, even though their beliefs do not differ. Partisan-ideological sorting is capable of encouraging an increasingly angry and enthusiastic electorate.

Evidence from an Experiment

Up until now, the effects of sorting on anger have only been demonstrated in the case of partisan-ideological sorting. Furthermore, all of the models presented above have measured anger as a simple yes/no response to a question regarding anger at the outgroup candidate, which a respondent must recall from memory. According to social identity theory and intergroup emotions theory, a threat is necessary for group identities to activate anger. The outgroup candidate is a good representation of a threat to group status. He or she is, after all, the embodiment of the party whose victory will mean an inevitable defeat for a partisan's own party. However, more precision in measuring both anger and threat is possible.

In the 2011 YouGov survey, I included an experiment in which respondents were randomly assigned to one of five conditions. Some respondents were asked to read a message that threatened their party. They were told it was taken from a political blog, but in fact I fabricated it based on a number of blog comments I had collected, in order to make the messages as comparable as possible. For Republicans, this message read:

2012 is going to be a great election for Democrats. Obama will easily win re-election against whatever lunatic the Republicans run, we are raising more money than Republicans, our Congressional candidates are in safer seats, and Republicans have obviously lost Americans' trust. Our current Congress is proving to Americans that Republicans do not deserve to be in the majority, and Americans will make sure they're gone in 2012. Finally, we'll take the Congress back and won't have to worry about the Republicans shutting down government anymore! I'm glad that Americans have finally returned to their senses. Republicans should get used to being the minority for the foreseeable future. Democrats will hold our central place in the leadership of the country. Obama 2012!!

For Democrats, the message read:

2012 is going to be a great election for Republicans. We're going to defeat the hardcore socialist Obama, we are raising more money than Democrats, our Congressional candidates are in safer seats, and Democrats have obviously lost Americans' trust. Our current Congress is proving to Americans that Democrats do not deserve to be in the majority, and Americans will make sure they're gone in 2012. Finally, we'll take the government back, and we won't have to worry about Democrats blocking us at every turn! I am so glad that Americans have finally returned to their senses. Democrats should not get used to running the government. Republicans will take back our central place in the leadership of the country. Defeat Obama in 2012!!

Other respondents were asked to read a "blog message" that threatened their party's cherished policy outcomes. For Republicans, this message read:

2012 is going to be a great election for responsible political ideas. After this election we can finally fix the economy using wise tax increases to pay for our indispensable social programs and infrastructure, so that we can create jobs instead of blindly throwing money to corporations and giving tax cuts to the millionaires who caused this mess. After this election we'll be able to improve the health care bill by adding a public option, make sure every woman has clear access to abortions, every child has a chance to learn evolutionary theory in school, and make it easier for all adults to get married if they want to, no matter who they are. Finally, our country will be on the right path again!

For Democrats, this message read:

2012 is going to be a great election for responsible political ideas. After this election we can finally fix the economy by enforcing personal responsibility, using a true free-market system to make sure people aren't handed more than they've earned. We'll be able to shrink the government and get it off our backs, and lower taxes so that hard-working people have a reason to work. After this election we'll be able to stop socialized medicine, prevent the abortions of innocent babies all over the country, bring God back into the public sphere, and make sure that we are a country that respects that marriage is between a man and a woman. Finally, our country will be on the right path again!

A fifth group did not read any message at all. The four messages were randomly assigned, so some Democrats would read the Republican threat

message and some Republicans would read the Democratic threat message. When this occurred, I coded this as a message of support for the party.

After reading one of the messages, respondents were asked how the message had made them feel. They could answer A great deal, Somewhat, Very little, or Not at all to the following emotion items: Angry, Hostile, Nervous, Disgusted, Anxious, Afraid, Hopeful, Proud, and Enthusiastic. I combined their responses to the Angry, Hostile, and Disgusted items to form a scale of anger ($\alpha = 0.91$), and the Hopeful, Proud, and Enthusiastic responses to form a scale of enthusiasm ($\alpha = 0.93$). In comparison to the yes/no anger responses measured above, this measure created a scale of emotion that ranges relatively continuously from 0 to 1, creating much more variation in the amount of anger or enthusiasm a person could report.

Figure 6.8 illustrates the main effects of each experimental treatment on emotion. As expected, in the threat conditions, anger is substantially stronger than enthusiasm, and in the support conditions enthusiasm is the main result. The party-threat conditions included language that had the potential to generate stronger emotions than the issue conditions, but, as the data show, emotional reactions to the issue threats are relatively similar to the main emotional effects of party threats.

As in chapter 5, I measured sorting using the full social-sorting scale, including partisan, ideological, black, secular, evangelical, and Tea Party iden-

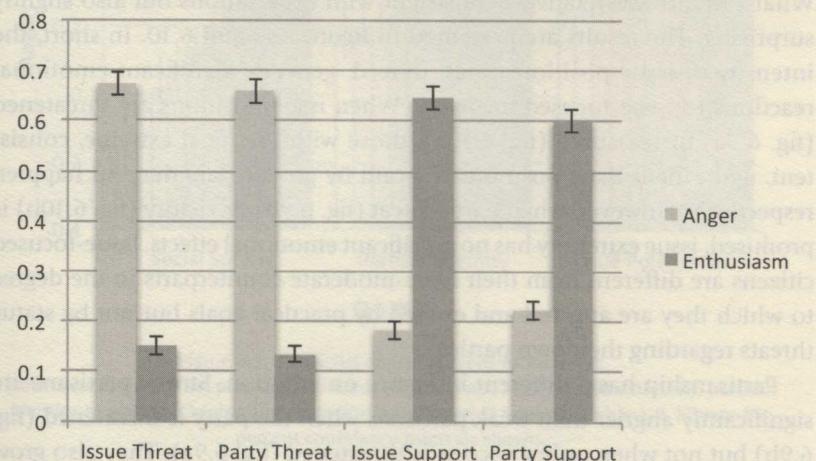


Figure 6.8. Main effects of experimental treatment
Note: Ninety-five percent confidence intervals shown. Bars represent mean levels of each emotion in each treatment, across the entire sample.

ties, measuring each, if present, using the four-item social-identification scale. This creates a much fuller measure of sorting by including multiple social identities that may come into play in determining how angry or enthusiastic each partisan can be.

I expected the most socially sorted partisans to be the most emotionally volatile. I thought they would react to the party-based threats with the most anger and to messages of support with the most enthusiasm. I also expected to find somewhat smaller results for partisan identity alone, and much smaller effects among those with the most extreme issue positions. In other words, I expected to see that a conglomeration of identities is most emotionally responsive to threat (particularly group-based threat), that one identity is slightly less so, and that a set of extreme issue positions generates the smallest emotional response to threat.

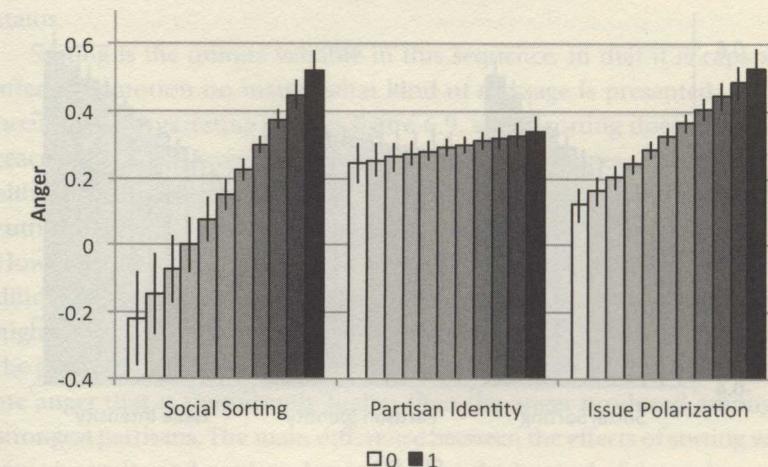
In order to give the issue positions a fair test, however, I included the threats that were devoid of partisan labels and only threatened policy outcomes. If anything were to anger those with strong issue positions, it should be these issue-based threats.⁴ Furthermore, the issue measure used here accounts for not only issue extremity but also issue importance and issue constraint.⁵ I refer to this measure as issue intensity, due to its inclusion of multiple elements of issue attitudes.⁶

Experimental Results

What I found was relatively consistent with expectations but also slightly surprising. The results are presented in figures 6.9 and 6.10. In short, the intensity of issue positions does, indeed, generate significant emotional reactions to issue-focused messages. When issue positions are threatened (fig. 6.9a) or reassured (fig. 6.10a), those with the most extreme, consistent, and salient issue positions respond by growing angrier and happier, respectively. However, when party defeat (fig. 6.9b) or victory (fig. 6.10b) is promised, issue extremity has no significant emotional effects. Issue-focused citizens are different from their issue-moderate counterparts in the degree to which they are angered and excited by practical goals but not by status threats regarding their own parties.

Partisanship has a different influence on emotion. Strong partisans are significantly angrier than weak partisans when the party is threatened (fig. 6.9b) but not when policy success is threatened (fig. 6.9a). They also grow significantly more enthusiastic than weak partisans when party victory is discussed (fig. 6.10b) but not when policy victory is promised (fig. 6.10a). It doesn't really matter to partisans whether their policy positions are threat-

Issue Threat (a)



Party Threat (b)

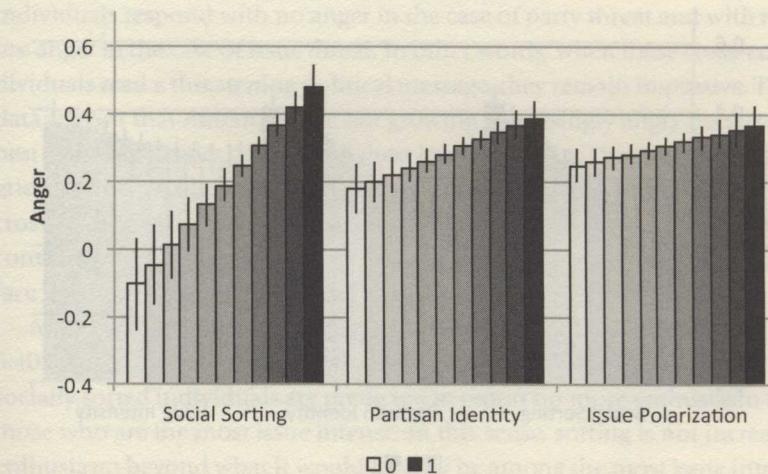


Figure 6.9. Predicted angry reactions to messages

Note: Bars represent the predicted values of anger at each level of issue extremity, partisan identity, or sorting. Originating regressions are shown in appendix table A.9. Ninety-five percent confidence intervals shown.

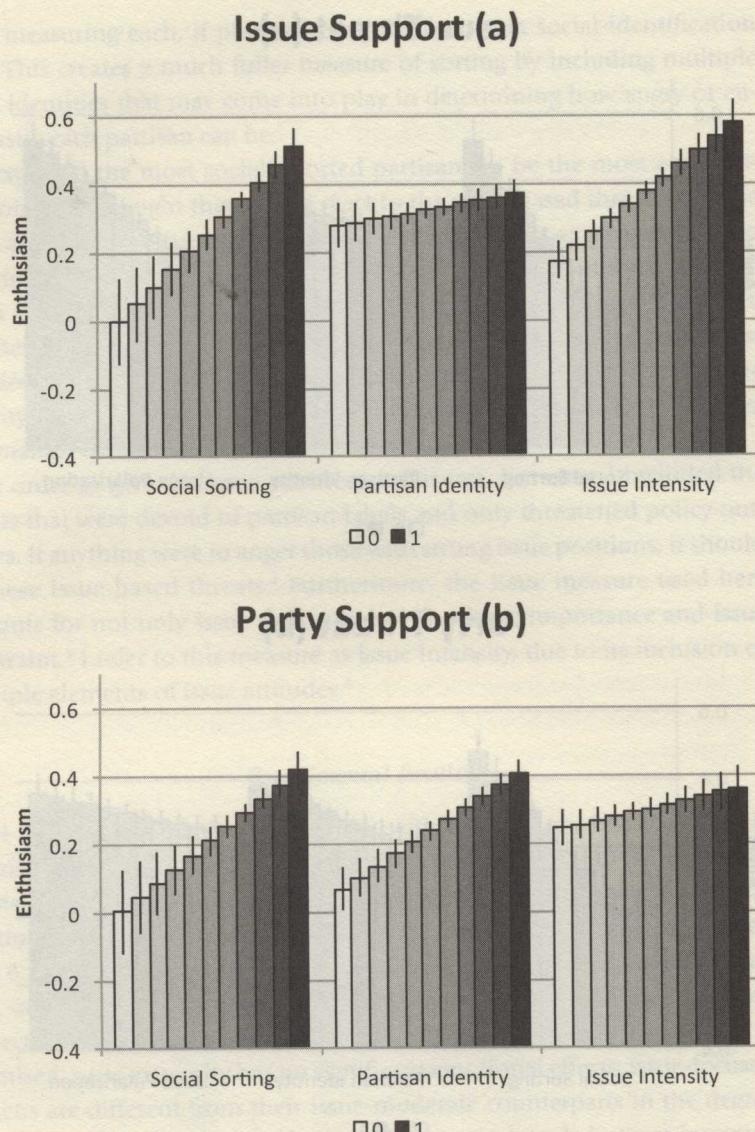


Figure 6.10. Predicted enthusiastic reactions to messages
Note: Bars represent the predicted values of enthusiasm at each level of issue extremity, partisan identity, or sorting. Originating regressions are shown in appendix table A.10. Ninety-five percent confidence intervals shown.

ened. Strong partisans are emotionally engaged by messages of support regarding their party's status—but not by the actual policy outcomes of that status.

Sorting is the unique variable in this sequence, in that it is capable of affecting emotion no matter what kind of message is presented. But this occurs in an interesting way. In figure 6.9, social sorting does affect angry reactions to both issue-based and party-based messages of threat. Unlike either issue intensity or partisan identity alone, the difference between cross-cutting and well-sorted identities is apparent in response to both messages. However, one important point to note is that, in the issue-based threat condition, the highest levels of sorting do not generate anger that is significantly higher than the anger produced among the most issue intense. Similarly, in the party-based threat condition, the highest levels of sorting do not generate anger that is significantly higher than the anger produced among the strongest partisans. The main difference between the effects of sorting versus issue intensity and partisanship is found at the *low end* of the scale.

The people with the most cross-cutting identities respond to both types of threat with significantly *less* anger than either the least issue-intense or the least partisan individuals. In fact, for both types of threat, the cross-cut individuals respond with no anger in the case of party threat and with *negative* anger in the case of issue threat. In other words, when these cross-cut individuals read a threatening political message, they remain impassive. These data suggest that Americans are not growing increasingly angry because the best-sorted identities drive the highest levels of anger. They are growing angrier because the people who tend to respond without anger (those with cross-cutting identities) are disappearing. As the sorting seen in chapter 3 continues, the people who have the best chance of remaining calm in the face of political conflict are shrinking as a proportion of the electorate.

A similar phenomenon is seen in the case of enthusiasm, shown in figure 6.10. In the presence of an issue-based message of victory (6.10a), the most socially sorted individuals are predicted to report no more enthusiasm than those who are the most issue intense. In this sense, sorting is not increasing enthusiasm beyond what it would already be among the most issue intense. However, at the low end of the spectrum, those with cross-cutting identities are significantly *less* enthusiastic than the least issue intense. The 95 percent confidence interval for the least-sorted group in figure 6.10a crosses zero, suggesting that, once again, those with cross-cutting identities have no emotional response whatsoever, even to a positive message.

In the case of party-based messages of victory, the same basic pattern arises. People who are highly socially sorted are no more enthusiastic after

hearing a victory message than are the strongest partisans. In this one case, those with cross-cutting identities are statistically indistinguishable from very weak partisans. So the dampening effect of cross-cutting cleavages does not go beyond the dampening effect of simple weak partisanship. However, one difference does exist. The confidence interval around the predicted level of enthusiasm for those with the most cross-cutting identities includes zero, which means it is statistically probable that these people do not respond to encouraging messages with any enthusiasm at all. In comparison, the confidence interval for the weakest partisan's level of enthusiasm does *not* include zero (narrowly), and therefore, statistically speaking, a weak partisan is predicted to respond with some minimal level of enthusiasm.

Well-sorted citizens are broadly emotionally responsive. They get angry at any message of threat, and they get happy at any message of victory. Whether party-based or issue-based, highly sorted individuals react to political messages with emotional reactions that match those driven by the strongest partisans or the most issue-intense individuals. However, while the emotional reactions of highly sorted individuals match the maximum emotional reactions already found in the electorate, the reactions of cross-cut individuals are significantly less intense than the reactions of any other citizens measured here. Cross-cutting identities dampen emotional reactions to political messages, such that the most cross-cutting identities lead to a complete lack of emotional response. This lack of response exists only in the group of cross-cut citizens that are increasingly disappearing from the American electorate.

Obstructive Anger

Emotional reactivity is obviously important when we are trying to understand why certain partisans react to politics with anger or excitement and others respond less emotionally. The more sorted we become, the more emotionally we react to normal political events, and the more cross-cutting our identities, the more calmly we respond. The anger on display at Cliven Bundy's ranch, at the 2010 town hall meetings over Obamacare, at the Occupy Wall Street protests, and at Donald Trump's 2016 rallies is fueled by our increasing social and partisan isolation. As Americans continue to sort into partisan teams, we should expect to see more of this emotional reaction, no matter how much we may truly agree on specific policies.

In examining intergroup conflict in other nations, Kahn et al. (2016) found that "hatred and anger, and the absence of positive intergroup sentiments and moral sentiments of guilt or shame, may be an important ob-

stacle both to the type of interest-based agreements that would benefit all concerned and to the type of relationship-building programs that can humanize adversaries and create the trust necessary for more comprehensive agreements. Indeed, trying to produce such agreement through careful crafting of efficient trades of concessions, without attending to relational barriers may be an exercise in futility" (83).

In other words, the anger that is driven by intergroup conflict and the gradual reduction of cross-cutting identities in the electorate is actively harming our ability to reasonably discuss the important issues at hand. The more people who feel angry, the less capable we are as a nation of finding common ground on policies, or even of treating our opponents like human beings. Our emotional relationships with our opponents must be addressed before we can hope to make the important policy compromises that are required for governing.

The increasingly prevalent well-sorted partisans are not only more intransigent in governing but also more active in politics, to make their intransigent inclinations known. Their emotional reactions to sorting can lead to a distinctly emotional type of political participation, in which partisans participate not only to make their policy positions known but, largely, because they're feeling particularly angry or elated.